

## **Definitions of “Consumer-Operated”, “Peer-run”, and “Peer Support Specialist” (or variations thereof)**

### **I. Definitions of “Consumer-operated”**

Most of the definitions of “consumer-operated” appear in the context of “consumer-operated service provider”. As such, only a few examples are included below.

#### A. Federal References

##### 1. SAMHSA

###### a. SAMSHA, [Evidence-Based Practices: Knowledge Informed Kit](#)

“Consumer-operated service” is defined as “a peer-run program or service that is administratively controlled and operated by the mental health consumers and emphasizes self- help as its operational approach”.

#### B. State References

##### 1. Illinois

###### [COSP Presentation, IL Dept. of Human Services & IL MH Collaborative for Access and Choice](#)

Consumer-Operated Service Providers are organizations that:

- Are peer-run self-help organizations or groups
- Are administratively and financially controlled by persons participating in mental health services (consumers)
- Are not simply mental health services delivered by consumers, but are independent, peer-run programs.
- Generally offer mutual support, community-building and advocacy.

##### 2. Missouri:

###### [MO Dept. of Mental Health](#)

“Consumer-operated services programs (COSP) are peer-run service programs that are administratively controlled and operated by mental health consumers and emphasize self-help as their operational approach.”

### **II. Definitions of “Peer-run”**

Please note that while both “peer-run” and “peer-operated” were researched, only the former phrase turned up significant results, some of which are from agency websites and not statute.

#### A. Academic Research

[Laysha Ostrow & Philip J. Leaf, Improving Capacity to Monitor and Support Sustainability of Mental Health Peer-Run Organizations, 65 Am. Psych. Ass'n.: Psychiatric Services. 239, 239 \(2014\):](#)

Peer-run organizations are defined as “programs, businesses, or services controlled and operated by people who have received mental health services,” with the mission of using support, education, and advocacy to promote wellness, empowerment, and recovery for individuals with mental disorders

## B. State References

### 1. Arizona:

[Arizona Health Care Containment Systems, Off. Individual & Family Affairs, Peer-Run Organizations](#)

Peer-run organizations are service providers owned, operated and administrated by persons with lived experiences of mental health and/or substance use disorders. These organizations are based in the community and provide support services.

### 2. Ohio:

[Ohio Admin. Code 5122-29-16:](#)

(A) “Peer run organization” means any service or activity that is planned, developed, administered, delivered, and evaluated by persons, a majority of whom have a direct lived experience of a mental health or substance use disorder.

\* \* \*

(C) Peer run organizations include but are not limited to consumer operated services, recovery community organizations, peer drop-in centers, and club houses.

(D) Peer run organizations shall:

- (A) Have a primary goal of enhancing the quantity and quality of support available to individuals seeking recovery from mental health or substance use disorders;
- (B) Be grounded in three core principles: a recovery vision, authenticity of voice, and accountability to the recovery community;
- (C) Promote the strategies of public awareness and education, personal empowerment, and peer based- and other recovery support services and activities which may include: peer recovery support, telephone recovery support services, all-recovery meetings, structured volunteer/work activities, groups, social activities, or wellness activities;
- (D) Be responsive to the needs of individuals participating in services and be based on local needs as identified by the individuals participating in the service.

3. Oregon:

OR 430.275:

“Peer-run organization” means an organization:

- (A) In which a majority of the individuals who oversee the organization's operation and who are in positions of control have received mental health services;
- (B) That is fully independent, separate and autonomous from other mental health agencies; and
- (C) That has the authority and responsibility for all oversight and decision-making on governance, financial, personnel, policy and program issues in the organization.

### III. Definitions of “Peer Support Specialist”

Below are examples of how the term “peer support specialist” (and variations thereof) are defined by the federal government and various states. Please note, not all examples are taken from statute/regulation; many are taken from agency websites, etc.

In addition, please note the highlighted language where a “peer support specialist” is defined to include both the individual with personal-lived experience or the family member of a person with personal-lived experience. In some instances (see e.g. Minnesota), “family peer support specialists” are given their own designation.

#### A. Federal References

##### 1. SAMHSA

- a. SAMHSA SOAR TA Center, [Webinar: Peer Support Specialists, A Critical Component for SOAR Programs](#)

Peer Specialist: an individual with lived recovery experience who has been trained and certified to help their peers gain hope and move forward in their own recover. (6:32)

- b. [Executive Order Safe Policing for Safe Communities: Addressing Mental Health, Homelessness, and Addiction Report](#)

Certified Peer Support Specialists (CPS): individuals with lived experience of mental illness and/or SUD who have undergone formal training and certification, can gain employment to serve others.

- c. [Emily Heller, Using Peers to Improve Mental Health Treatment, 24 NCSL: Legisbrief](#) (Mar. 2016)

SAMHSA defines a peer support specialist as “a person who uses his or her lived experience of recovery from mental illness and/or addiction, plus skills learned in formal training, to deliver services in behavioral health settings to promote mind-body recovery and resiliency.”

