“This guidance document is advisory in nature but is binding on an agency until amended by such agency. A guidance document does not include internal procedural documents that only affect the internal operations of the agency and does not impose additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties or include confidential information or rules and regulations made in accordance with the Nebraska Administrative Procedure Act. If you believe that this guidance document imposes additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties, you may request a review of the document.”

Pursuant to
Neb. Rev. Stat. § 84-901.03
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I. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) Office of Consumer Affairs (OCA) directs the establishment of standards for peer support, including standards for training programs and for training, certification of, and service delivery by peer support services.

Certification is designed and intended for trained individuals or a parent/legal guardian or caregiver who have been successful in their own recovery, and are prepared to share their experience and knowledge with others as part of an organized care team.

The Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) Certification process was developed by the DBH OCA in collaboration with consumers, educators, providers and peers. It is structured to meet or exceed the standards prepared by the International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC) as appropriate and is also aligned with the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) core competencies for peer support.

The purpose of peer support professional certification is to promote consumer protection and public confidence by assuring that peer support services are being provided by trained and qualified individuals. For the provider, peer certification gives recognition to the unique experience, education and skills of the peer support provider, encouragement for continued professional growth and development, and a recognized and billable professional certificate.

The guidance document lays out expectations and instructions for certification for those who completed a set of educational training requirements completed in 2018, testing and certification process going forward in 2019, and the guidelines for trainers that include the minimum required Peer Support Core Curriculum competencies. The document also addresses forms, applications, renewals, continuing education and testing in respective sections.

The guidelines set forth are consistent with the regulations for peer support currently moving through the review and approval process. Upon release of the Peer Support regulations, there will be an opportunity for any person holding a State of Nebraska-issued Certified Peer Support and Wellness Specialist (CPSWS), who meets the grandfather guidelines, to apply for the new Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) credential.

**IF YOU COMPLETED PEER SUPPORT TRAINING PRIOR TO JANUARY OF 2019 AND CURRENTLY HOLD A CPSWS CERTIFICATE** issued by the State of Nebraska, no additional training or testing is required until the regulations are released.

If, however, you would like to take the IC&RC Peer Recovery exam now to obtain your CPSS certification, you can submit an online CPSS application. You will also need to have the Peer Support Employer/Volunteer Verification form completed to confirm that you have worked or volunteered in a peer support role for a minimum of five hundred
(500) hours in the last twelve (12) months immediately prior to making application for the CPSS Certificate.

**IF YOU COMPLETED SIXTY (60) HOURS OF PEER SUPPORT TRAINING IN 2018,** you will need to complete the CPSS online application along with having the curriculum trainer complete the Verification of Peer Support Training form. If you have certificates of completion from trainings completed online or elsewhere, please have a copy available to upload with the application. Proof of completing a total of sixty (60) hours of Peer Support training will need to be submitted with the online application.

**IF YOU COMPLETE THE PEER SUPPORT CORE CURRICULUM TRAINING AFTER JANUARY 1, 2019,** you will need to complete the online CPSS application and have a copy of the certificate of completion of a State of Nebraska-approved sixty (60) hour Peer Support Core Curriculum training available to upload to the online CPSS application.

Following internal review of the application, the applicant will be notified via email that the applicant has been either 1) approved to make arrangement to take the IC&RC Peer Recovery exam or 2) denied based on an application or credential requirement deficiency. Applicants should keep a copy of their entire application, including all supporting documentation for their own records.

### II. REQUIREMENTS FOR CPSS CERTIFICATION

**AGE:** Must be at least nineteen (19) years old.

**LAWFUL PRESENCE:** Must be lawfully present in the United States and provide supporting documentation as requested.

**RECOVERY/LIVED EXPERIENCE:** This certification is designed and intended for a self-disclosed current or previous consumer of behavioral health services who have been successful in their own recovery, or as a parent/legal guardian or primary caretaker of an individual who receives or has received behavioral health services. All applicants shall be prepared to share their experience and knowledge with others while working as part of an organized clinical and non-clinical care team. Attestation of a minimum of one (1) year of recovery and as having lived experience is required within the application.

**BASIC EDUCATION:** Must provide verification of completion of a high school or General Equivalency (GED) diploma, or higher degree.

**PEER SUPPORT CORE CURRICULUM TRAINING:** Must obtain a certificate of completion or equivalent documentation of completion of Peer Support Core Curriculum training as follows:
TRAINING COMPLETED IN 2018 GUIDELINES:

- Complete the CPSS online application.
- Upload supporting documentation of successful completion of 60 hours of peer support training during the 2018 calendar year by having the trainer complete the Verification of Peer Support Training prior to completing the application. Any certificate(s) of completion for other peer support education including online education will need to be uploaded when the online CPSS application is completed.
- Training must be completed within 12 months immediately prior to the date of the application for the CPSS Certification.
- Review the Peer Support Core Curriculum Competencies, effective 1/1/19, as these competencies include the knowledge base for the IC&RC Peer Recovery exam.

NOTE: If the applicant does not feel prepared to take the IC&RC Peer Recovery exam, he/she may choose to take a State of Nebraska approved Peer Support Core Curriculum. See the DBH OCA web page for a list of approved curriculum providers and their contact information.

TRAINING COMPLETED AFTER JANUARY 1, 2019:

- Complete the CPSS online application
- Upload documentation of successful completion of 60 hours of a State of Nebraska DBH-OCA approved Peer Support Core Curriculum Training.
- Peer Support Core Curriculum Training must be completed within 12 months immediately prior to the date of the application for the CPSWS Certification
- Review the Peer Support Core Curriculum Competencies, effective 1/1/19, as these competencies include the knowledge base for the IC&RC Peer Recovery exam.

