



Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Proposal

California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA)

November 2021

Purpose

The California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA), in partnership with County Mental Health Plans¹, is pleased to submit this proposal for the implementation of the state-approved Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification (PSSC) program, as created by the passage of Senate Bill 803 (SB 803). CalMHSA recognizes the dedication and crucial voice of Peers, Caregivers, Parents, and the Community for the passage of peer certification legislation. As a leader in behavioral health program implementation, CalMHSA recognizes peers as an integral part of the behavioral health workforce tapestry supporting engagement and recovery.

In alignment with SB 803, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) has established state standards for the implementation of Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification programs. The Peer Specialist would be a new provider type and distinct service type under the Medi-Cal programs for Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) and the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS).

This document details CalMHSA's proposal for the Medi-Cal PSSC program. The PSSC program supports peers with lived experience, family members, and caregivers who provide peer support services to individuals to strengthen recovery and connectedness.

Program Overview

CalMHSA, as a Joint Powers Authority serving California Counties and Cities, is well poised for the implementation of a state-approved Medi-Cal PSSC program. CalMHSA has experience in developing, funding, and implementing mental health services and educational programs at the state, regional, and local levels.

CalMHSA's PSSC program includes a centralized administration and monitoring of all relevant business functions from training and exam administration to program audits and monitoring. CalMHSA will develop program guides with information on peer certification, expectations on maintenance and renewal of certification, code of ethics and code of conduct expectations, and complaints, actions, and appeals processes.

Training will be offered by approved training vendors whose training curricula has met training standards leading toward the certification exam as well as training for specializations, supervisors of peer work, and continued education. The Peer Certification program includes a standardized examination for certification of Peer Support Specialists.

The PSSC program will have a dedicated Peer Support Specialist Registry ("Certificant Registry"). A "Certificant" is an individual who receives Certification as a Peer Support Specialist. The Certificant Registry will be open to the public and will have up-to-date information on the PSSC and certification process, including information addressing candidate requirements, approved training vendors, and a candidate portal. The candidate portal will support application and document upload features, requests for taking exams, and a method for filing complaints. The Certificant Registry will also include a search feature to provide up-to-date information on the status of the Certificant's certification.

¹ County Mental Health Plans who have agreed to representation by CalMHSA.

Our Approach

CalMHSA will develop a PSSC program that is responsive to the needs of California’s population under the Medi-Cal Specialty Mental Health and Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery Systems. CalMHSA anticipates a go-live date for the PSSC program in May – July 2022.

Community Focus

- **Community Input** **October 2021 – March 2022**
 - CalMHSA considered community input provided prior to the passage of SB 803, as well as information from listening sessions hosted by DCHS. Additionally, CalMHSA held twelve community input sessions in October 2021 to receive input from community stakeholders, Peers, and Peer Supporter agencies on aspects for program design. Community input sessions included a Spanish-language interpreter. CalMHSA will report back to the community on outcomes of the input sessions and may use information to inform future program design and implementation.
 - CalMHSA will convene time-limited workgroups for the identification of curriculum/content for all four specializations. Priority will be given to the development of the Parent, Caregiver, Family Member Peer specialization training content, which will launch with the inception of the PSSC program. CalMHSA will convene the remaining three time-limited workgroups for the identification of training content for Peer providers supporting persons in crisis (Crisis Specialization), Peer providers supporting persons who are unhoused (Homelessness Specialization), and Peer providers supporting persons with justice involvement (Forensic Specialization).

- **Stakeholder Advisory Council (Advisory Council)** **October 2021 - Ongoing**

CalMHSA recognizes the need for input from Peers and other stakeholders for the implementation of a PSSC program to meet the needs of those it intends to serve. With that in mind, we have established a Stakeholder Advisory Council (Advisory Council) that will make recommendations on behalf of a variety of stakeholder groups. The development and selection of the Advisory Council members was done in collaboration with the California Association of Mental Health Peer Run Organizations (CAMHPRO) on behalf of DHCS. Advisory Council members were selected via an application process, and the membership is reflective of the Medi-Cal populations served by the county specialty plans. Wherever possible, Advisory Council members represent underrepresented or hard to engage communities. During the implementation phase, the Advisory Council will offer recommendations on program development, training, and policies. CalMHSA values continuous quality improvement and the Advisory Council will serve as an avenue for ongoing feedback during the implementation phase and beyond.

- **Subject Matter Experts** **September 2021 – June 2022**

CalMHSA has contracted with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to inform the development of the PSSC program.