2. U.S. Government Accountability Office

[U.S. Gov’t Accountability Off., Report to Congressional Committees, Mental Health: Leading Practices for State Programs to Certify Peer Support Specialists](#) (Nov. 2018):

- i. GAO Highlights (p. 2 of 38): peer support specialists—individuals who use their own experience recovering from mental illness to support others.
- ii. Note 3, p. 2: “Definitions of and terms for peer support specialists can vary, and peer support specialists may differ in the types of services provided and the populations served.

B. State References

1. California:

[California Welfare and Institutions Code Div. 9, Part 3, Ch. 7](#)

[§ 14045.12\(g\)](#): “Peer support specialist” means an individual who is 18 years of age or older, who has self-identified as having lived experience with the process of recovery from mental illness, substance use disorder, or both, either as a consumer of these services or as the parent or family member of the consumer, and who has been granted certification under a county peer support specialist certification program.

2. Colorado:

[HB 21-1021 Enacted](#):

- i. “Peer support professional” means a peer support specialist, recovery coach, peer and family recovery support specialist, peer mentor, family advocate, or family systems navigator who meets the qualifications described in subsection (III)(a)(iii) of this section.
- ii. (III)(a)(iii): On or before July 1, 2022, the state department shall develop a procedure for recovery support services organizations to be approved by the executive director of the state department for reimbursement pursuant to this section. The procedures must ensure that the recovery support services organization:

\* \* \*

Employs or contracts with peer support professionals who must:

- A. Self-identify as having experienced the process of recovery from a mental health disorder, substance use disorder, trauma, or one or all of such conditions, either as a consumer of recovery services or as the parent or a family member of the consumer;

- B. Have successfully completed formal training covering all content areas outlined in the core competencies for peer support professionals established by either the state department or the substance abuse and mental health services administration of the united states department of health and human services; and
- C. Provide nonclinical support services that align with recommendations from the substance abuse and mental health services administration of the united states department of health and human services, including engaging individuals in peer-to-peer relationships that support healing, personal growth, life skills development, self-care, and crisis-strategy development to help achieve recovery, wellness, and life goal

3. Connecticut:

[Public Act No. 21-35](#):

- i. “Peer support services” means all nonmedical mental health services and substance use services provided by peer support specialists; and
- ii. “Peer support specialist” means an individual providing peer support services to another individual in the state.

4. Florida:

[Fl. Statutes 397.417](#): Peer specialists—

An individual may seek certification as a peer specialist if he or she has been in recovery from a substance use disorder or mental illness for at least 2 years, or if he or she has at least 2 years of experience as a family member or caregiver of a person with a substance use disorder or mental illness.

5. Minnesota:

a. [2021 MN Statutes 256B.0616](#):

- i. Subd. 4. Peer support specialist program providers: The commissioner shall develop a process to certify family peer support specialist programs, in accordance with the federal guidelines, in order for the program to bill for reimbursable services. Family peer support programs must operate within an existing mental health community provider or center.
- ii. Subd. 5. Certified family peer specialist training and certification: The commissioner shall develop a training and certification process for certified family peer specialists. The candidates must have raised or be currently raising a child with a mental illness, have had experience navigating the children's mental health system, and must demonstrate leadership and advocacy skills and a strong dedication to family-driven and family-focused services.

b. [MN DHS](#):

Certified peer specialists are individuals who have a lived experience of mental illness and are trained to be direct service mental health staff.

6. North Carolina:

[HB732](#) Peer Support Specialist Certification Act —**not enacted; would amend § 90-732 to include:**

Certified peer support specialist – An individual who has a personal recovery experience and has been certified by the Board to provide peer support services by completing the application process, training, examination, and any other requirement established by the Board.

7. Oklahoma:

[OK DMHSAS](#):

The Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist (PRSS) fulfills a unique role in the support and recovery from mental illness and substance abuse disorders. A PRSS is a person in recovery from a mental illness and/or substance abuse disorder, who has been trained to work with others on his/her individual road to recovery.

8. Oregon:

[OR Enrolled House Bill 2304 \(HB 2304-B\)](#):

Peer support specialist: any of the following individuals who meet qualification criteria adopted by the authority under ORS 414.665 and who provide supportive services to a current or former consumer of mental health or addiction treatment:

- a. An individual who is a current or former consumer of mental health treatment; or
- b. An individual who is in recovery, as defined by Oregon Health Authority by rule, from an addiction disorder.

9. Rhode Island:

[Exec. Off. Health & Human Services: Peer Recovery Services](#):

Peer Recovery Specialists (or Recovery Coaches) are current or former consumers of behavioral health services, or recovery supports as well as family and loved ones who have shared in the experiences of someone directly affected. They are trained and certified to offer support and assistance to those interested in recovery and community-integration process.