



Office of
Mental Health

The Role of Peers in Psychiatric Rehabilitation

Presented by the Academy of Peer Services, the OMH Office of Advocacy and Peer Support Services, and the OMH Bureau of Rehabilitation, Treatment, and Care coordination

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Agenda

- What is a Peer?
- Overview of Peers in Rehabilitation Services
- Defining Peer Support Services in PROS
- Defining Peer Support Services in CORE
- Fidelity to Peer roles & Supervision Requirements
- Training & Resources
- Q&A

Opening Activity: What is a Peer?

Pair up with a neighbor and come up with as many **short descriptions of “peer”** as possible.

Overview of Peers in Rehabilitation Services

A Tale of Two Peers

Story 1

No hope for recovery

Story 2

No limits on recovery

Peer Support = Hope

A Brief Historical Perspective

Early documented instance in 19th century France leading to “moral treatment.” (Davidson et al, 2012)

In the 20th century, peer support grew from three distinct branches:

- 12 Step/12 Tradition Recovery Movement
- Consumer/Survivor/Ex-patient (c/s/x) Movement
- Patient/Family Support Groups

Peer-Led Peer Support Groups

Self Help:

You alone can do it, but you cannot do it alone

Mutual Support:

Giving and receiving support in the form of lived experience

*Mutual sharing is the **common thread** that makes peer support a genuine source of help.*

Peer Support is...

- Personal “Lived and Living” Experience
- Non-linear recovery and resilience
- Accepting support
- Being part of a peer community
- Growing individually and collectively
- Giving Back

Differences between Peer Support and Peer Support Services

These are a few...

- Paid position vs. voluntary service
- Formal training vs. learning as you go
- Job tasks vs. giving freely
- Supervised vs. feedback from equals
- Documentation vs. recovery plans like WRAP

Fidelity to Peer Roles

Peer Support Essentials

1. **Mutual Support**: Here, mutuality refers to operating from as equal of a playing field as possible where the connection is the focal point and no one person is the 'fixer'.
2. **Change agent**: Based on wisdom gained from personal experience, people in peer roles advocate for growth and facilitate learning within the mental health system and beyond.
3. **Remaining 'in' but not 'of' the system**: This refers to working in the mental health system while holding values that are specific to the peer role and not taking on responsibilities that dilute purpose.

What Are Peer Support Workers?

Peer Support Workers Are...	Peer Support Workers Are Not...
Qualified peer support service providers	“Junior” clinicians, “gophers,” or errand persons
Supportive of the whole person and their needs	Limited to promoting only what the program offers
Able to share personal experience of local resources	Case managers or care coordinators
Teaching people to do tasks for themselves	Focused on doing tasks for people
Sharing their own relevant lived (living) experiences	Authorized to give “professional” or medical advice
Trauma-responsive and create trust and safety	Required to make people comply with treatment
Role models for positive recovery behaviors	Textbook “case studies” of how all people recover
Able to fill a valuable role in the workforce	“Cheap labor” or a solution to the workforce crisis

What Do Peer Support Workers Do?

The Peer Support Workers Do...	The Peer Support Workers Do Not...
Use human language	Use clinical and diagnostic language
Work with a person's strengths and abilities	Try to "fix" what's wrong with the person
Interact in ways that are mutual and reciprocal	Maintain professional distance
Work with the person on a recovery plan	Manage the person's medications
Support many pathways to recovery	Prescribe treatment or one specific path to recovery
Motivate through hope and inspiration	Motivate through fear of negative consequences
Have cultural humility and curiosity about each person	Treat everyone the same
Have different boundaries from clinical practice	Ignore the boundaries of clinical colleagues
Respectfully hold differing perspectives	Automatically agree or disagree to "fit in"
Help the person to find their own voice	Speak for the person

What Do Peer Support Workers Do?



Adult Peer Services

- Engagement, Bridging and Transition Support
- Self-Advocacy, Self-Efficacy, and Empowerment
- Peer Recovery Supports and Peer Counseling
- Community Connections and Natural Supports
- **Pre-crisis and Crisis Support Services**



Youth Peer Support Services

- **Skill Building**
- **Coaching**
- Engagement, Bridging and Transition Support
- Self-Advocacy, Self-Efficacy, and Empowerment
- Community Connections and Natural Supports



Family Peer Support Services

- Engagement, Bridging and Transition Support
- Self-Advocacy, Self-Efficacy, and Empowerment
- **Parent Skill Development**
- Community Connections and Natural Supports

Services provided must be within each peer type's scope of practice

Proficiencies of Working in Peer Roles

Believes

- ✓ that everyone can progress, heal, and move forward in life

Values

- ✓ choice and self-determination
- ✓ the peer role as a non-clinical position to augment and not duplicate traditional services

Recognizes

- ✓ the importance of “hope” in healing
- ✓ the relationship of the peer role and self-help movement

Ability to

- ✓ describe the peer role to both, people receiving and providing services
- ✓ “stand up” for people receiving services, with respectful and effective communication
- ✓ describe a healing process through use of personal story
- ✓ use personal story to describe strategies toward healing
- ✓ describe elements of recovery-oriented mental health approach/describe things within the mental health system that hinder the recovery process

