



# Comparative Analysis of State Requirements

for Peer Support Specialist  
Training and Certification  
in the United States



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# Introduction

Peer recovery support occurs when people with shared lived experience connect with each other. The bond that results can create mutual empathetic experiences that foster growth and recovery. This dynamic has long played a role in health and wellness, and, in recent decades, there has been an increased recognition of the role of peer recovery support in the behavioral health field (Myrick & del Vecchio, 2016). This has led to the development of a workforce of peer providers in many community and service settings. In the behavioral health field, peer support specialists are people with lived experience in recovery from mental health and substance use challenges who provide non-clinical, strengths-based support to others seeking their own, individualized, person-centered recovery.

The behavioral health peer workforce flourished in grass-roots consumer-rights and self-help communities (Hill, 2020). As further growth of the workforce has occurred within state health care systems over the last several decades, behavioral health certification boards active in the United States such as [NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals](#) and the [International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium \(IC/RC\)](#), as well as national organizations such as [Mental Health of America](#), developed national peer recovery certifications, but to date no one national training and certification standard has been accepted across the country. Instead, state healthcare systems in the United States have developed their behavioral health peer recovery training and certification systems at the individual state level, sometimes associated with a state certification board, sometimes not. As increased evidence for best practices for peer recovery continues to emerge, each state is continually updating its training and certification requirements for behavioral health peer support specialists working in their jurisdictions to improve the quality and practices of peer support in their communities.

The national Peer Recovery Center of Excellence (PRCoE) was funded by SAMHSA in 2020 to provide training and technical assistance to the substance use peer recovery field. To provide a comprehensive overview of state peer recovery trainings and certifications, information offered in this report includes peer support training and certification for peer support specialists with lived experience in substance use and/or mental health recovery. This approach also reflects the integrated certifications for peer support specialists with either type of lived experience offered by many states. The data compilation occurred in partnership with the Texas Institute of Excellence in Mental Health (TIEMH) at the University of Texas-Austin and is indebted to past work by TIEMH (Kaufman, L., Kuhn, W., & Stevens Manser, S. 2016), Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale Technical Assistance Center (BRSS-TACS, 2020) and The Copeland Center for Wellness and Recovery (n.d. Copeland Center for Wellness and Recovery).

Information is not included in this report for behavioral health peer certification and training programs provided by private and not-for-profit entities that are not state approved. State approved behavioral health peer certification and training programs are evolving quickly, and information may have changed since this review. For more information about the programs presented, please use the provided state specific links in the Reference section to visit the website for each state and the District of Columbia. If you have any questions, comments or updates regarding the information contained in this report, please contact us at [info@peerrecoverynow.org](mailto:info@peerrecoverynow.org).

## Methods

The information in this report reflects the current status of state approved training and certification for behavioral health peer support specialists in the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia as of July 1, 2021. The data were gathered as part of the forthcoming publication by the [Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health](#) at the University of Texas-Austin: “Training and Certification Programs: A National Overview” (Stevens Manser, S., Parkin, S., n.d.) with assistance from the [Peer Recovery Center of Excellence](#). The data were compiled from reviews of, and direct excerpts from, online resources from state behavioral health agencies, state certification boards and affiliated organizations that oversee the training and certification of behavioral health peer support specialists. Additional information was obtained from email and phone exchanges between the authors and contacts from select state behavioral health agencies and state certification boards. A detailed list of the source websites by state can be found in the Reference section of this document.

Information is summarized across states and the District of Columbia on a number of key indicators, including types of certifying entities, integrated vs. separate state certifications for substance use and mental health peer support specialists, lived experience requirements for certification, educational hours, work hours, exam requirements, criminal background checks, disqualifying offenses for certifications, fees for training and certification, and peer support specialist supervisor qualifications. Key findings are summarized, and recommendations for improving access to information regarding requirements for peer support specialist training and certification as well as for strengthening the rules and processes to support the unique qualifications and contributions of the peer support specialist field are provided.

### *A Note on Numbers*

In many instances throughout this document, the number of states or certifications in charts and tables will equal to a sum greater than 51 (50 states and the District of Columbia). These sums are due to the fact that some states have more than one certification for peer support specialists (e.g., a certification for substance use peer support specialists and a certification for mental health peer support specialists), with differing rules or structures for their respective training processes and certifications. Additionally, some state certifications may have multiple categories that apply in a given topic; in those instances, the certification will be counted in each category.

# Glossary of Terms



**Behavioral Health:** the promotion of mental health, resilience and well-being; the treatment of mental health and substance use disorders; and the support of those who experience and/or are in recovery from these conditions, along with their families and communities (SAMHSA)

**Certification:** an official document that attests to a status or level of achievement, including the attainment of professional skills and knowledge (Oxford Languages)

**Human Services:** programs or facilities for meeting basic health, welfare and other needs of a society or group, as of the poor, sick or elderly (Dictionary.com)

**License:** a permit from an authority to own or use something, do a particular thing, or carry on a trade (Oxford Languages)

**Peer Support Specialist:** Person with lived experience in recovery from mental health and substance use challenges who provides non-clinical, strengths-based support to others seeking their own, individualized, person-centered recovery

**Peer Support Specialist Certified Supervisor:** a person who provides formal supervision to peer support specialists who has also obtained a peer support specialist certification and worked as a peer support specialist

**Peer Support Specialist Supervisor:** a person who provides formal supervision to peer support specialists

# Findings

## National Data/Overview

### State Behavioral Health Peer Support Specialist Certification

State systems have taken a variety of approaches to certification for peer support specialists in the state health system. The approach is based on the type of lived experience the peer support specialist offers in their professional role, i.e., whether the lived experience is with substance use recovery or mental health recovery, or both. Lived experience in recovery is the key tool utilized by peer support specialists to perform their job across a variety of service settings. The majority of states (34) offer a single, integrated peer professional certification in the state health system for individuals with lived experience in substance use and/or mental health recovery. Other states (12) offer separate certifications based on the peer support specialist's type of behavioral health lived experience: substance use or mental health recovery. One state (Hawaii) currently offers only a mental health peer certification, and two (New Hampshire and Vermont) currently offer only substance use peer certification. Two states do not currently have a peer certification in the state health system (California and South Dakota). California is in the process of developing a certification. In states that offer one integrated certification for people with lived experience in substance use and/or mental health recovery, the specific type of lived experience required in the field is determined by individual job requirements, service settings and the needs of the people being served.

