Core Competencies for Certified Peer Recovery Specialists

Background

A peer is defined as a person in recovery from mental illness and/or substance use disorder or, in the case of family peer support, a family member of a person living with a behavioral health condition.

Peer Recovery Specialists are individuals that use their lived experience to assist others in seeking knowledge and experience of recovery.

What are Core Competencies?

• The integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that contribute to the quality of a person’s work performance.
  – **Knowledge** is information and understanding learned through experience or training.
  – **Skill** is the result of applying knowledge or ability to a set of circumstances and **attitude** is the manner in which a behavior is performed.
  – **Attitudes** often align with the principles or values of a practice.
• Foundational and essential
• Required by all positions that provide peer support in behavioral health services.
• Common across a range of roles and environments.
  – Peer roles in some settings or program models may require advanced or specialized competencies in addition to basic core competencies.
• Guide delivery and promote best practices in peer support.
• Inform peer training programs
• Provide standards for certification
• Inform self-evaluation and
• Inform job descriptions and performance evaluations
• Principles and Values
All competencies should be performed in a manner that aligns with the principles of recovery-oriented, person-centered, non-coercive, trauma-informed and relationship-focused.

- **Recovery-oriented:**
  - Peer support provides a hopeful framework for the person to envision a meaningful and purposeful life, recognizing that there are multiple pathways to recovery.

- **Person-centered:**
  - Peer support is directed by the person participating in peer support service. Peer support is personalized to meet the specific hopes, needs and goals of an individual.

- **Non-coercive:**
  - Peer support never involves force and participation in peer support is always voluntary.

- **Relationship-focused:**
  - Peer support centers on the affiliation between peers. Characteristics of the relationship are: respectful, empathetic, and mutual.

- **Trauma-informed care:**
  - Peer support utilizes a strengths-based framework that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety and creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.
Virginia
Core Competencies

• **Current Body of MH/SUD Knowledge**
  – Knowledge of current body of knowledge of recovery from substance use disorder and/or mental health conditions (wellness, trauma)
    • Define mental illness and substance use disorder recovery
    • Knowledge of key language and terms
    • Explain individual advocacy
    • Knowledge of current research practices and trends in MH and SUD

• **Recovery Process - Promoting Services, Supports, and Strategies**
  – Knowledge of recovery plans, strengths-based recovery planning, and recovery goal setting (WRAP, Relapse Plan)
  – Knowledge of the recovery process and recovery-promoting services, supports and strategies
    • Explain major recovery models (12 steps, Intentional Peer Support, SMART Recovery, Women for Sobriety, Celebrate Recovery)
    • Knowledge of multiple pathways to recovery
    • Explain evidence-based practices, practice-based evidence, and promising practices
    • Explain recovery plans and recovery goal setting (such as, but not limited to, WRAP)
    • Assist individual with goal setting
    • Promote self-determination and choice

• **Crisis Intervention**
  – Knowledge of basics of crisis intervention
    • Explain de-escalation techniques
    • Explain basic suicide prevention concepts and techniques
    • Knowledge of peer role and activities for peer support during crisis
    • Identify and utilize legal and ethical policies and practices
    • Recognize signs and symptoms of distress
    • Recognize various crisis and emergency situations
• **Values for Role of Peer Recovery Specialist**
  – Knowledge of the role of peer recovery specialist values such as strengths-based, mutuality, unconditional high regard, shared experience, etc.
    • Explain the concept of a strength-based approach to recovery
    • Ability to share experience using lived experience
    • Establish and maintain a peer relationship rather than a hierarchical relationship
    • Establish a respectful, trustful relationship
    • Practice non-judgmental language
    • Identify strengths and resilience in others
    • Knowledge of peer recovery philosophy and practices

• **Basic Principles Related to Health and Wellness**
  – Knowledge of basic principles related to health and wellness
    • Define the concepts of health and wellness
    • Understand the concepts of recovery and resilience
    • Recognize the importance of holistic health
    • Understand the impact of mental illness and substance use disorders on the experience of health and wellness

• **Stage Appropriate Pathways in Recovery Support**
  – Knowledge of stage-appropriate pathways that support recovery
    • Knowledge of medication assisted recovery
    • State the stages of recovery
    • State the stages of change
    • Knowledge and use of motivational enhancement techniques

• **Ethics & Boundaries**
    • Adhere to peer code of ethics
    • Recognize and adhere to the rules of confidentiality
    • Explain how and why individuals should establish an Advanced Directive
    • Knowledge of and adherence to professional and personal boundaries
    • Understand self-care principles
• Establish working relationships with other professionals
• Use organizational/departmental chain of command to address ethical issues

• **Cultural Sensitivity and Practice**
  – Knowledge of cultural sensitivity and practice
    • Define culture, elements of culture, and its impact
    • Ability to communicate utilizing first person and person-centered language
    • Recognize different types of cultures
    • Explain key recovery language and culture concepts
    • Knowledge of the influence of cultural heritage on individuals and groups
    • Knowledge of and sensitivity to how cultural identity can influence the dynamics in communication.
    • Knowledge of and sensitivity to how cultural identity shapes the helping process.

• **Trauma and Impact on Recovery**
  – Knowledge of trauma and its impact on recovery from mental health and substance use disorders
    • Define trauma and its impact on recovery process
    • Explain trauma informed care and recovery support
    • Understand the symptoms of PTSD
    • Skill in identifying physical and sexual abuse symptoms
    • Knowledge and awareness of risk indicators when working with others
    • Identify and respond to personal stressors and triggers

• **Community Resources**
  – Identify community resources, including crisis services, community supports and professional services
    • Ability to access and refer to community resources
    • Ability to coach others to navigate community resources
    • Knowledge of and ability to collaborate with community organizations and other partners
    • Demonstrate effective networking skills
• **Delivering Peer Services within Agencies and Organizations**
  – Knowledge of how to deliver peer support on an individual level and in an agency, organizational, systems and federal setting
    • Define systems level advocacy
    • Knowledge of Virginia’s service delivery systems
    • Provide peer support within an organizational culture and requirements
    • Understand documentation requirements of activities to meet organizational requirements
    • Knowledge of when to seek out and use supervision
    • Advocate for peers and recovery support services within the organizational culture
    • Differentiate between the levels of advocacy