Defining Peer Support Services in PROS

History of Peers in PROS

- Peers have worked in PROS and been a part of many PROS teams since the start of the model
 - Peers have worked in professional and paraprofessional roles... as “recipient employees” and as non-recipient employees, as Certified Peer Specialists, as uncertified Peer Specialists or Advocates, and in every other role
- PROS was first implemented in 2006, one year before the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) officially recognized Peer Support as a Medicaid-billable service
- Peers working in PROS have always been able to provide the same rehabilitation services as other team members
- Peer Support, as a service, has not been an official part of the model, but it has always been embedded in how PROS programs operate
- In the nearly 2 decades since PROS was developed, Peer Support has been formally embedded throughout the mental health system... in MHOTRS, CCBHC, ACT, and CORE

Adding Peer Support Services to the CRS Component

- Redesign includes an ***all new Peer Support Service*** created specifically for PROS, creating an opportunity to honor the unique value and contributions of peer workers
 - Peer Support Services will **accrue PROS Units toward the base rate**, just like other CRS services
- Peer Support Services will be an optional service that programs may deliver if they have appropriate staffing and supervision in place
 - PROS programs *do not* need permission from OMH to provide Peer Support
- **Peer workers will continue to be able to deliver all the other services they are qualified to provide** as a paraprofessional or professional staff member based on their individual qualifications

Service Definition (New for Redesign in 2025)

Peer Support Services (PSS) in **PROS** includes psychoeducation, person-centered goal planning, demonstrating effective coping skills, and facilitating community connections and crisis support to reduce symptomology and restore functionality. **PSS promote recovery, self-advocacy, and the development of natural supports and community living skills.** Individuals actively participate in decision-making and the delivery of services. **Services are directed toward achievement of the participant's goals, as documented in their IRP.**

Peer Support in PROS

- Peer Support is always provided through the lens of **shared lived experience**. It is a service intended to promote socialization, recovery, wellness, self-advocacy, development of natural supports, and development and growth of community living skills.
- With Redesign, Peer Support Services may also be used to **strengthen and enhance a participant's commitment** to their established goal(s) that support their own recovery through engagement in PROS.
- Programs deliver **team-based**, integrated rehabilitation, treatment, and supported employment and education services
- PROS Teams will include peers in team communication, collaboration, and a weekly PROS Team meeting
- Peer workers will remain an **equal member of the PROS**

PSS Service Components in PROS (Redesign, 2025)

- **Self-Advocacy, Self-Efficacy, & Self-Direction:** Promoting **self-directed recovery** by exploring individual purpose beyond the identified mental illness, building self-advocacy skills, and raising awareness of existing social support and services
- **Empowerment:** Supporting participants to **make positive changes** and achieve their goal(s). Empowerment emphasizes hope and wellness through **the intentional sharing of personal lived experience**
- **Bridging and Transitional Support:** Supporting a participant with long or repeated hospitalizations, detox admissions, or other institutional stays as they **transition back to their home and community**.

Staffing Qualifications for New Peer Support Service in PROS

Peer Support may only be provided by:

- Certified or Provisionally Certified Peer Specialists (NYCPS, NYCPS-P)
- Credentialed or Provisionally Credentialed Youth Peer Advocates (C-YPAs)*

Peer Support Services must be supervised by a “Competent Mental Health Professionals,” which includes:

- Professional Staff, *and*
- Certified Peer Specialists or Credentialed Youth Peer Advocates with at least three years of direct experience providing peer support services

*At this time, Youth Peer Advocates may only deliver PROS Peer Support Services to participants ages 18-26. See the [New York Peer Specialist Certification Board website](#) for more information on cross-credentialing.

Defining Peer Support Services in CORE

Service Definition: CORE Empowerment Services – Peer Support

Empowerment Services – Peer Support (Peer Support) are **non-clinical, peer-delivered** services with **focus** on **rehabilitation, recovery, and resilience**. They are designed to promote skills for coping with and managing behavioral health symptoms while facilitating the utilization of natural supports and community resources.

The **intentional, goal-directed activities** provided by this service emphasize the opportunity for peers to model skills and strategies necessary for recovery, thereby **developing the individual's skills and self-efficacy**. These services are provided through the perspective of a **shared personal experience of recovery**, enhancing the individual's sense of **empowerment and hope**.

Staffing Qualifications

Delivered by Certified Peers under the supervision of a qualified supervisor:

- **Certified Peer Specialist** (OMH) (includes provisionally certified)
- **Certified Recovery Peer Advocate** (OASAS) (includes provisionally certified)

Service Delivery, Modality, and Location, Recommended Unit Ranges

- Services are delivered with respect to **the individual's preferences regarding days, times, modalities, and locations** that are convenient for them and best suited for their desired outcomes.
- Peer Support is offered **1:1** only
- The **scope** and **intensity** of CORE Services should be based on the **level of support needed to support** the individual in achieving their recovery goal and sustaining recovery
- **Recommended Unit Ranges** have been developed to illustrate **the scope of service** and program design.
- Recommended ranges do not apply to an individual in crisis, although the crisis should be clearly documented in a progress note
- Ranges may be exceeded when a short-term increase in intensity supports goal acquisition
 - Outside of crisis situations, the decision to exceed the recommended range should only be made in consultation with the Clinical Supervisor

Peers in PROS & CORE

What services do peer workers provide in PROS & CORE?