Figure 1: State Peer Support Specialist Certifications

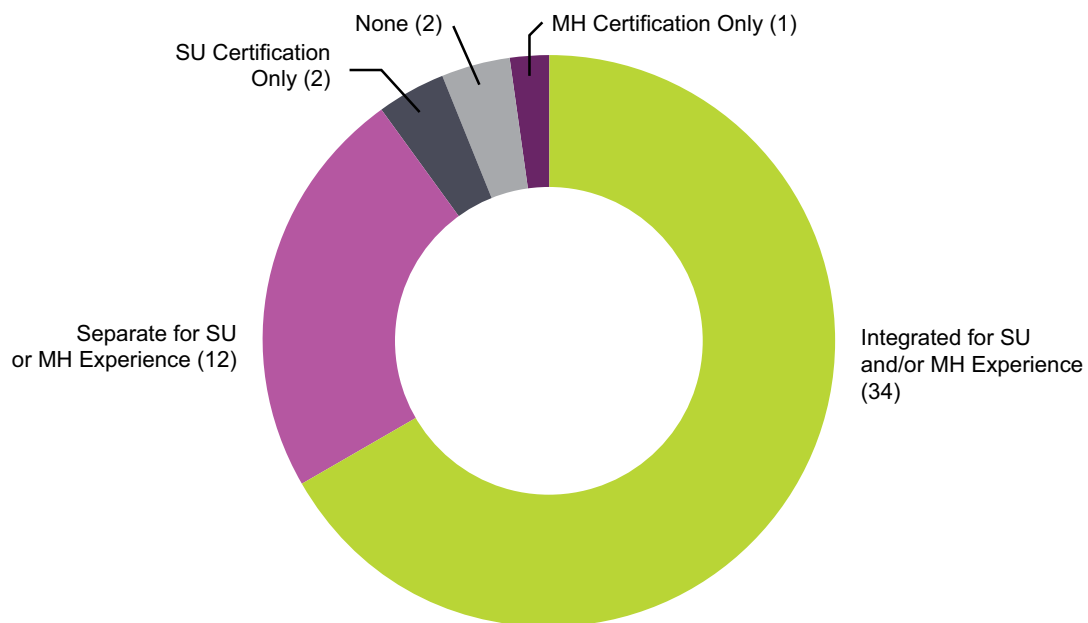


Table 1: State Peer Support Specialist Certification Types

*Key*

**Separate:** Separate certifications for Peer Support Specialists with lived experience with substance use or mental health recovery

**Integrated:** One certification for Peer Support Specialists with lived experience in substance use and/or mental health recovery

**Substance Use Only:** Certification for Peer Support Specialists with lived experience in substance use recovery

**Mental Health Only:** Certification for Peer Support Specialist with lived experience in mental health recovery

**None:** No established Peer Support Specialist certifications.

State	Type of Certification	State	Type of Certification
Alabama	Separate	Montana	Integrated
Alaska	Integrated	Nebraska	Integrated
Arizona	Integrated	Nevada	Integrated
Arkansas	Integrated	New Hampshire	Substance Use Only
California	None	New Jersey	Separate
Colorado	Integrated	New Mexico	Integrated
Connecticut	Integrated	New York	Separate
Delaware	Integrated	North Carolina	Integrated
District of Columbia	Integrated	North Dakota	Integrated
Florida	Integrated	Ohio	Integrated
Georgia	Separate	Oklahoma	Integrated
Hawaii	Mental Health Only	Oregon	Integrated
Idaho	Separate	Pennsylvania	Separate
Illinois	Separate	Rhode Island	Integrated
Indiana	Integrated	South Carolina	Integrated
Iowa	Integrated	South Dakota	None
Kansas	Integrated	Tennessee	Integrated
Kentucky	Integrated	Texas	Separate
Louisiana	Integrated	Utah	Integrated
Maine	Separate	Vermont	Substance Use Only
Maryland	Integrated	Virginia	Integrated
Massachusetts	Separate	Washington	Integrated
Michigan	Separate	West Virginia	Integrated
Minnesota	Separate	Wisconsin	Integrated
Mississippi	Integrated	Wyoming	Integrated
Missouri	Integrated		

### State Behavioral Health Peer Support Specialist Certifying Entities

The states utilize a variety of entities to issue certifications for peer support specialists, including state health and human services agencies, state certification boards, or third-party organizations. Some states may have more than one certification entity, especially if they offer separate certifications for substance use and mental health peer support specialists. Twenty-two states utilize a certification board for issuing peer support specialist certifications. The majority of these state certification boards are focused on the substance use field and also offer professional clinical certifications. However, even if the state certification board's clinical focus is in one area of behavioral health, the peer support specialist certification is often available for individuals with lived experience in either substance use or mental health. For example, the [Texas Certification Board](#) primarily certifies clinical professionals in the addiction field; however, they certify peer support specialists with substance use and/or mental health lived experience. Eighteen states and the District of Columbia utilize health and human services agencies to issue peer support specialist certifications, and another two offer certifications through state agency/ university partnerships. Ten states collaborate with a third-party organization, usually via a subcontract or collaborative agreement, to issue peer support specialist certifications.

