

Peer Specialist Training and Technical Assistance Initiative

Background

The Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) is accepting applications for participation in a Peer Specialist Training and Technical Assistance Initiative. In 2005 OMHSAS was awarded a three year grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to pilot a Peer Specialist initiative in Pennsylvania. County clusters in the NE and Central regions of the state and a single county in the NW quadrant were selected as pilot counties for the development of a peer specialist program through this grant. Pilot counties were provided with technical assistance focused on improving each region's readiness to support peer services. Pilot counties received assistance in designing their peer specialist programs to include the development of job descriptions, identifying provider agencies to serve as hosts to the peers and providing on-going support for the peer specialists and supervisors. In 2006, OMHSAS provided a round of four regional trainings that allowed each county to identify two individuals to receive the Peer Specialist training. In addition, individuals from providers who would serve as Peer Specialist supervisors and county representatives were also trained.

In response to additional requests for Peer Specialist level training, OMHSAS has decided to draw upon the success of the targeted pilot approach to training and technical assistance provided through the federal CMS grant. In keeping with that approach, OMHSAS is looking to identify clusters of counties that can demonstrate readiness to implement a Peer Specialist initiative. The goal of this round of trainings is to target areas of the state where few peers have been trained to date. Counties that have had peers trained through the CMS pilot initiative, through the Harrisburg State Hospital closing, or that have contracted with the Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania to have their peers trained will be considered for this initiative, however, applicants in underserved areas will be prioritized. Counties will need to partner with contiguous counties to meet the selection criteria and project requirements noted below. This project involves training and employing consumers in various mental health settings to provide peer support services and to facilitate consumer recovery. The expansion of peer support services is seen as a key element in promoting recovery practices throughout the Commonwealth's county mental health programs.

Project Goals and Objectives

The Peer Specialist Training and Technical Assistance Initiative is designed to promote the quality and expansion of Peer Specialist Services within the Commonwealth's county mental health programs. OMHSAS has implemented a Certified Peer Specialist Program through technical assistance provided by the Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania (MHASP). As a result of this work, a protocol was developed for engaging community stakeholders to support this new recovery workforce, a Peer Specialist and Peer Specialist Supervisor training curriculum were produced, training strategies were

finalized and approximately 350 individuals have completed the peer specialist training program. Peer specialists have been hired into positions in a variety of settings, including case management, PACT teams, crisis intervention, inpatient, outpatient, partial hospitalization, and psychiatric rehabilitation. Many peers that have been trained are awaiting job prospects.

Effective July 1, 2007, a second training vendor –Recovery Innovations of Arizona (formerly known as META) will be available in Pennsylvania.

The training provided by these two vendors helps consumers better understand peer support and utilizes a multi-tiered approach focusing on providing education, skill building and an experiential process. Training addresses communication skills, outreach, engagement, conflict management, crisis intervention, cultural competency and navigating the workplace. Peer specialists help consumers with skill building, recovery/life goal setting, problem solving, establishing self-help groups, building and utilizing self-help recovery tools (such as WRAP), developing individual recovery plans and self-advocacy.

For economic reasons, this focused training and technical assistance initiative and consultation can only be offered at up to six to eight geographic sites across the state. Therefore, counties should look to partner with contiguous counties to form geographic clusters to apply for this project. Since the intent is to assist as many counties as possible through this initiative, single county/jointer applications will not be accepted. Due to the limited nature of this training/technical assistance opportunity, counties that wish to receive Peer Specialist training more quickly or outside of this solicitation are encouraged to contract directly with the Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania or Recovery Innovations (after September 1st.) As noted above, preference will be given to underserved counties in which few peers have been trained, to date.

As part of this effort, OMHSAS was recently approved by the Centers For Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to begin offering peer support services as a Medicaid reimbursable service in Pennsylvania. Funding for on-going Peer Specialist and Peer Specialist Supervisory Trainings has been factored into the rate for the service. In addition, OMHSAS is in negotiation with the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation to consider the development of an agreement that will cover the training costs for participants eligible for OVR services. As a result of the approval by CMS, it is likely that this will be the last Peer Specialist and Supervisory training that is sponsored and funded by OMHSAS.

Through this project, identified consumers in each of the geographic clusters will receive Peer Specialist and Peer Specialist Supervisory education and technical assistance through MHASP or Recovery Innovations. Technical assistance will focus on improving each cluster's readiness to support recovery/peer support services, determining resources to create or transform employee positions and recruiting consumer trainees. Twenty (20) consumers from each geographic cluster will receive two weeks (10 days) of Peer Specialist training. In addition, up to 20 individuals, per cluster, will receive the 2 day Peer Specialist Supervisory training.