- In most circumstances, peer workers can provide the same services that paraprofessional staff can provide
- Certified Peers are able to provide Peer Support Services in addition to other services like Psychosocial Rehabilitation
- Many programs have employed individuals with lived experience in non-peer roles for years
 - Decision to disclose and decision to provide in peer support services is up to each individual
 - Individuals with lived experience may choose to continue working in programs and providing non-peer services like psychosocial rehabilitation, even after PROS Redesign
- Programs will need to work with each individual peer worker to determine their interest and skill in providing non-peer support services

Supervision of Peers

What Contributes to Successful Supervision?

- Understanding the work of each discipline, as staff support individuals across the lifespan
- Being able to support staff using the perspectives, values, and insights of each
- Infusing the values into the supervisory structure: comparison to clinical supervision
- Co-Supervision/Contracting
- Supervisory Boundaries: staff or client?
- Moving toward Peer Supervision Best Practice of Peer Supervisors

Supervision of PSS

- OMH strongly recommends that Certified Peers have access to **in-discipline supervision, mentoring, and support** from Peer Specialists/Advocates where possible
- When not supervised by a credentialed peer staff, it is strongly recommended that the supervisor complete additional recommended training specific to the supervision of Peer Specialists
- Supervisors must have an understanding of Peer values and their scope of work

Example Peer Support Guideline: Support Choice

- Peer supporters do not force or coerce others to participate in peer support services or any other service.
- Peer supporters advocate for choice when they observe coercion in any mental health or substance use service setting
- Supervisors Role: Encourage peer support specialists in promoting individuals' choices including becoming more knowledgeable about trauma-informed approaches that reduce or eliminate force and coercion to create a safer environment for all.
- Provide guidance (in line with the values) to peer support specialists when they are advocating for choice or speaking up when coercion occurs, especially when it is subtle or systemic.
- [National-Practice-Guidelines-for-Peer-Specialists-and-Supervisors-1.pdf](#)
([peersupportworks.org](#))

Trauma Aware and Responsive Supervision

- Applies to all staff
- Utilize the 5 Principles:
 1. Safety
 2. Choice
 3. Collaboration
 4. Trustworthiness
 5. Empowerment

Creating Safety During Supervision

- Set an intention together
- Manage your energy
- Try not to yell, or be retaliatory
- Take a moment, regroup, breathe, however you can center (the meeting after meeting conundrum)
- Document and provide copies when possible
- Follow through
- Model what you are asking for in staff
- Minimize surprises
- Create learning opportunities from errors
- Recognize vulnerability as strength

Supervision That is Collaborative

- Minimize power differentials
- Ongoing assessment of whether you are both moving toward the same goals
- Support professional development and training
- Recognize strengths and highlight them
- Mutual listening
- Treat as expert in what they know

Training Recommendations for Non-Peer Supervisors of CPS

- For non-peer supervisors of Certified Peer Specialists (CPS) and provisionally Certified Peer Specialists, OMH recommends the following trainings through the Academy of Peer Services (APS)
 - Peer Credentialing & Training 101 for OMH Providers
 - What Is Peer Support – for New Supervisors
 - Supervision of Peer Staff
 - An Introduction to Supervising Peer Specialists – Parts 1 & 2

Training Support & Resources

Training Recommendations for Non-Peer Supervisors of C-YPAs

- For non-peer supervisors of Credentialed Youth Peer Advocates (YPA-C) and provisionally Credentialed Youth Peer Advocates, OMH recommends the following trainings through the Community Technical Assistance Center (CTAC)
 - Youth Peer Advocate Orientation Training for Supervisors
 - Supervision Best Practices Series
 - Adopting the Principles of Trauma-Informed and Resiliency-Based Care in the Supervision in the Behavioral Health Workforce

PeerTAC

- The Peer Support Technical Assistance Center (PeerTAC) delivers training, technical assistance and consultation to mental health organizations serving people across the lifespan including children, youth, families, and adults/older adults living with mental health conditions. Our focus is on the expansion of Peer Support Services within mental health organizations.
 - PROS programs and CORE providers are encouraged to check out the [PeerTAC website](#) to access resources and archived trainings



New York Peer Advancement Network (NY-PAN)

- The New York Peer Advancement Network (NY-PAN) is a partnership between the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) and the National Association of Peer Supporters (N.A.P.S.). This mission of this program is to grow the peer support profession by promoting the inclusion of peer specialists throughout healthcare and other community systems throughout the state of New York.
 - The website includes an online job board and a repository of resources specific to New York
 - For more information: peersupportworks.org/NY

Q&A



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