Figure 2: State Peer Certification Entities

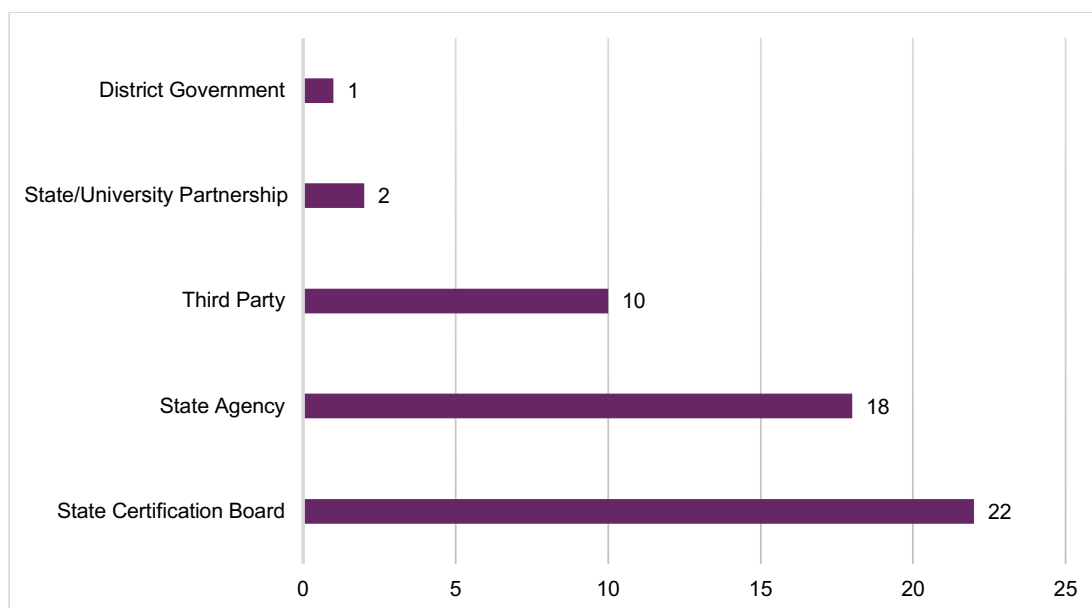




Table 2: State Peer Certification Entities

State	Certification Entity	State	Certification Entity
Alabama	State Agency	Minnesota <i>(Substance Use)</i>	State Certification Board
Alaska	State Certification Board	Mississippi	State Agency
Arizona	Third-Party Organization	Missouri	State Certification Board
Arkansas	State Certification Board	Montana	State Agency
California	Not Applicable	Nebraska	State Agency
Colorado	State Certification Board	Nevada	State Certification Board
Connecticut	Third-Party Organization	New Hampshire <i>(Substance Use)</i>	State Agency
Delaware	State Certification Board	New Jersey	State Certification Board
District of Columbia	District Government Agency	New Mexico	State Agency
Florida	State Certification Board	New York	State Certification Board
Georgia	Third-Party Organization	North Carolina	State Agency/University Partnership
Hawaii <i>(Mental Health)</i>	State Agency	North Dakota	State Agency
Hawaii <i>(Substance Use)</i>	Not Applicable	Ohio	State Agency
Idaho <i>(Mental Health)</i>	Third-Party Organization	Oklahoma	State Agency
Idaho <i>(Substance Use)</i>	State Certification Board	Oregon	State Agency
Illinois	State Certification Board	Pennsylvania	State Certification Board
Indiana	State Agency	Rhode Island	State Certification Board
Iowa	State Certification Board	South Carolina	State Certification Board
Kansas	Third-Party Organization	South Dakota	Not Applicable
Kentucky	State Agency	Tennessee	State Agency
Louisiana	Third-Party Organization	Texas	State Certification Board
Maine <i>(Mental Health)</i>	State Agency	Utah	State Agency
Maine <i>(Substance Use)</i>	Third-Party Organization	Vermont	Third-Party Organization
Maryland	State Certification Board	Virginia	State Certification Board
Massachusetts <i>(Mental Health)</i>	Third-Party Organization	Washington	State Agency
Massachusetts <i>(Substance Use)</i>	State Certification Board	West Virginia	State Certification Board
Michigan	State Agency	Wisconsin	State Agency/University Partnership
Minnesota <i>(Mental Health)</i>	Third-Party Organization	Wyoming	State Certification Board

## Analysis

### Variations in Peer Support Specialist Certification Requirements

#### Peer Support Specialist Certification Lived Experience Requirements

State peer support specialist certification requirements for lived experience involve subtle distinctions. The majority of state certifications require **personal experience with recovery** from substance use and/or mental health challenges. In addition:

- Two state certifications define substance use recovery as **abstinence specific**.
- Several state certifications require no use of illicit drugs or alcohol **for a specified period of time**.
- Several state certifications require that the applicant has a mental health or substance use **diagnosis**.
- Several state certifications require that the applicant have a **history of receiving behavioral health services**.
- In some states, an applicant can obtain certification as a peer support specialist without being in personal recovery **if they have lived experience as a family member/caregiver** of a person with behavioral health challenges or in recovery.

Table 3: Substance Use Lived Experience Requirements

Type of Substance Use Lived Experience Required	No. of States with Requirement
Substance Use Personal Recovery Experience	31
Substance Use Personal Recovery Experience-Abstinence Specific	2
Experience as Family/Caregiver of Person with Substance Use Challenges or in Recovery (Optional Additional Category)	7
Personal Lived Experience with Substance Use Challenges	5
Experience with Substance Use Diagnosis	4
Experience as a recipient of services	11
No specific personal experience	4
Information not available on public websites	2

Table 4: Mental Health Lived Experience Requirements

Type of Mental Health Experience Required	No. of States with Requirement
Mental Health Personal Recovery Experience	28
Experience as Family/Caregiver of Person with Mental Health Challenges or in Recovery (Optional Additional Category)	7
Personal Lived Experience with Mental Health Challenges	8
Experience with Mental Health Diagnosis	7
Experience as recipient of services	14
No specific personal experience	1
Information not available on public websites	3

**Example A: Eligibility Requirements: Hawaii**

To become certified as a Peer Specialist in the State of Hawaii, all applicants must meet the following minimum requirements:

1. Be at least 18 years of age or older
2. Hold a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED)
3. Have a primary diagnosis of mental illness or co-occurring disorder. A single, primary diagnosis of a substance use disorder does not meet certification requirements
4. Self-identify as a person who has received or is receiving mental health or co-occurring services as part of his or her personal recovery process
5. Have demonstrated a minimum of 12 consecutive months in self-directed recovery in the last two years. Self-directed recovery includes experience in leadership, advocacy and peer support
6. Successfully complete an AMHD OCA approved Peer Specialist Training Program
7. Have successfully demonstrated mastery of the following competencies through testing and evaluation as required by a Peer Specialist Training Programs recognized by the Office of Consumer Affairs

Source: *Hawaii Certified Peer Specialist Program Guidelines Standards and Procedures (July 2012)*

### Peer Support Specialist Certification Training and Education

The states with peer support specialist certifications require a range of approved educational hours to receive certification. The most common requirement is between 40 and 46 hours of approved education. Exams are a part of the state certification process in almost all states.

