



Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services

Peer Support in the Mental Health & Substance Use
System



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Objectives

- Overview of the North Carolina Certified Peer Support Program
- Peer Support Evidence- Based and Effective in the Community
- Certification Process
- Workforce Initiatives for Peer Support Specialists

Who is a North Carolina Certified Peer Support Specialist?

A North Carolina Certified Peer Support Specialist, is an individual with lived experience in recovery assisting someone in their community follow their own path to recovery. The North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services (DMHDD SUS) announced the peer support credentialing process and established the NC Certified Peer Support (NCCPSS) Program in 2006.

- Lived experience with mental health and/or substance use and in recovery for at least eighteen months
- High School Diploma, GED, Certificate of Completion, or equivalent
- Be willing to share their own recovery story
- Complete the certification training of their choice
 - 20 additional mental health or substance use training hours
 - 2 letters of reference from individuals about their recovery path
- Understand every person in recovery has their own unique path and recovery is not linear
- Work as a supportive agent for the individual they are serving
- Assist clinical staff and the individual being served in building a stronger relationship
- Reduces the overall cost of behavioral health services
- Lower the risk of hospitalization and inpatient length of stays

What can a NC CPSS do?

A North Carolina Certified Peer Support Specialist assists an individual through a relationship of shared respect and mutual empowerment by:

- Meeting the individual exactly where they are
 - Could be in active addiction and looking at recovery
 - A day into their recovery journey
 - Years into their recovery journey and needing assistance to continue their recovery path
- Helping the individual learn how to navigate their own systems of care
 - Transportation Services
 - Clinical Services
 - Community Supports
 - Housing Supports
 - Job Supports
- Assisting the individual in finding support in their community and building their own community
- Supporting the individual with navigating the Behavioral Health System and advocating for their own rights and needs
- Assisting individuals in crisis

What can a CPSS not do?

According to the Medicaid Definition and SAMHSA best practices, CPSS are not intended to:

- Provide transportation services
- Provide childcare activities
- Provide CPSS services to children, spouses, or other family members
- Develop a Person-Centered Plan
 - They can assist the individual in developing their own goals, but this must be done with a QP or licensed staff

Other job duties not intended for CPSS include:

- Janitorial duties
- Administrative duties, except those related to their job
- Counseling sessions

Peer Support and Evidence Based Practices

Peer Support Specialists have been proven to be an effective evidence-based practice. Several studies have been done on Peer Supports in New York, Tennessee, Arkansas, Georgia, and more.

- Peer Supports have proven to show a decrease in crisis and recovery costs for both mental health and substance use
- Lower hospitalization – Studies have seen a 32% to 56% reduction in hospitalizations for individuals with a PSS
- Lower re-hospitalizations – Studies have seen re-hospitalizations at a rate of 3.4% and longer lengths of time between hospitalizations
- Peer staffed crisis programs can also lead to an approximate \$2,000 decrease in additional services

Peer Support and Evidence Based Practices

In North Carolina, the Department of Health and Human Services Conducted a study showing:

