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## HHS Publishes National Model Standards for Substance Use, Mental Health, and Family Peer Worker Certifications

*Peer Workforce Integration is a Primary Goal of President Biden's National Mental Health Strategy*

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), today published National Model Standards for Peer Support Certification - PDF <<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/national-model-standards-for-peer-support-certification.pdf>> for substance use, mental health, and family peer workers. The national model standards were created to accelerate universal

adoption, recognition, and integration of the peer workforce across all elements of the healthcare system. A peer worker is someone who, through their own lived experience of addressing a substance use or mental health issue, works to help others.

“Our peer workforce plays a critical role in the treatment and recovery journey for individuals with behavioral health issues,” said HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra. “These new national standards will help advance President Biden’s strategy to tackle the nation’s behavioral health crisis. We can improve health outcomes for people with behavioral health issues by better integrating the peer workforce into our health care system. Getting help from a person who has been successful in the recovery process can be lifechanging.”

Building a national certification program for peer specialists was a primary goal outlined in President Biden’s 2022 State of the Union Address where he announced the national strategy as part of the Unity Agenda <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/01/fact-sheet-president-biden-to-announce-strategy-to-address-our-national-mental-health-crisis-as-part-of-unity-agenda-in-his-first-state-of-the-union/> to address the nation’s mental health crisis.

SAMHSA collaborated with federal, state, tribal, territorial, and local partners including peer specialists, and also requested and incorporated public comments, to develop the national model standards. Back to top

“Peer workers play a crucial role in overdose prevention, crisis intervention, and in the promotion of recovery, resiliency and well-being across the nation,” said Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D., HHS Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use and the leader of SAMHSA. “These standards will help accelerate their participation in the workforce as partners in the delivery of mental health and substance use services.”

SAMHSA’s national model standards are not intended as a substitute for any state certifications, but instead have been developed as guidance for states, territories, tribes, and others, to promote quality and encourage alignment and reciprocity across often disparate state peer support certifications.

Since the 2015 release of SAMHSA’s Core Competencies for Peer Workers in Behavioral Health Services - PDF [https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs\\_campaigns/brss\\_tac/core-competencies\\_508\\_12\\_13\\_18.pdf](https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/brss_tac/core-competencies_508_12_13_18.pdf), the peer workforce has flourished, resulting in the

implementation of state-endorsed or state-run peer certification programs across 49 out of 50 states.

On May 22, HHS, through SAMHSA, awarded \$5.54 million to recovery community organizations under the Building Communities of Recovery program to mobilize and connect a broad base of community-based resources to increase the prevalence and quality of long-term recovery support for people with substance use disorders (SUD) and co-occurring substance use and mental health issues. These grants support the development, enhancement, expansion, and delivery of recovery support services as well as the promotion of and education about recovery. It is expected that these grant activities will be administered and implemented by individuals with lived experience who are in recovery from SUD and co-occurring SUD and mental health issues and reflect the needs and population of the community being served.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org. To learn how to get support for mental health, drug, and alcohol issues, visit [FindSupport.gov](https://www.findsupport.gov).