Figure 3: State Peer Certification Required Educational Hours

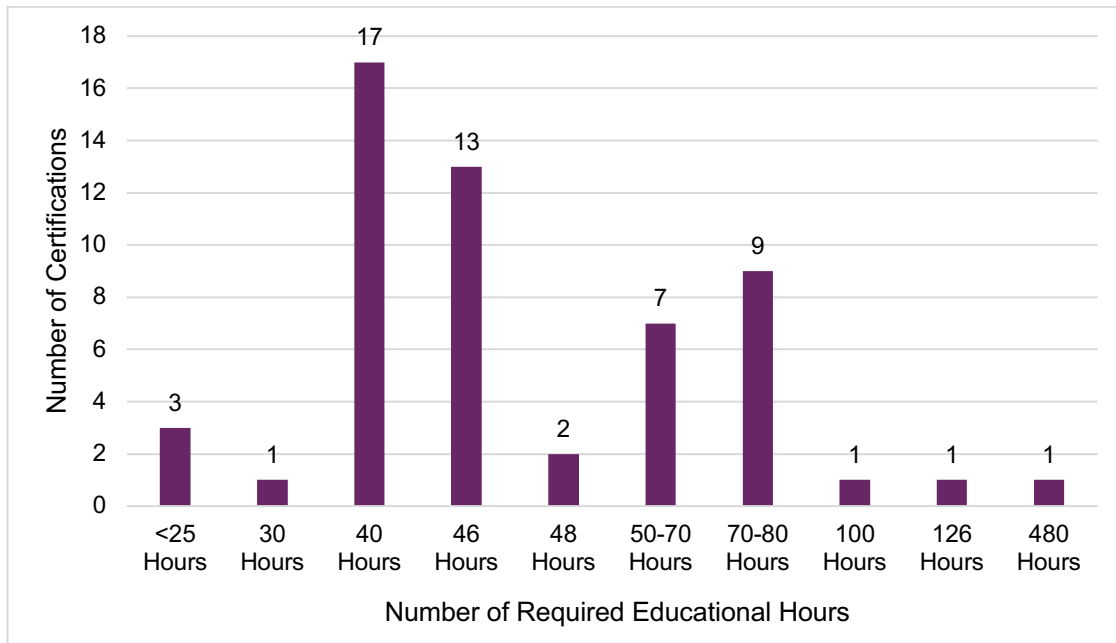
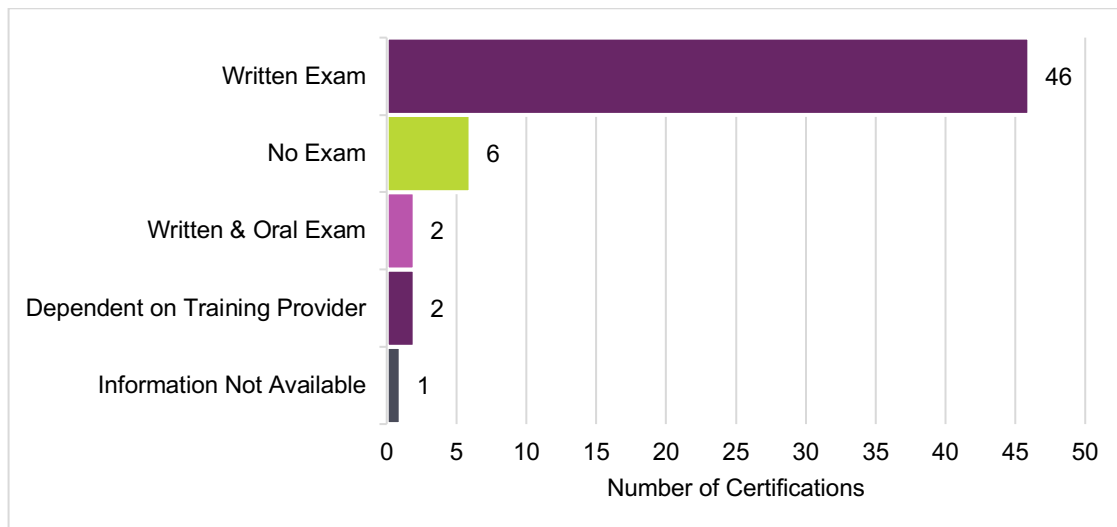


Figure 4: State Peer Certification Exam Requirements



Peer Support Specialist Certification Required Work Hours

Twenty-two state certifications also require supervised work or volunteer hours for peer support specialists seeking certification. For those with supervised-work hour requirements, the number of required hours ranges from 200 to 2000, with the majority requiring 500 hours. Of the 22 state certifications that require supervised-practice hours, 15 certifications allow paid or volunteer work experience, two require paid experience (hours must be entirely paid or a hybrid of paid/volunteer hours), and one requires an 80-hour unpaid field practicum (Washington, D.C.). Information on how work experience must be obtained (paid or volunteer) was not available for four states.

Figure 5: Supervised Work Experience Requirements for Certification

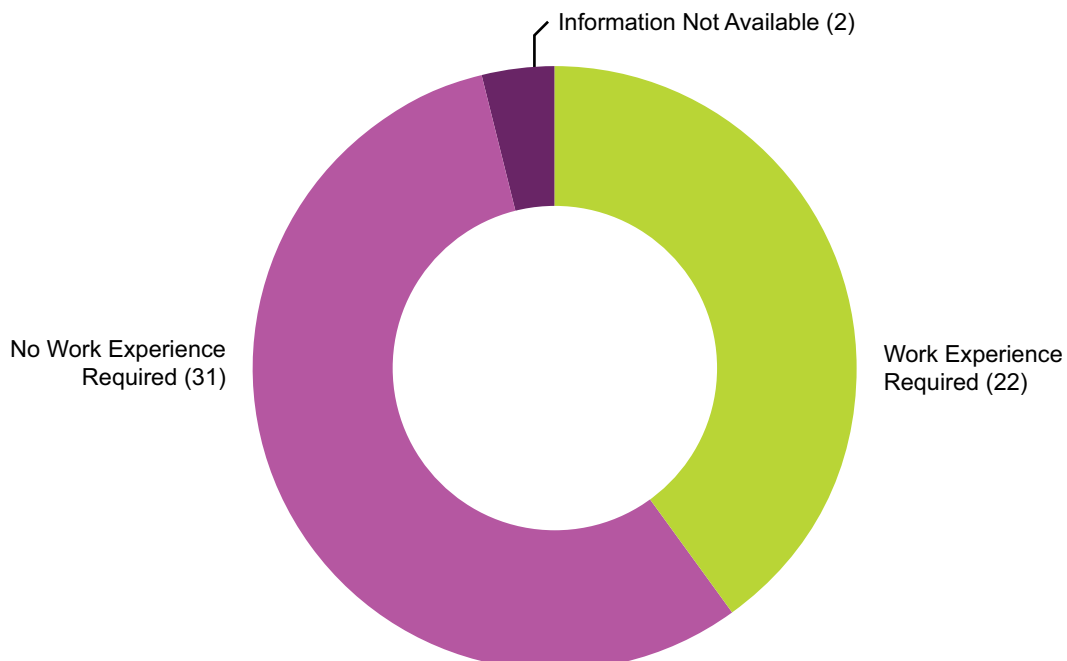
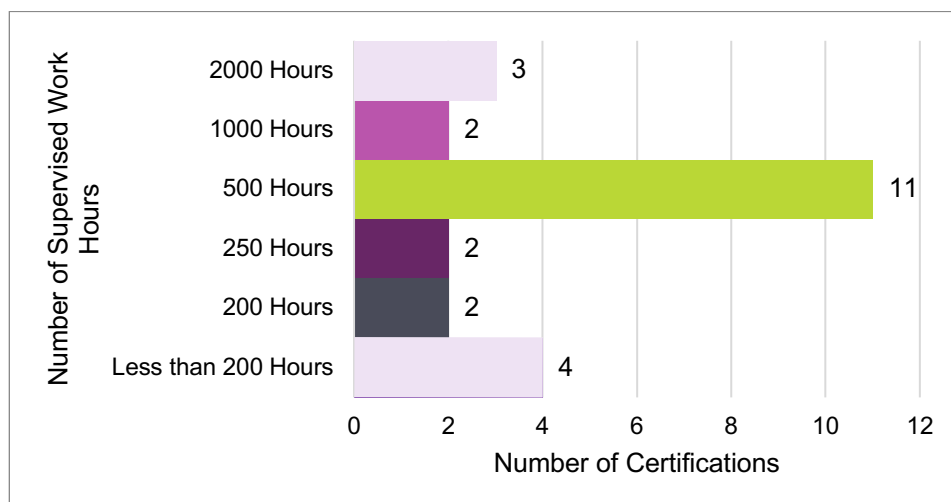


