



WICHITA STATE
UNIVERSITY

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
INSTITUTE

Center for Behavioral Health Initiatives



Do You Want to Be a Peer Specialist?

The job of a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) in Kansas is to help instill the hope of recovery from behavioral health challenges or dual diagnosis. CPSs use their experience to help others engage in recovery. A person wanting to become a CPS must complete a training program and pass written exams.

Peer specialists have the opportunity to be aware of and openly share what they have learned in the recovery process.

Some questions you may want to ask yourself . . .

- How have you handled disclosing to other people that you have faced behavioral health challenges?
- What has helped you move from where you were to where you are now? What did you do? What did others do?
- What have you learned about yourself in your recovery?
- What strengths have you have developed?
- What do you do on a regular basis to help yourself feel well?
- What are some of the beliefs and values you have or have developed that help strengthen and support your recovery?
- How has facing individual challenges impacted your life?
- How might you handle sitting in another's discomfort?
- What part does a sense of hope or resiliency play in your life and your recovery? What are some words you would use to describe this?
- How have you dealt with difficult setbacks?
- What external supports do you use, and how do they help you?

The Certified Peer Specialist training draws strongly on a person's lived experience and recovery journey. This training can be intense and emotional, and peers are encouraged to carefully examine if they are prepared for this next step and have the necessary resources necessary to complete the training and examination process.

Please take the time to gauge your agreement with the following statements as a way to decide if Certified Peer Specialist training is right for you at this point in your life.

- I am willing to disclose to my colleagues and peers that I have struggled with behavioral health challenges. I understand that in doing so, I help educate others about the reality of recovery.
- I have the time needed to participate in a challenging course of study.
- I have taken and completed formal schooling, adult education classes, have a GED or high school diploma.
- I am able to travel away from my home for multi-day trainings.
- I feel ready to be involved in a class that requires active participation.
- I am able to participate in a full 8-hour training day.
- I am able to discuss my own recovery story and experience with others
- I can listen to others' stories and feel empathy for their experience, even when it parallels painful experiences from my past.
- I can arrange for my own transportation needs.

Agreement with these statements does not necessarily predict program completion. However, these statements have been chosen because they reflect the factors that have contributed to the success or difficulties of past CPS course participants.

For more information regarding peer support and its role in behavioral health recovery, please visit http://www.psychosocial.com/IJPR_10/Peer_Support_What_Makes_It_Unique_Mead.html to read Shery Mead's "Peer Support: What makes it unique." This may aid in building a foundation off of which to deepen your understanding of peer support.

Adapted from the South Carolina Department of Mental Health Peer Support Readiness Self-Assessment and Missouri Peer Specialist Department of Mental Health Peer Specialist Readiness Assessment.