

Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services

DMHDDSUS Advisory Committee: Peer Support Workforce

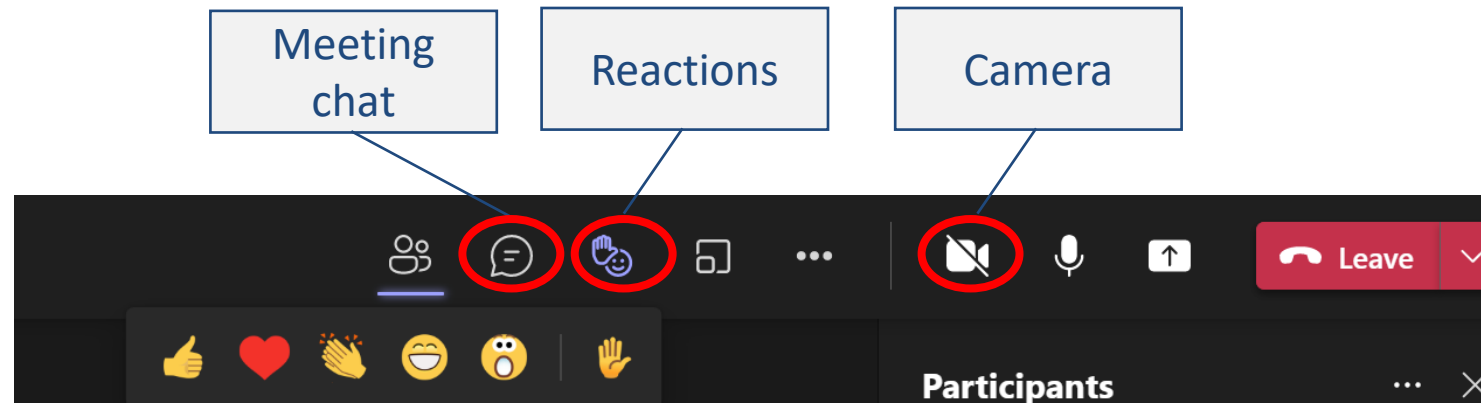
February 8, 2024

Agenda

- Roll Call
- Recap of December Advisory Committee Meeting
- Continued Discussion of Interview Findings: Community Partner Feedback on Expanding High-Quality Peer Supports

Increasing Engagement

We encourage those who are able to turn on cameras, use reactions in Teams to share opinions on topics discussed, and share questions in the chat.



Recap: January Advisory Committee Meeting

January Advisory Committee Meeting Discussion: Key Takeaways

During January's Advisory Committee meeting, the group discussed interview findings from DMH/DD/SUS conversations with 10+ community partners and subject matter experts on peer support accountability/oversight, access to peer supports, and amplifying peer voices.

- The group was generally **supportive of efforts to increase accountability and oversight** of peer supports and suggested processes for making information on ethical violations more readily available
- The group discussed whether DMH/DD/SUS should explore **allowing individuals under 18 years old to become a certified peer support specialist**
- The group discussed the **role community colleges can play in expanding access to certification courses**, acknowledging that the high cost of the courses is currently a barrier
- The group **confirmed the importance of peer support specialists having “a seat at the table” during policy discussions** (e.g., inviting peers if DMH/DD/SUS meets with the General Assembly to discuss an oversight board)

Continued Discussion of Interview Findings: Community Partner Feedback on Expanding High-Quality Peer Supports

Interview Findings, Cont.

The following slides describe key takeaways from 10+ interviews with community partners and subject matter experts across several themes, including:

- Addressing Equity
- Funding Peer Supports

Today, we want to hear from you about your reaction to these findings, what perspectives may be missing, and if there are other issues impacting peer supports in North Carolina that we should consider as we develop a vision and plan for expanding high quality peer supports across the state .