Figure 6: States Peer Certification Required Work Hours

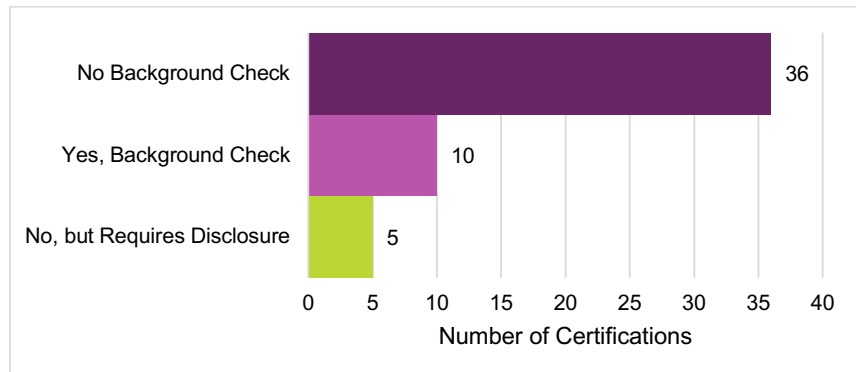


Peer Support Specialist Certification Required Criminal Background Checks

In the review of public websites with information on the process for obtaining state peer support specialist certifications, including those of state health agencies and certifying entities, 10 state certifications indicated required criminal background checks, and five indicated that applicants were required to self-disclose any previous convictions (Missouri requires both convictions and arrests be reported). A question remains whether other state certifications don't require them or don't disclose the requirement on the public-facing websites.

**Figure 7: State Peer Certification Criminal Background Check Requirements**

Fifteen state certifications detailed the impact of qualifying convictions reported through criminal background checks or self-disclosure.

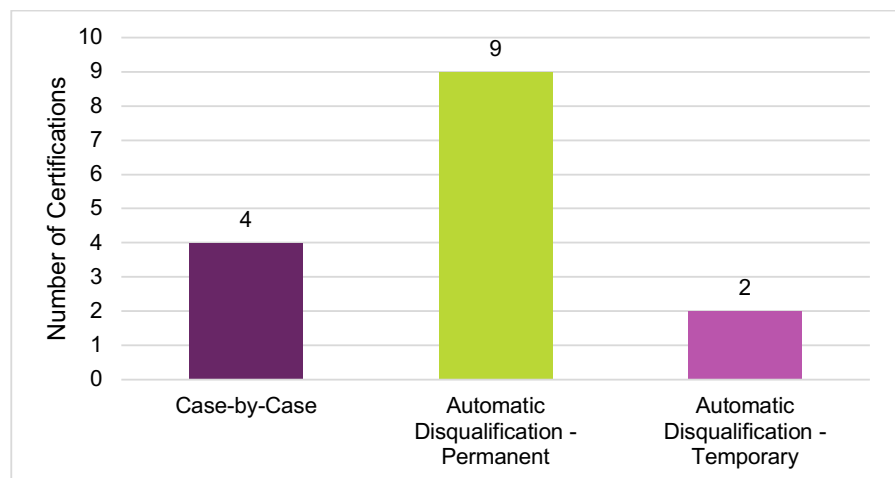


**Case-by-Case**

**Determinations:** Four state certifications utilize case-by-case determinations for people with criminal backgrounds applying for peer support certifications. For three of those state certifications, felony convictions trigger a case-by-case analysis (Montana, Pennsylvania, Virginia); other circumstances that trigger a case-by-case determination include: presence on an Adult Protective Services/Child Protective Services registry (Nebraska), two or more misdemeanors within five years (Montana), denial or revocation of professional licenses (Montana), or pending or completed legal/disciplinary action (Montana). Information on considerations for approving or denying an application for certification were not readily available for any state certification utilizing a case-by-case approach.

**Temporary Automatic Disqualifications:** Both certifications that require temporary disqualifications for criminal histories are Texas peer specialist certifications (Mental Health Peer Specialist and Recovery Support Peer Specialists). For more information on how Texas implemented temporary disqualifications in its peer support certification program, see *Example B: Texas Disqualifying Charges for Peer Certification*, below.

**Figure 8: State Peer Certification Responses to Disqualifying Charges**



## Example B: Texas Disqualifying Charges for Peer Certification

A certification entity must deny the initial or renewal application of a person in the following manner:

- During the person's lifetime, they were convicted or placed on community supervision for:
  - capital offenses
  - sexual offenses involving a child victim
  - felony sexual offenses involving an adult victim who is a client (one or more counts)
  - multiple counts of felony sexual offenses involving any adult victim
  - 1st-degree homicide
- During the 15 years preceding the date of application, a person was convicted or placed on community supervision for:
  - kidnapping
  - arson
  - homicide lesser than 1st degree
  - felony sexual offenses involving an adult victim who is not a client (single count)
  - attempting to commit crimes in this category or the preceding category
- During the ten years preceding the date of application, a person was convicted or placed on community supervision for:
  - felony offenses that are not listed separately in this section and that result in actual or potential physical harm to others or animals.
- During the five years preceding the date of application, unless proceedings have been dismissed and the person has been discharged after having been placed on and completing community supervision following a deferred adjudication, a person was convicted or placed on community supervision for:
  - class A misdemeanor alcohol and drug offenses
  - class A misdemeanor offenses resulting in actual or potential physical harm to others or animals
  - felony alcohol and drug offenses
  - all other felony offenses not listed separately in this section
- During the three years preceding the date of application, a person was convicted or placed on community supervision for:
  - class B misdemeanor alcohol and drug offenses
  - class B misdemeanor offenses resulting in actual or potential physical harm to others or animals.