CalMHSA – Certification Program Responsibilities

<i>Initial Certification Policies and Procedures</i>	October 2021– March 2022
	<p>Standardized Policies and Procedures CalMHSA will develop and implement policies and procedures that meet all state and federal requirements under the PSSC program. The development and application of the policies and procedures will drive program integrity, including training requirements, examination administration, certification, biennial renewal, reciprocity, confidentiality, security, data collection, program monitoring, complaints and corrective actions processes, and code of ethics and code of conduct.</p>
<i>Certification Exam</i>	October 2021 – March 2022
	<p>Standard Examinations CalMHSA plans to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for examination developers. Once awarded, the exam developer will work collaboratively with SMEs for the identification and writing of examination items to create a standard examination for certification of Peer Support Specialists.</p> <p>Subject Matter Experts As noted above, CalMHSA will contract with subject matter experts (SME) for the development of standardized examinations. SMEs offer expertise in the profession of peer work and will work collaboratively with an exam developer to write exam content.</p>
<i>Biennial Certification Renewal Policies and Procedures</i>	October 2021– March 2022
	<p>Standardized Policies and Procedures CalMHSA will develop and implement policies and procedures that meet all state and federal requirements under the PSSC program. The development and application of the policies and procedures will drive program integrity, including training requirements, examination administration, certification, biennial renewal, reciprocity, confidentiality, security, data collection, program monitoring, complaints and corrective actions processes, and code of ethics and code of conduct.</p>

<p><i>Training Curriculum For:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Peer Support Specialist</i> • <i>Parent, Caregiver, and Family Member Peers</i> • <i>Peer Supervisors</i> 	<p>October 2021– March 2022</p>
	<p>Training leading to peer and specialization examination: CalMHSA will select and authorize training vendors to provide training that leads toward examination for peer support specialist and training in the areas of specialization. Selection of vendors will be conducted through a request for proposals (RFP). All training content will be reviewed to ensure training meets or exceeds standards. Information on authorized vendors will be available on the Certificant Registry.</p> <p>Procurement of training content: To provide low-barrier/highly accessible training, CalMHSA will procure training content to be hosted on the CalMHSA Learning Management System (LMS) as a web-based training. The selection of the training content will be conducted through a request for proposal.</p> <p>Training for continued education: CalMHSA will select and authorize vendors for continued education that meet or exceed training content standards. The selection of continued education vendors may be done through a request for proposals. Information on authorized vendors will be available on the Certificant Registry.</p>
<p><i>Certification Fee Schedule</i></p>	<p>October – December 2021</p>
	<p>CalMHSA will continue to work with the DHCS to identify funding opportunities for peer certification. DHCS intends to offer some funding for peers pursuing Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification under the approved PSSC program.</p>
<p><i>Grandparenting and Out-of-State Reciprocity Process</i></p>	<p>May 2022 – December 31, 2022</p>
	<p>CalMHSA, in alignment with DHCS standards, will develop and implement policies and procedures for “grandparenting” and out-of-state reciprocity. Applications for individuals seeking certification via a grandparenting clause or through out-of-state reciprocity will be processed in accordance with DHCS standards.</p>

<i>Complaints, Corrective Actions, and Appeals Process</i>	May 2022- Ongoing
	<p>Complaints, corrective actions, and appeals The complaint and corrective action processes will be outlined in the policies and procedures guides posted on the Certificant Registry. Content will include information on initiating a complaint, type of actions that may be taken, appeals processes, and relevant timelines for each process. CalMHSA will conduct all activities related to complaints, actions, and appeals and will maintain documentation of these activities.</p>
<i>Reporting Process</i>	May 2022 - Ongoing
	<p>State-Level Reporting In accordance with DHCS standards, CalMHSA will collect required data on Certificants and submit data reports directly to the DHCS at established intervals.</p> <p>County-Level Reporting CalMHSA will develop county-level reports counties may use to support DHCS Triennial Reviews, annual California External Quality Reviews, and other performance management activities.</p>
<i>Additional Program Element</i>	January – March 2022
	<p>Certificant Registry CalMHSA will develop and administer all business functions of the PSCC program through the development of a Peer Support Specialist Certification Registry (“Certificant Registry.”) The Certificant Registry is an all-inclusive, public facing website with information on all aspects of the certification program. The Certificant Registry will support candidates perform activities such as registering for an exam, requesting exam accommodations, uploading required documentation, and obtaining information on authorized training vendors. The online Registry will include a search function to allow candidates to quickly obtain current information on their certification status.</p>
<i>Additional Program Elements</i>	May 2022 - Ongoing
	<p>Quality Assurance Program Monitoring and Audits CalMHSA will develop monitoring and audit tools and will perform all activities related to monitoring and auditing.</p>
<i>Additional Program Element</i>	July 2023 – December 2023
	<p>Program Evaluation In collaboration with the DHCS, CalMHSA will contract with an evaluation agency to assess the impact of the Peer Support Specialist Certification program on key client and health system metrics.</p>