



Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services

DMH/DD/SUS Advisory Committee: Peer Support Workforce

March 14, 2024

Agenda

- DMH/DD/SUS Announcements
- Discussion: Making the Peer Support Certification Process No-Cost
- Next Steps & Topics for Future Discussion

The Statewide Peer Warmline Launched on 2/20!

- People are calling 988 looking for support and resources.
 - 40% of people are repeat callers
- **The Peer Line is open 24/7/365**
- People can **call the Peer Warmline Directly OR 988 can do a warm transfer**
- Peer Support Specialists are people living in recovery with a mental illness and/or substance use disorder
 - offer non-clinical support and resources to those who reach out
 - offer a unique perspective of shared experiences
- Read the press release [here!](#)



NCDHHS is investing \$5.5 million into reentry services for Justice-Involved Individuals

- FIT Wellness delivers psychiatric and physical health care services along with connections to community supports for individuals with Serious Mental Illness in Wake County after release from the state prison system
- Funding will be used to:
 - Establish new FIT Wellness program sites at Piedmont Health Services (Chapel Hill) and MedNorth Health Center (Wilmington)
 - Support costs such as post-release housing, transportation, and medical equipment
 - Promote training opportunities for medical students and psychiatry residents with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people with SMI
- Read the press release [here](#)!

Making the Peer Support Certification Process No-Cost

Current Challenges

As discussed in previous Advisory Committee meetings, the cost of becoming a certified peer support specialist (CPSS) is a barrier for many people to enter the field.



Because peer support certification courses are independently owned and operated, there is no consistent price to take a course



Currently, the average cost of a certification course is \$350, with prices ranging from \$125 – 400. Many people who are trying to become a CPSS have experienced significant trauma or life challenges as part of their recovery journey, making this cost more unattainable



Additionally, because course offerings vary across the state, some people only have access to higher-cost courses because of where they live

Proposed Solution: Scholarship Program

DMH/DD/SUS is proposing funding scholarships for prospective peer support specialists to take certification courses at no cost.

DMH/DD/SUS intends for a scholarship program to:

- **Improve access to the workforce** for low-income and historically marginalized communities
- Support **expanded access to peer support certification courses**
- Include an **application process** to screen peers for eligibility to become certified
- Pay scholarships **directly to course owners**
- Be a **first step** in moving North Carolina's peer support program toward a **no or very low-cost certification process**

Discussion Questions

1. How should DMH/DD/SUS think about promoting a scholarship program to make sure peers know about it before they sign up for a course?
2. What feels like a fair amount of scholarship funding? Flat price vs. dependent on course cost?
3. How can DMH/DD/SUS use scholarships to incentivize trainings in areas that have been historically underserved?
4. Should DMH/DD/SUS consider a scholarship program for family peers? What do you think that should look like?