*Source: Texas Administrative Code, Section 354.3201, Criminal History and Registry Checks (adopted January 1, 2019)*

The following chart gives an overview of the types of convictions that may result in disqualification from peer support specialist certification. Not all offenses are disqualifying in all states.

*Table 5: Categories of Disqualifying Charges*

Category of Disqualifying Offenses	Number of State Certifications
Drug Offenses	5
Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation of the Elderly	3
Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation of People with Developmental Disabilities	2
Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation of Children	6
Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation of Clients/Patients	4
Murder	6
Manslaughter/Vehicular Homicide	3
Assault/Battery	3
Sexual Offenses (Adult)	6
Sexual Offenses (Child)	7
Kidnapping, False Imprisonment	4
Child Abduction, Parental Kidnapping, Interference with Custody	2
Human Trafficking	3
Prostitution	3
Robbery, Arson, Burglary	4
Stealing, Forgery, Identity Theft or Financial Exploitation of the Elderly or People with Disabilities	2
Terrorism	2
Aiding Escape of Prisoners	2
Conspiracy of Certain Disqualifying Offenses	3
Animal Abuse	2
DWI/Chronic DUI	1
Any Felony	4
Denial or Revocation of Professional Licenses	1
Active Warrant	1

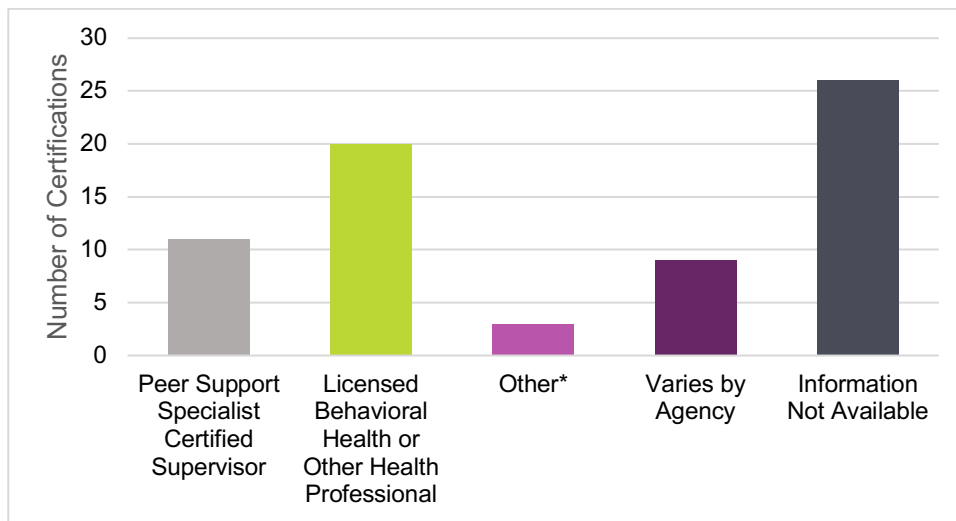
*Variations in Peer Support Specialist Supervisor Qualifications*

In the review of public websites with information on Peer Support Specialist Supervisor qualifications or certifications, including those of state health agencies and certifying entities, 11 have information about qualifications for peer support supervisors. Those that do report a wide variety of qualifications for supervisors of peer support specialists. One clear distinction is between state or certification entities that require supervision by a Licensed Behavioral Health or Other Professional and those that require or allow certification by a Certified Peer Support Specialist Supervisor. One state mandates that a peer support specialist be supervised by both a peer supervisor and clinical supervisor. Two others require some kind of previous experience with peer support specialists (either general experience working with peer support specialists or experience supervising peer support specialists).



Many of the state or certification entities that required supervision by a licensed behavioral health professional indicate they do so to comply with Medicaid requirements. Of those reporting on their websites, some require supervisors to take the peer support specialist certification training in order to be certified as a peer supervisor; others require a supervisor specific training, and some require no specific training. In general, there were more qualifications required for a supervisor with experience as a peer support specialist than a supervisor with clinical education and experience.

*Figure 9: Types of Professionals Approved to Supervise Peer Support Specialists*



\* The “Other” category includes professions outside of health care (e.g., teacher, Tennessee), people engaged in a course of study to become healthcare practitioners (Tennessee), and people with documented work or volunteer experience in a related field that focuses on recovery culture (Pennsylvania).

The following chart reflects the range of qualifications that the 11 state or certification entities reporting have in place for Peer Support Specialist Certified Supervisors.

*Table 6: Peer Support Specialist Certified Supervisor Qualifications by State Certification*

<b>Supervisor Qualification: Peer Support Specialist Certified Supervisor</b>	<b>Number of State or Certifying Entities</b>
Advanced peer support specialist certification	1
Regular peer support specialist certification	5
Supervisor training requirement	2
Requisite experience providing supervised peer support services	7
250 hours	1
500 hours	1
2 years	2
4 years	2
5 years	1
6000 hours	1
State certification exam for peer supervisors	1
Requisite hours providing peer supervision	4
250 hours	1
1 year	1
2 years	2
Associate degree	2
Must currently serve in managerial or supervisory position	1
Ongoing consultation with a behavioral health professional	1

The following chart reflects the range of qualifications that the 11 state or certification entities reporting have in place for behavioral health clinicians or other professionals to supervise peer support specialists.

*Table 7: Clinical or Other Professional Supervisor Qualifications by State Certification*

<b>Supervisor Qualification: Behavioral Health or Mental Health Professional Licensure or Designation</b>	<b>Number of State or Certifying Entities</b>
Psychiatrist	2
Physician	5
Individual holding medical degree	2
Psychologist	6
Psychotherapist	1
Physician assistant	2
Advanced Practice Registered Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Registered Nurse, Registered Nurse with psychiatric mental health or addictions credential	13
Behavior analyst	2
Individual licensed to practice behavioral health independently	2
Individual licensed to practice behavioral health under direct supervision	2
Health and Welfare Clinical Supervisor (QP)	1
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist	5
Licensed Professional Counselor	5
Licensed Clinical Social Worker	6
Licensed Associate Counselor	2
Substance use counselor/Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor	2
Case Manager	1
Teacher	1
Currently studying to be a behavioral health professional, supervised by a licensed behavioral health professional with 2 years of experience	1

Finally, there are a range of additional qualifications imposed by the reporting state or certification entities for supervisors of peer support specialists.

