

**Workforce and Employment Committee Letter to CalMHSA
Re: Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Areas of Specialization**

March 24, 2023

CHAIRPERSON
Deborah Starkey

EXECUTIVE OFFICER
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California Mental Health Services Authority
Peer Certification Team

To Dr. Amie Miller:

The California Behavioral Health Planning Council thanks CalMHSA for the opportunity to comment on the areas of specialization for the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program. Pursuant to state law, the Council serves as an advisory body to the Legislature and Administration on the policies and priorities that this state should be pursuing in developing its behavioral health system. Our membership includes persons with lived experience as consumers and family members, professionals, providers, and representatives from state departments whose populations touch the behavioral health system. Their perspectives are essential to our view on the challenges and successes of behavioral health services and best practices in California.

- **Advocacy**
- **Evaluation**
- **Inclusion**

The Council, in collaboration with community stakeholders, have leveraged the knowledge of individuals who currently work as Peer Support Specialists, county partners, and their own expertise and experience as professionals, consumers, and champions within the public behavioral health system to inform policies and best practices for Medi-Cal Peer Support Certification in California. The recommendations provided in this letter are in response for the areas of specialization (unhoused, crisis care, and justice-involved populations), particularly in regard to the core competencies. These recommendations are applicable to providing culturally responsive care with respect to all populations including but not limited to children and families, immigrants and refugees, LGBTQI2S, and ethnically-diverse populations.

Areas of Specialization

The Council supports specialization for Peer Specialists and recommends a focus on peer training that is targeted to the role that peers have in their specific program. This includes quality supervision of peers and ongoing support involving reflection and engagement in practice. CBHPC also recommends that CalMHSA be cognizant of and distinguish between the definition of recovery for mental health conditions and the definition of recovery for substance use disorders. Additionally, we ask that CalMHSA add language for the unhoused and justice-involved areas of specialization to state “Forensic (Justice-Involved) Systems and Partnerships” and “Unhoused, Homeless Services, and Systems/Partnerships” to account for the coordination of care that exists between multiple systems and partners when addressing individuals with behavioral health needs.

Core Competencies

The Planning Council recommends the following in regard to the core competencies for the areas of specialization for Peer Support Specialists:

1. Broaden the competency on professional boundaries and ethics to clearly distinguish the unique difference between a peer provider and non-peer provider for the unhoused and justice-involved area of specializations.
2. Add language to the justice-involved core competency #4 to state “Cultural Responsiveness and Humility,” include equity and social equity to this competency, and the recognition that cultural humility training is an ongoing process. The Council also recommends that this core competency be included in the crisis care and unhoused areas of specialization.
3. Modify language for core competency #10 for the unhoused area specialization to state “Systems and Resource Navigation and Education,” and add language regarding education on resource navigation to core competency #3 for the crisis care area of specialization. We recommend adding this language to core competency #10 for the justice-involved area of specialization.
4. Add team and inter-professional practices as a standalone competency to the list of competencies for each specialization.

We hope that the recommendations put forth in this letter are taken into consideration as CalMHSA finalizes the landscape analysis and core competencies for the Medi-Cal Peer Specialist Certification areas of specialization.

The Council appreciates the opportunity to submit comments, and asks to be included in conversations hosted on this topic. For questions, please contact Jenny Bayardo via email at Jenny.Bayardo@cbhpc.dhcs.ca.gov or by phone at (916) 750-3778.

Sincerely,

Jenny Bayardo
Executive Officer

cc: Tatiana Ortiz, Executive Assistant
California Mental Health Services Authority