Interview Findings: Addressing Equity



- Interviewees did not feel that the peer workforce fully represented the diversity of the state- especially Hispanic, Black, and LGBTQ populations
 - One interviewee specially stated that to engage these populations to build the peer workforce, the state will need to do authentic, intentional community outreach with trusted partners
- Diversity is critical in peer work because people need to feel comfortable sharing their story with someone who can provide culturally competent care

Need “people in place that can do authentic community engagement... stigma-slaying recovery warriors”

Interview Findings: Funding Peer Supports



- Several interviewees suggested that peers should be “contracted out” from peer-run organizations to work in clinical spaces (hired and supervised by peer-run organizations, but integrated into multi-disciplinary teams)
- Not all peer-run organizations wanted to bill for Medicaid, and found the service definition too restrictive
- Small community organizations found paying for upfront costs challenging, this made it hard to participate in reimbursable payment arrangements
- Many interviewees advocated for more investment in peer-run organizations
- Billing Medicaid for services (family, IDD, etc.) that are not currently allowable currently would improve sustainability of programs, but the way that Medicaid billing and documentation in North Carolina is structured also presents challenges

[About billing Medicaid] “We’ve grown so much without having to do it. It would take our authenticity away.”

Feedback on Proposed Legislation to Establish a Peer Support Certification Oversight Board

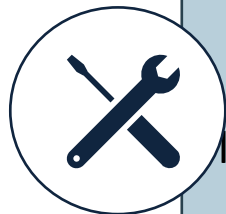
Background: How We Got Here



Current challenge: There is no centralized entity which has the power to hold certified peer support specialists accountable to the code of ethics and other certification requirements. Employers may fire peer support specialists following an ethical violation, but there is no way to de-certify the peer or prevent them from getting a job at another agency.



Previous attempts to address the challenge: In 2021, House Bill 732 proposed the creation of a Peer Support Specialist Certification Oversight Board that would have the ability to issue, deny, suspend, and revoke peer support certifications and hold hearings to determine the validity of ethical violations and impose sanctions. The bill had the support of community partners, but ultimately did not pass.



Proposed solution: DMH/DD/SUS is proposing updated legislation to establish a Peer Support Specialist Certification Oversight Board, which will include many of the elements of the 2021 legislation and align with the Division's goals to professionalize peer supports and strengthen the workforce.

Background: Data on Complaints in FY24

DMH/DD/SUS's peer support education vendor, UNC Behavioral Health Springboard (UNC-BHS) has received 15 complaints against certified peer support specialists in fiscal year 2024. We believe this may be an undercount, due to the fact there are no formal processes to investigate and sanction a peer outside of their employer.

Of the 15 complaints since July 2023:

- 6 have involved fraudulent activity
- 8 have involved unethical client interactions or other ethical violations
- 1 has involved confidentiality or HIPPA violations

Examples of complaints include:

- Inappropriate relationships with clients
- Improper billing practices (e.g., billing for a client who was deceased)
- Harassment of fellow employees
- Sharing client information with unauthorized individuals
- Promising gifts to clients
- Lying about meeting certification criteria

Overview of Proposed Legislation

DMH/DD/SUS intends to propose the Peer Support Specialist Certification Oversight Board legislation in April. We are interested in the Advisory Committee's feedback on the proposed legislation and encourage discussion in this meeting or written feedback.

Key elements of the proposed legislation:

- Establishes an 11-member PSS Certification Oversight Board that will enforce the rules for issuing certifications and renewals, continuing education requirements, ethical and disciplinary actions, and other requirements of the program
 - The Board will be able to deny, issue, suspend, revoke, and renew certification and conduct investigations to oversee PSS.
- The Division will continue to establish certification and ethical requirements for PSS.
- The Board will be inclusive of adult mental health, SUD, I/DD and TBI, and family peer support specialists.
- Board members will:
 - Be appointed by a range of State officials
 - Include at least 4 peer support specialists (inclusive of family partners and I/DD peer support specialists)
 - Be subject to 3 year term limits

Next Steps

- Next Peer Workforce Advisory Committee meeting will be held on March 14 at 3:30 PM
- Potential topics for future meetings:
 - Discuss a support system for Peers entering the workforce and finding the best fitting job for them
 - Discuss proposed strategy for use of new workforce funding
 - Discuss initial recommendations for expanding high-quality peer supports