*Table 8: Peer Support Specialist Supervisor Qualifications — General — By State Certification*

<b>Supervisor Qualification</b>	<b>Number of State or Certifying Entities</b>
Information not available on public websites	26
Varies by agency	9
Behavioral Health or Mental Health Professional (general)	11
Behavioral Health or Mental Health Professional (defined; see Table 5)	6
“Credentialed, certified, licensed or degreed in field within which applicant is working”	1
Reciprocal credential through state certification board (e.g., AADC, CADC)	4
Master’s degree in relevant field	2
Bachelor’s degree in relevant field	4
Requisite experience providing behavioral health services	5
5 years	1
3 years	1
2 years	2
1 year	1
Requisite experience in human services field (2 years)	1
Previous experience working with peer support specialists	1
Requisite experience supervising peer support specialists (1 year)	1
Requisite experience providing clinical supervision (2 years)	1
Currently employed as a supervisor	2
Training Required for clinical supervisor?	12
<i>Supervision specific training</i>	9
<i>Core peer support specialist training</i>	3
Peer support specialist certified supervisor (certification or qualifications for peer support specialists to serve as supervisors for peer services; see Table 4)	11
Peer support specialist must be supervised by clinical supervisor and peer supervisor	1

## Example C: Arkansas Peer Support Specialist Certified Supervisor Requirements

Arkansas Peer Recovery Peer Supervisor (PRPS) Eligibility Requirements:

1. Submit a completed and signed Arkansas Peer Recovery Peer Supervisor Application
2. Pay a \$100.00 non-refundable application fee
3. Submit a copy of current APR credential
4. Attest to a minimum of three years of recovery from a substance use and/or mental health disorder
5. Attest to a minimum of three years of abstinence from illicit drugs and alcohol
6. Submit a copy of a background check completed in the last 60 days
7. Attest that they have read, understand and will adhere to the Arkansas Peer Supervisor Code of Ethics
8. Submit signed verification of minimum of one year of consistent employment as a PR or APR
9. Submit two completed and signed reference evaluations. One must be completed by candidate's current Peer Supervisor.

*Source: Arkansas Peer Specialist Program Peer Recovery Peer Supervisor Application (July 2021)*

## Example D: Colorado Clinical Supervisor Requirements

### Colorado Peer and Family Specialist Supervisor Requirements:

1. The supervisor must be credentialed, certified, licensed or degreed in the field within which the applicant is working
2. The supervisor must have two years of experience in human services. Human Services is considered to be a service that is provided to people in order to help them stabilize their life and find self-sufficiency through guidance, counseling, treatment and providing for basic needs
3. The supervisor must have previous experience working with peer support services and a significant understanding of the role of a peer
4. The supervisor will be required to submit their resume/CV to the Supervised Experience section of the supervisee's application for review by the Certification Committee
5. The supervisor will abide by the following ethical guidelines regarding Dual Relationships:
  - a. Supervisors shall make every effort to avoid multiple relationships with supervisees. When a dual relationship is unavoidable, the professional shall take extra care so that professional judgment is not impaired and there is no risk of supervisee exploitation. Such relationships include, but are not limited to, members of the supervisor's immediate or extended family, business associates of the supervisor or individuals who have a close personal relationship with the supervisor or the supervisor's family. When extending these boundaries, supervisor's take appropriate professional precautions such as informed consent, consultation, supervision and documentation to ensure that their judgment is not impaired and no harm occurs. Consultation and supervision shall be documented.

*Source: Colorado Peer and Family Specialist Certification Manual (April 2020)*

*Variations in Peer Support Specialist Training and Certification Fees*

Fees for peer support specialist trainings and certifications varied widely and were often difficult to identify via public websites.

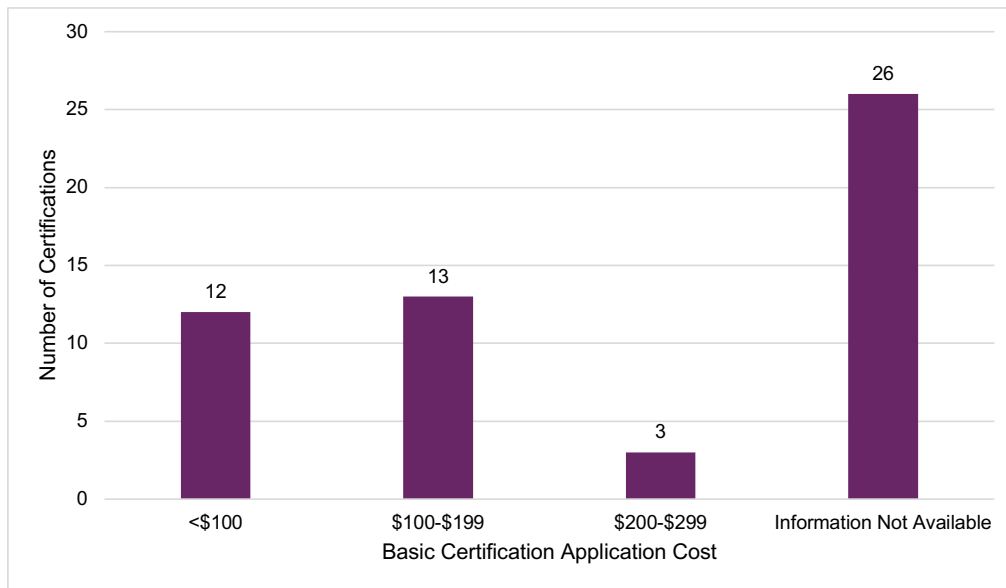
**Peer Support Specialist Training fees:** Twenty state certifications include free peer support specialist trainings, and 20 state certification processes include training costs that vary by training provider. Multiple state certifications with training fees offer scholarships for trainings, though the websites did not clearly indicate the process for obtaining scholarships.

*Figure 10: State Peer Support Specialist Training Costs*



**Peer Support Specialist Certification Basic Application Fees:** Roughly half of the state certifications entities did not clearly identify an initial application cost for peer support specialist certification, but, of those that did, the average cost was \$130. Additional costs that may be incurred depending on the certification entity include exam fees and recertification fees.

