



**NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
BUREAU OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

<b>Issue Date</b>	March 26, 2024
<b>Subject</b>	Peer Support Specialist Certificate Program Requirements
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In an effort to improve access, availability and opportunities for peer training, the department has launched a new Peer Support Specialist certificate program.

**BACKGROUND:**

Due to challenges securing trainers for components of NH’s peer training/certification model, the department was unable to offer sufficient training needed to certify mental health peers. Therefore, through an initiative led by Dartmouth Health in partnership with multi-sector stakeholders, including the CMHCs (specifically staff from NHS, LRMHC, MHCGM, and WCBH) and Peer Support Agencies, the Peer Support Specialist certification curriculum and requirements have been redesigned.

Starting in January, 2024 a new Peer Support Specialist certificate program was offered through the community college network via a [cooperative project agreement](#) with the department. [The first cohort](#) was offered to peers already working in the field in need of certification. 24 peers enrolled in the first cohort that will conclude in March 2024. An additional six (6) cohorts will be offered through March 2025 **at no cost to peers**.

**CERTIFICATE PROGRAM OVERVIEW:**

The new Peer Support Specialist certificate program is designed to prepare students to enter a peer support role in the mental health workforce. The curriculum aligns with the National Model Standards for Peer Support Certification and Core Competencies for Peer Workers in Behavioral Health Services as released by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The certificate program is delivered virtually via asynchronous and live-online teaching. Students complete weekly online learning modules and participate in weekly interactive virtual meetings for co-reflection, guided practice, role playing, and discussion of complex topics between current students and experienced peers. Students must attend all nine (9) weekly virtual meetings to receive full certification.

The 40–46-hour certificate program is comprised of nine (9) course modules which are taught over a ten (10) week period. The modules include:

1. Roles and Settings;
2. Behavioral Health Recovery;
3. Person-Centered Support;

4. Recovery Planning;
5. Sharing Lived Experience;
6. Crisis and Crisis Support;
7. Suicide Prevention;
8. Ethics and Boundaries; and
9. Co-occurring Substance Misuse.

Each certificate program cohort is limited to a maximum of 24 students with priority given to NH residents. The certificate program is currently being offered on a pilot basis through the NH Community College system with the expectation of expanding in future years.

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PEERS WORKING IN MY CENTER:**

For **peers who are already certified**, they will not be required to complete additional certification requirements. Ongoing professional development is required according to employer contract requirements and [He-M 402](#) and [He-M 426](#). Current CPSSs may attend the NH Peer Community of Practice once it is available. This is encouraged however it is not required to maintain state certification.

For **peers seeking NH Peer Support Specialist Certification** – they must:

1. Enroll and successfully complete the Peer Support Specialist certificate program offered through the NH Community College system within 1 year of employment. This curriculum replaces the previous training requirements and certification exam for a Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS). Students must complete all 9 modules and attend all weekly virtual course meetings, as referenced above, to obtain full certification. The community college will notify the Department of all peers who pass the certification course at the end of each cohort.
2. Peers will receive their official Peer Support Specialist Certification status from the Department upon successful completion of the course.
3. Ongoing professional development is required according to employer contract requirements and [He-M 402](#) and [He-M 426](#).

**UPCOMING:**

The Department is implementing a NH Peer Community of Practice (COP) through a contracted vendor. The COP will be open to all peer specialists and peer supervisors statewide and occur on a monthly basis. Meeting topics and presentations will focus on peer best practices and will be different each month to promote learning, collaboration and professional development. The Department anticipates the COP to launch in May 2024!

**REMINDER:**

**Intentional Peer Support (IPS) co-reflection**

IPS is not a required training component of the new Peer Support Specialist certificate program. However, some peers may wish to maintain their IPS certification. In order to maintain IPS certification, the national requirement of a minimum of 1.5 hours per quarter of co-reflection will need to be met. Co-reflection is available through [IPS Central Co-reflection](#).

Please contact the Bureau of Mental Health Services, Office of Consumer and Family Affairs with questions: [OCFA@dhhs.nh.gov](mailto:OCFA@dhhs.nh.gov)