PSI Project Timelines/Activities

- **July 13, 2007:** Postmark deadline for applications.
- **July 31, 2007:** Award notification will be made to the County MH/MR Administrators.
- **Aug-Oct, 2007:** Counties/providers will receive technical assistance in preparing the environment for the Peer Specialist Program.
- **Sept-Dec, 2007:** 10 day Peer Specialist and 2 day Peer Specialist Supervisor training is provided in up to six geographic clusters.

Selection Criteria and Project Requirements

The strongest consideration will be given to county clusters that meet most or all of the following selection criteria:

- Demonstrated plan for implementing the project, including identification of:
 - Number and type of peer positions envisioned, including suggested functions and tasks. The positions should provide a competitive salary.
 - Number and type of provider agencies, including specific providers committed to the project. Description should include an overview of provider “readiness” to assume peer positions within their agencies and how MA enrollment of the program is being considered by each county/provider.
 - The process to be used to identify consumers who will participate in the program.
 - The process for matching peer specialists with the identified job positions. It is expected that all of the peer specialists who are trained will be matched with jobs in the county/cluster.

Selected applicants also will be required to:

- *Provide training space for the two-week training session and the two day supervisory training/orientation. Applicants must also cover consumers’, and supervisors’ travel, meal and overnight expenses related to the training. A point person must also be assigned to coordinate hotel and training logistical details as outlined by MHASP and Recovery Innovations.*

OMHSAS will pay for trainer and consultant expenses for on-site Peer and Supervisor training and other technical assistance.

Project Application Procedures

- All interested counties must complete the enclosed application form. Only County MH/MR Offices may apply.
- The completed application must be reviewed and signed by the County MH/MR Administrator designated to serve as lead contact for the initiative.
- One signed original of the completed application must be submitted.
- Applicants selected for the Peer Specialist Training and Technical Assistance Initiative will be notified by July 31, 2007.

APPLICATION FORM

**PEER SPECIALIST TRAINING AND TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE INITIATIVE**

NAMES OF PARTICIPATING COUNTIES:

**COUNTY MH/MR ADMINISTRATOR (SIGNING ON BEHALF OF THE
PROJECT):**

ADDRESS:

CITY, ZIP CODE:

PHONE:

FAX:

E-MAIL:

CONTACT PERSON: (to handle training logistical details)

PHONE:

FAX:

E-MAIL:

**PLEASE ANSWER EACH OF THE FOLLOWING
QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS**

The purpose of this project is to establish a Peer Specialist training and technical assistance project in up to six to eight geographic clusters of the state. Through this initiative, consumers will be trained and hired to provide peer support services.

- 1) Identify the number and type of peer specialist positions envisioned for each county in the geographic cluster. (Total should not exceed 20. **Single county/joiner applications will not be accepted**)
- 2) Identify the number, type and name of providers committed to hiring Peer Specialists for each county in the geographic cluster
- 3) Provide a brief overview of county and provider “readiness” to assume Peer Specialist positions including which providers will be enrolled in MA to provide the service.
- 4) Briefly describe the process to be used to identify consumers and supervisors who will be trained
- 5) Briefly describe the process for matching peer specialists with the identified job positions.
- 6) Indicate any preference for a training vendor (attempts will be made to accommodate preferences, however no guarantee can be given.)

I agree that _____ is applying for
(Name of Lead County)

participation in the Peer Specialist Training and Technical Assistance Initiative and agree to the guidelines and requirements set forth in the project concept paper.

We agree to provide the funding to cover the cost of the training site, as well as the cost of travel, meals, and overnights for peers, supervisors, and administrators that participate in the training. _____

We agree to appoint a person who will represent the counties in coordinating all of the expenses and training site logistics for the trainees. This person will agree to be on-site when the training occurs to coordinate and provide needed assistance/support. _____

We agree to provide names of all trainees to either MHASP or Recovery Innovations (pending assignment) within the designated timeframes _____

Signature of the County MH Administrator/Lead County MH Administrator & Date

Application Due Date and Mailing Instructions

The signed and completed application should not exceed 4 pages, and must be postmarked or received via email no later than **July 13, 2007**.

Mail or email completed original application to:

**Carol Ward-Colasante
Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
2nd Floor Beechmont Building
P.O. Box 2675
Harrisburg, Pa 17105
ccolasante@state.pa.us**