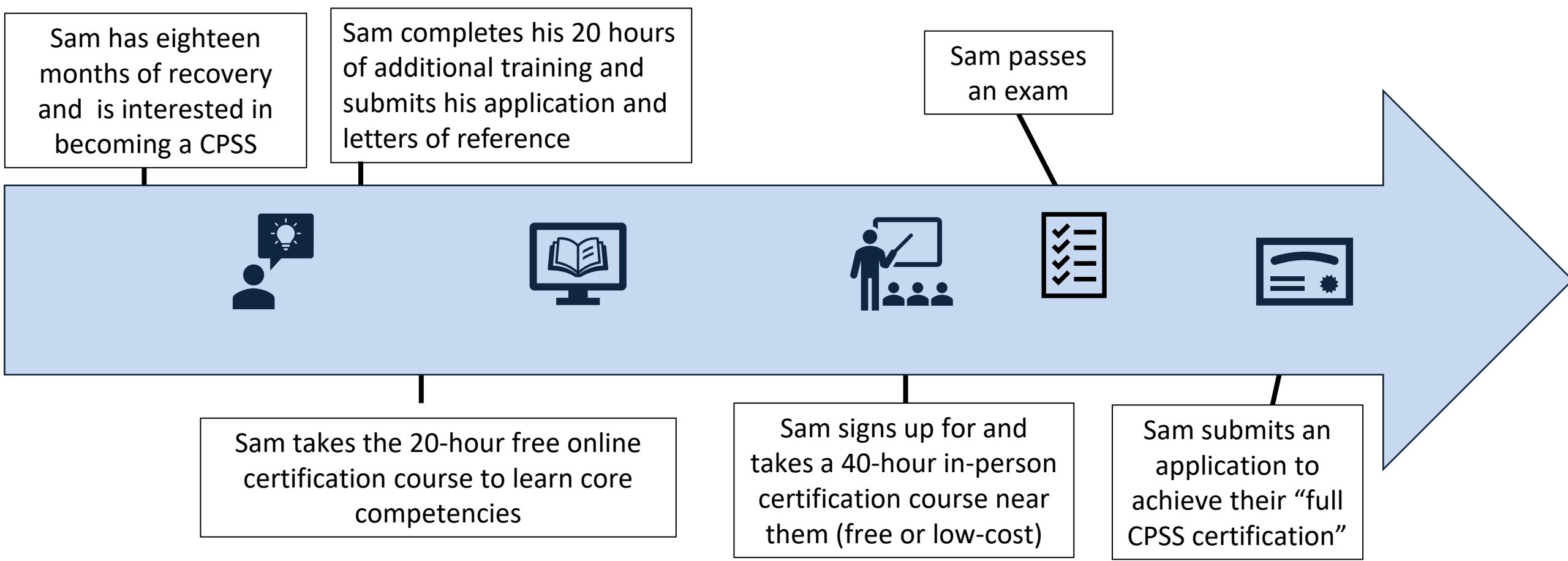
- CPSS in North Carolina are effective at not only reducing psychiatric hospitalizations but also increasing employment.
- On average an individual with a CPSS saved \$775 on their value of expected benefits. Resulting in 65% of individuals where the benefits will exceed the cost.
- Most individuals average 77-hours of individual CPSS services and roughly 5-hours of group CPSS services
- NC CPSS helped individuals gain employment and maintain their positions

Expanding High-Quality Peer Services

- Vision: Building robust recovery-based Peer infrastructure in each community
- Expanding Recovery/Respite Centers & Peer-led services (braiding in MHBG)
- Standardized MH and SU curriculum and IDD and TBI Peer Mentor Curriculum
- Standardized Statewide Specialty Job trainings:
 - Older Adults
 - Adults with Justice Experience
 - ED Hospital Programs
 - Crisis
- Ongoing support for Peers and Providers
 - Workforce Development
 - Job Matching Supports



New Standardized Curriculum Peer Journey



Foundations of Peer Support New Statewide Certification Course

Built by North Carolina CPSS to better prepare new NC CPSS for their roles in the community:

- Online self-paced 20-hour training with multiple learning pathways
- 40-hour in-person course covering 13 modules with role plays and scenarios to ensure learned material is related to community activities
- Free training for anyone who meets the requirements

Foundations of Peer Support, Part I (Online)

- Launched in August 2025
- Nine(9) sections:
 - Introduction to the Worldview of Peer Support & Self-determination, Choice, and Shared Decision Making
 - Values and Principles of Peer Support, Recovery, and Resiliency
 - Self-care and Wellness (Resources and Tools)
 - Role, Purpose, and Scope of Peer Support
 - History of Recovery Movements in Mental Health, Substance Use, and Families
 - Ethics and Boundaries of a Peer Support
 - Communication, Language, and Group Skills (Peer- to- Peer Engagement and Story Telling)
 - Legal Systems and Resources
 - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

NCCPSS Foundations Course Training

START COURSE



North Carolina Certified Peer
Support Specialist Program

This course provides a strong foundation in the principles and practices of peer support, focusing on respect, shared responsibility, and mutual understanding. You'll gain insights into the role of a Peer Support Specialist and explore topics such as communication, problem-solving, and ethical responsibilities.

