

S.195

An act relating to the certification of mental health peer support specialists.

The House proposes to the Senate to amend the bill by striking all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds:

(1) The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recognizes that the experiences of peer support specialists, as part of an evidence-based model of care, can be an important component in a state's delivery of effective mental health treatment. CMS encourages states to offer comprehensive programs.

(2) Research studies have demonstrated that peer supports improve an individual's functioning, increase an individual's satisfaction, alleviate symptoms, reduce hospitalizations and hospital days, increase an individual's satisfaction with treatment, and enhance an individual's self-advocacy.

(3) Certification can encourage an increase in the number, diversity, and availability of peer support specialists.

(4) The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, more than 46 states, and the District of Columbia have created statewide mental health peer certification programs.

(5) Mental health peers in Vermont are currently providing individualized support, coaching facilitation, and education to individuals with mental health needs, in a variety of settings, yet no statewide scope of practice, standardized curriculum, training standards, supervision standards, or certification protocols are available.

Sec. 2. PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST CERTIFICATION

(a) The Department of Mental Health shall initiate the next steps toward the creation of a statewide peer support specialist certification program through execution of the grant for advancing peer certification in Vermont included in the allocation of monies appropriated to the Department in 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 83, Sec. 72a(c)(4).

(b) On or before December 15, 2022, the Department shall submit a written report to the House Committee on Health Care and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare that:

(1) incorporates recommendations of the grantee selected pursuant to subsection (a) of this section; and

(2) provides policy guidance and recommendations for any legislation necessary to create the program.

(c) The report required pursuant to subsection (b) of this section shall include input from:

(1) the Office of Professional Regulation; and

(2) the Department of Vermont Health Access regarding the options and steps required to seek Medicaid funding for certified peer support specialists.

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2022.

and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act relating to examining mental health peer support certification”