Figure 11: State Peer Certification Application Costs





## Limitations



Limitations of this analysis include that data were compiled from reviews of, and direct excerpts from, online resources from state behavioral health agencies, state certification boards and affiliated organizations that oversee the training and certification of behavioral health peer support specialists. Information on these websites were sometimes incomplete or unclear. Data were compiled as of July 1, 2021, and may have subsequently been updated. Additionally, as the peer recovery field is developing rapidly, state entities overseeing peer training and credentials often update state rules and the requirements for training, experience and certifications.

# Conclusions & Recommendations

## Summary of Key Findings

Key findings include:

- States and the District of Columbia have independently developed training and certification processes for peer support specialists in the behavioral health field. This has led to varying requirements, qualifications and costs. This raises significant barriers for peer support specialists who relocate between states and seek recognition of a peer support certification obtained in their past state of residence.
- The majority of states and the District of Columbia (34) have adopted a single, integrated peer professional certification in the state health system for individuals with lived experience in substance use and/or mental health recovery. Other states (12) offer separate certifications based on the peer support specialist's type of behavioral health lived experience: substance use or mental health recovery.
- One state (Hawaii) currently offers only a mental health peer certification and two (New Hampshire and Vermont) currently offer only substance use peer certification.
- Two states do not currently have a peer certification in the state health system (California and South Dakota). California is in the process of developing a certification.
- The states and the District of Columbia utilize a variety of entities to issue certifications for peer support specialists, including state health and human services agencies, state certification boards and third-party organizations. Some states may have more than one certification entity, especially if they offer separate certifications for substance use and mental health peer support specialists.
- State peer support specialist certification requirements regarding lived experience in recovery are varied. The overwhelming majority of state certifications require personal experience with recovery from substance use and/or mental health challenges, which may include parameters such as abstinence, no use of illicit drugs or alcohol for a specified period of time, receipt of a substance use or mental health diagnosis and a history of receiving behavioral health services.
- In a few states, an applicant can obtain certification as a peer support specialist without being in personal recovery if they have lived experience as a family member/caregiver of a person with behavioral health challenges or in recovery.
- Peer Support Specialist training and certification application fees vary widely and were often difficult to identify via public websites.
- In the review of public websites with information on the process for obtaining state peer support specialist certifications, limited information is available regarding required criminal background checks. Ten state certifications clearly indicated required criminal background checks for peer support specialist certifications, and five indicated that applicants were required to self-disclose any previous convictions (Missouri requires both convictions and arrests be reported).

## Recommendations

In reviewing the data, the Peer Recovery Center of Excellence recommends the following strategies to better support those individuals seeking information from state public-facing websites about peer support specialist certification and those completing the peer support specialist certification application process.

- Recommendations that states establish one website for each state certification with clear and easy-to-navigate information on the process for becoming trained and certified as a peer support specialist and with key information such as qualifications, background check requirements and fees clearly displayed on home page.
- Recommendation that certifying entities prominently display the fees involved in the peer support specialist certification application process.
- Recommendation that certifying entities explicitly indicate whether criminal background checks are required and, if so, which convictions result in disqualification.
- Recommendation that, for certification entities that make decisions on a case-by-case basis regarding disqualifying criminal offenses for peer support specialist certification, more information is provided about the process for determining qualification of applicants.
- Recommendation that disqualifying offenses do not contradict common experiences of people with behavioral health challenges (e.g., drug offenses or sex work).

# About the Peer Recovery Center of Excellence

The **Peer Recovery Center of Excellence (CoE)** is housed at the University of Missouri Kansas City (UMKC). Partners include the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, University of Texas-Austin, University of Wisconsin-Madison and our appointed peer-led Steering

Committee. Peer voice is at the core of our work and guides our mission to enhance the field of substance use peer support services.

The Peer Recovery CoE has four focus areas: Integration of Peers into Non-Traditional Settings, Recovery Community Organization Capacity Building, Peer Workforce Development, and Evidence-Based Practice & Practice-Based Evidence Dissemination. In addition to trainings and publications, the Peer Recovery CoE accepts [technical assistance requests](#) from any individual, organization, community, state or region in need of training relating to substance use disorder peer support services.

## Partnership with the University of Texas – Austin

The Peer Recovery CoE partnered with the University of Texas – Austin (UT) to produce this Comparative Analysis. UT leads efforts within the Peer Recovery CoE related to Workforce Development.

## About the Authors

Maureen Nichols began her career in addiction and recovery as part of the team that developed and implemented the state initiative to expand long-term treatment services in the Texas prison system, to include ongoing recovery services when individual returned to their communities. She has worked in training, technical assistance and program evaluation at the state and community level for twenty-five years and has experience as a grant writer and curriculum developer for peer recovery services. She is a member of the Workforce Development Core Team for the Peer Recovery Center of Excellence.

Darcy Kues is committed to building a world where recovery and lived experience are uplifted and centered at every level of decision-making. She has over 5 years of experience in curriculum development, grant writing, and program coordination for peer support services and recovery-oriented behavioral health. In 2018, Darcy launched Kues Consulting, her consulting business where she provides curriculum development and grant writing services catered to peer support and recovery services. She has developed trainings on reentry peer support, youth and young adult peer support, trauma responsiveness, peer support supervision, LGBTQ affirming services, and more.

Tim Saubers got his start as a Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist and has worked in the field of peer support at the local, state, and national levels. He has over 4 years of experience in program management, curriculum and toolkit development, and grant writing for professional peer certification programs. Tim centers the principles of equity and justice in his work while moving not just to disrupt and reform systems, but to create new systems in their entirety. He is a member of the Workforce Development Core Team for the Peer Recovery Center of Excellence.

Stacey Stevens Manser is a research scientist whose work is focused on behavioral health wellness and recovery. She studies effective implementation of mental health peer services and the strengths and needs of the peer recovery workforce. She and her colleagues have been following national trends in peer training and certification since 2009.

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## Ohio

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- <http://www.SCSHARE.com>
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- [https://addictionprofessionalsofsouthcarolina.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Peer support-Specialist-Manual-feb-edit.pdf](https://addictionprofessionalsofsouthcarolina.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Peer-support-Specialist-Manual-feb-edit.pdf)

## **South Dakota**

N/A

## **Tennessee**

- [https://www.tn.gov/behavioral health/cprs](https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/cprs)
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## **Texas**

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## **Virginia**

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## **West Virginia**

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## **Wisconsin**

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## **Wyoming**

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