

A peer is a person who draws on lived experience with mental illness and/or substance use disorder and recovery, bolstered by specialized training, to deliver valuable support services in a mental health and/or substance use setting. Studies demonstrate that use of peer support specialists in a comprehensive mental health or substance disorder treatment program helps reduce client hospitalizations, improve client functioning, increase client satisfaction, alleviate depression and other symptoms, and diversify the mental health workforce. That's why 48 other states have adopted peer certification programs. Peer support can divert people from emergency services and ensure patients receive a continuum of care, saving substantial costs of treatment and improving health outcomes. Research shows that peers contribute to the ability of people with mental illness and substance abuse to obtain education and employment, contributing to communities economy rather than depending on social safety nets alone. Federal agencies such as SAMSHA, and the Institute of Medicine have identified services offered through a certified peer specialists as being valuable and effective. While increasing consumer wellness, the use of peer specialists decreases costs. Data shows a clear return on investment when peers are part of the Human Services system.

Peer support Recovery promotes recovery substance use disorders by helping individuals better engage in services, manage physical and mental health conditions, build support systems, and ultimately, live self-directed lives in their communities. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recognizes peer support as an effective, evidence-based practice. And, as of January 2019, over 43 states allowed Medicaid – the state program for individuals with disabilities, are low income, and for pregnant women and their children – to be billed for peer support services.

- According to [SAMHSA](#), the proven benefits of peer support include reduced hospital admission rates, increased social support and social functioning, and decreased substance use and depression.
- A 2018 [analysis](#) showed that providers with peer services had 2.9 fewer hospitalizations per year and saved an average of \$2,138 per Medicaid-enrolled month in Medicaid expenditures.
- The Veterans' Administration has recognized the value of peer support specialists to serve Veterans with mental health and substance use conditions. For example, a [2012 White House Executive Order](#) to improve mental health access for Veterans included a directive to hire additional peer support specialists.
- A peer support program in Pierce County, Washington reduced involuntary hospitalizations by 32 percent leading to a savings of \$1,990,000 in one year.
- A Federally Qualified Health Center in Denver found that using peers saved \$2.28 for every dollar spent.
- A New York-based peer support program for individuals transitioning from inpatient services back to the community resulted in a 47.1 percent decrease in total behavioral health costs.

*Recovery Support Services” means a set of culturally competent, nonclinical, evidence-based activities provided consistent with the Code of Ethics for Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialists and coordinated through a written individualized recovery plan of care that documents a substance use disorder and reflects the need and preferences of the individual in achieving the specific, individualized, measurable goals specified in the plan. “Recovery support services” are provided in a mutual relationship by an individual with **direct lived experience with a substance use disorder or by a loved one of an***

individual with a substance use disorder, and include a range of social and other services that facilitate recovery from substance use disorder, support health and wellness, and link individuals with service providers and other supports shown to improve quality of life for persons, and their families, in and seeking recovery from substance use. “Recovery support services” do not include the provision of psychotherapy as defined in section 4082 of this title.”