

Behavioral Health Services (BHS) – Information Notice

To:	BHS Contracted Service Providers
From:	Behavioral Health Services
Date:	October 5, 2021
Title	BHS Peer Support Specialist Certification Program

Background

In September 2020, [Senate Bill \(SB\) 803](#) required the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to seek federal approval to establish Peer Support Specialist (PSS) as a provider type and to provide distinct peer support services under Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) and Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS) programs.

In July 2021, DHCS released [Behavioral Health Information Notice \(BHIN\) 21-041](#) to provide the standards for implementing the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program. To support statewide consistency, San Diego County Behavioral Health Services (BHS) has opted to work with the California Mental Health Services Authority ([CalMHSA](#)) to implement a **Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist (PSS) Certification Program**.

Next Steps

BHS recognizes that providers may have questions on how the Medi-Cal PSS Certification Program would impact current operations and appreciates your patience as BHS staff works with the State to provide clarification. Please be on the lookout for Peer Support Specialist local guidelines and Q&As via the *Up to the Minute* (UTTM) announcements. As a reminder, UTTMs are accessible on the [BHS Provider Information Portal](#). Please contact your COR with any additional questions.

Providers are encouraged to visit [the DHCS Peer Support Services webpage](#) to access additional information about the State’s efforts on Peer Support services.

Additionally, BHS Providers are highly encouraged to become familiar with the elements noted in the [BHIN 21-041](#), including but not limited to the State’s requirements referenced below.

[BHIN 21-041](#)

For individuals who are employed in a peer support position as of January 1, 2022, and are seeking certification under the legacy standards outlined in the BHIN, or those individuals certified out of state and seeking to be certified under these standards, a Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program must grant certification if the individual has:

Either:

- 1 year of paid or unpaid work experience (1550 hours) as a peer specialist AND 20 hours of continuing education (CEs), including law and ethics. CEs can be in relevant professional competencies obtained via relevant in-state, out of state or national educational forums
- OR**
- 1550 hours in 3 years, with 500 hours completed within the last 12 months, working as a peer specialist AND 20 hours of continuing education (CEs), including law and ethics. CEs can be in relevant professional competencies obtained via relevant in-state, out of state or national educational forums.

For More Information:

- Contact your Contracting Officer’s Representative (COR)

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AND has all of the following:

- Completion of a peer training(s)
- 3 Letters of Recommendation as outlined:
 - One from a supervisor
 - One from a colleague/professional
 - One self-recommendation describing their current role and responsibilities as a peer support specialist
- Pass the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program Exam

As with the initial certification, the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program must provide reasonable accommodations to the candidate as requested, including verbal testing and testing in prevalent languages.

Peers employed as of January 1, 2022 and seeking certification through the legacy process must complete or begin the process by December 31, 2022. After this date, peers seeking certification under a Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program must complete the initial certification process. Peers with out of state certification seeking reciprocity have no sunset date to seek certification.

End of memo

For More Information:

- Contact your Contracting Officer’s Representative (COR)