

## Peer Support Services– Seeking Federal Authorities

The use of peer support specialists has been demonstrated to be a cost-effective and evidence-based practice for supporting individuals experiencing mental health conditions and substance use disorders.

Currently, peer support specialists are only authorized to deliver covered services in the Medi-Cal program in a limited fashion. Specifically, peer-to-peer services are covered as a component of recovery services under the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS). With regards to specialty mental health services (SMHS), peers are not currently included in California's Medicaid State Plan as providers for Medi-Cal Rehabilitative Mental Health and Targeted Case Management services. They are similarly not included under the State Plan Drug Medi-Cal program.

Pursuant to SB 803 (Beall, Chapter 150, Statutes of 2020), DHCS will seek federal approval to establish peer support specialist as a provider type, with associated Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System codes, allowed to provide distinct peer support services under the SMHS, DMC-ODS, and State Plan Drug Medi-Cal programs. While some services provided by peers can currently be claimed under the provider type "other qualified provider" within the SMHS program, DHCS is proposing to add peers as a unique provider type with specific reimbursable services, including unique peer services currently unavailable under California's Medicaid program and to allow counties to opt-in to provide this valuable resource. By July 1, 2021, DHCS will determine the peer certification standards in alignment with the provisions of Senate Bill (SB) 803 (Beall, Chapter 150, Statutes of 2020), and in accordance within CMS' guidance, with the new benefit in place by January 1, 2022.

### Definition of Peer Support Specialists

Peer support specialists must be self-identified as having experience with the process of recovery from mental illness or substance use disorder either as a consumer of these services or as the parent or family member of the consumer. They are in the recovery process and can help others experiencing similar behavioral health treatment and recovery life situations. Peer support specialists must possess a high school diploma or equivalent, a current peer support specialist certification, adhere to their code of ethics, and be 18 years or older. With certification and through shared understanding, respect, and mutual empowerment, peer support specialists help beneficiaries engage in the recovery process and reduce the likelihood of relapse.

### Certification/Credentialing Requirements

A county or an entity representing a county administering the peer support specialist certification program in accordance with DHCS statewide standards must adhere to the following guidance:

- Peer support specialist must hold a valid certification by a participating county following the State's peer support specialist certification standards.
- Counties must adhere to all applicable state requirements pertaining to the peer's scope of practice and administer a certification program to the standards set by the State.
- Peer support specialists must provide services under the consultation, facilitation, or direct supervision of a behavioral health professional within their scope of practice.
- Counties shall ensure certified peer support specialists maintain certification with continuing education.
- Counties shall administer utilization controls to ensure program integrity of reimbursed peer support services.

#### Scope of Practice:

- Peer support specialists may provide services in a licensed and/or certified facility and anywhere in the community, including the home.
- Peer support specialists may provide services in person, by telephone or through synchronous video.
- Services provided by peer support specialists are eligible for reimbursement if the county has an approved rate for the level of care.

#### Scope of Services

- Peer support specialist services means culturally competent services that promote recovery, engagement, socialization, self-sufficiency, self-advocacy, development of natural supports, and identification of strengths. Services that peer support specialists provide include but are not limited to relapse prevention services, coaching, supporting linkages to community resources, or education documented in an individualized treatment or recovery plan.
- Services are directed toward the achievement of the specific, individualized, and result-oriented goals defined by the beneficiary and specified in the treatment and/or recovery plan.
- Peer support specialists may provide the following services as recommended as part of the treatment plan:
  - Therapeutic Activity: any structured non-clinical activity whose purpose is to augment treatment and provide additional internal foundations for clients to attain and maintain recovery within their communities. These activities may include advocacy, resource utilization, and/or collaboration with the client and others providing care or support to the client, family members or significant support persons.
  - Engagement: includes peer led activities, such as motivational interviewing, that encourage clients to enter, remain in, and complete behavioral health treatment programs, and maintain recovery.
  - Educational Groups: provides a supportive environment in which clients and their families learn coping mechanisms and problem-solving skills in

order to help the client achieve desired outcomes. These groups should promote skill building for the client in the areas of socialization, recovery, self-sufficiency, self-advocacy, development of natural supports, and maintenance of skills learned in other support services.

#### Levels of Care

In all levels of care, peer support specialists can provide services in combination with other medically necessary mental health or substance use services or as an independent service to maintain beneficiaries' recovery.

DRAFT