With interactive activities, real-world applications, and a supportive learning environment, this course will provide the foundation for successful peer support and help you positively impact the lives of those you serve. Let's get started!

Designing with mobile content delivery in mind.



North Carolina Certified Peer
Support Specialist Program

This course provides a strong foundation in the principles and practices of peer support, focusing on respect, shared responsibility, and mutual understanding. You'll gain

- Modeled conversations to help show learned practices in community settings.
- Audio modality available to increase content accessibility.



Course Introduction and Learning Outcomes



Course Introduction

Click Play Below to hear audio of Course Introduction

▶▶ 00:41

[Audio: Course Introduction](#)

This self-paced, online course will provide the foundational knowledge necessary to understand the role of a Peer Support Specialist (PSS), the principles that guide peer support, and the best practices for implementing peer support in various settings.

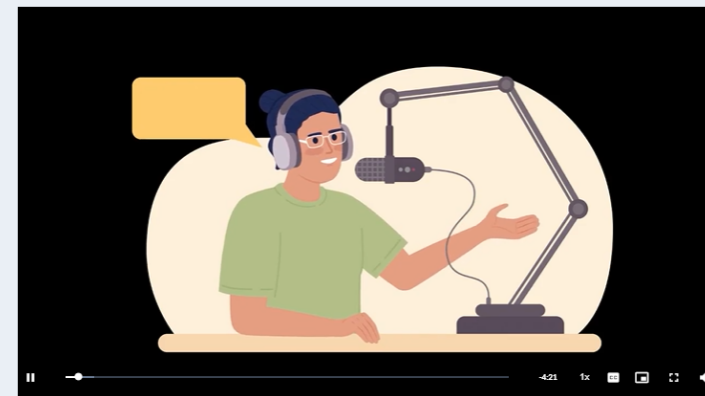
**Learner-driven
(choice) activities
and varied content
delivery methods.**



Peer Support and Trauma Informed Practice

Click Play below to listen to the Podcast. Closed Captioning is available.

"Healing Through Connection" A Podcast



00:51

Audio: Recovery Pathways: Hope

Foundations of Peer Support, Part II (In-Person)

- Launched October 2025
- Thirteen(13) sections:
 - Introduction and review of the online training
 - Computer and Digital Health Literacy
 - Self-care and Wellness (Resources, Tools, Self-help and Mutual Support Groups)
 - Role, Purpose, and Scope of Peer Support
 - Crisis Response
 - Trauma Response Approaches
 - Ethics and Boundaries of a Peer Support
 - Communication, Language, and Group Skills (Peer- to- Peer Engagement and Story Telling)
 - Understanding and Identifying substance use, mental health, and co-occurring conditions
 - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility
 - Community Resources
 - Harm Reduction, including suicide and overdose protection
 - Advocacy & Reducing Prejudice/Discrimination

Technical Assistance for Providers and CPSS

CPSS can help elevate all services for individuals living with mental health or substance use concerns. They assist clinical team in understanding the individual's needs and helping the individual to feel empowered on their recovery journey.

UNC is working to create technical assistance for providers who have employed/are interested in employing CPSS. This TA will include:

- Understanding what a CPSS can and cannot do (case management vs CPSS)
- How to incorporate a CPSS onto their team
- How to write a good CPSS job description
- How to supervise and support CPSS in their role

Technical Assistance is already being provided by UNC but as part of the Workforce Center individuals will be able to sign up for TA services on the UNC website. You can currently access TA by emailing nccpssprogram@unc.edu

Peer Workforce: Initiatives In Progress

Initiatives

- Partnering with Division of Health Benefits to update the Peer Support Medicaid definition
- Developing a LinkedIn resource to assist Peers in resume building, and job placements
- Peer to Peer Mentoring through Connections App is free for CPSS in North Carolina to communicate with each other and provide support



Peer Workforce: Future Initiatives

Future Initiatives

- Creation of IDD and TBI curriculums to launch in 2026
- Creation of specialty job trainings for crisis, justice involved, and more
- Development of a Peer Supervisor Training by Fall 2026
- Development of technical assistance offerings for providers by April 2026



Questions?

Contact Ann Marie Webb:

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