ADULT AND CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES PORTAL REGISTRY: Must complete the Adult and Child Protective Services Portal Registry background check information through the portal link listed on the CPSS application and found on the DBH OCA webpage. Registry information will be released to the applicant and the designated DBH OCA staff.

CONVICTION INFORMATION: The application includes a question about whether you have any misdemeanor or felony convictions. You must answer “Yes” if you have ever been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor. The Office of Consumer Affairs and Division of Behavioral Health Services understand and value lived experience as a provider of peer services and a conviction does not automatically disqualify applicants from obtaining certification.
You must list all your misdemeanor and felony convictions. It does not matter how long ago the conviction happened or whether or not you reported the conviction on a previous application. Infractions, diversions, and dismissals do not need to be listed. If you have ever received a ticket from a law enforcement office or were ever charged with an offense, you can check with the court system to determine if the incident appears on your record as a misdemeanor. Misdemeanors can be processed through traffic courts, so be sure to include misdemeanor traffic violations.

**Examples of Common Misdemeanors**

This list is provided to help you identify misdemeanors that are sometimes mistaken for infractions. *This is not a complete list.*

- MIP
- DUI/DWI
- Open Container
- Tobacco Use by Minor
- Shoplifting/Theft/Burglary
- Unauthorized Use of Financial Transaction Device
- Assault
- Disorderly Conduct/Disorderly House
- Reckless Driving
- Driving under Suspension/Revocation
- License Vehicle without Liability Insurance
- Fail to Appear in Court
- False Information or Reporting
- Leave the Scene of an Accident
- Operator not Carrying License
- Unlawful Display of Plates/Renewal Tab
- Park Rule Violation/Curfew Violation
- Dog at Large/Fail to Vaccinate Animal
- Littering/Fireworks
- Bad Check

The following is information that will need to be provided on the online CPSS application:

- List the date of conviction(s), county and state in which the conviction occurred and the type of conviction(s). Please include a brief description of the conviction(s) including what the conviction was for, what happened and who was involved.
- An explanation of the actions the applicant has taken to address the behaviors or actions related to the conviction(s).
- If the applicant is currently on probation, a letter from the applicant's probation officer addressing the terms and current status of the probation.
The entire court record for any misdemeanor or felony that occurred outside the State of Nebraska.

Additional information may be requested by the DBH OCA upon initial review of your application to include: a copy of the entire court record related to all misdemeanor or felony convictions and an explanation of the events leading to the conviction to include: what, when, where and why.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION(S) OR LICENSURE(S): If the applicant has ever held or currently holds a Certified Peer Support and Wellness Specialist (CPSWS) certificate issued by the State of Nebraska, or any other professional licensure or certification (for example: a Medication Aide, Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, Mental Health Practitioner, Registered Nurse, etc.), please list the name, identification number, date of issuance, date of expiration and any disciplinary action that may have ever been taken against said certifications or licenses in Nebraska or any other state. Additional information may be requested by the DBH OCA to include an official copy of the disciplinary action, including any charges, sanctions and disposition.

TESTING - INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATION & RECIPROCITY CONSORTIUM (IC&RC) PEER RECOVERY EXAMINATION: IC&RC Peer Recovery Examination must be passed within the twelve (12) month designated time frame of which the CPSS application is in active status. The twelve (12) month time frame begins on the date the IC&RC emails the applicant with notification of approval to test.

CODE OF ETHICS: Must read and agree to abide by the Nebraska CPSS Code of Ethics as indicated by applicant’s digital signature on the online CPSS Application.

CPSS CERTIFICATE APPLICATION FEE: There is currently no application fee charged by the State of Nebraska for the CPSS certification.

CPSS CERTIFICATE EFFECTIVE DATES: The CPSS Certification will require a renewal application be completed every two (2) years, along with an attestation of the completion of twenty (20) continuing education hours (CEUs). Upon release of the regulations, all CPSWS and CPSS credentialed individuals will be notified of the opportunity to complete the CPSS Grandfather application upon meeting the Grandfather criteria.

III. IC&RC TESTING INFORMATION

The purpose of the IC&RC is to promote uniform professional standards and quality assurance for the peer support specialist profession and to give the profession greater visibility throughout the United States and other countries. Following is a link to information on the IC&RC Peer Recovery exam: https://internationalCERTIFICATEing.org/creds/pr
The email notification the applicant receives from IC&RC includes instructions for registering to test, location sites, fees and obtaining the exam study guide information. Applicants must adhere to all IC&RC policies and procedures as outlined on the IC&RC web page and as provided to applicants upon notification of approval to test.

**PEER RECOVERY EXAM DATES and LOCATIONS:** The IC&RC exam is offered at approved testing centers thereby allowing candidates to test on a date and time and a location that convenient for them. Candidates will receive information from IC&RC on registering for testing once application for certification is approved by the State of Nebraska DBH OCA.

**CONTENT:** The State of Nebraska Peer Support Core Curriculum training include the minimum standards which align with the IC&RC competencies to help prepare the applicant for the workforce as well as the IC&RC examination.

**CANDIDATE GUIDE:** The domains, including the competency/task statements per domain, sample exam questions, and a list of references are included in the free candidate guide found at the following IC&RC link: [www.internationalCERTIFICATEing.org/examprep](http://www.internationalCERTIFICATEing.org/examprep).

**STUDY GUIDE:** A study guide for the IC&RC Peer Recovery examination can be found at [www.internationalCERTIFICATEing.org/PR.Study.Guide](http://www.internationalCERTIFICATEing.org/PR.Study.Guide).

**SPECIAL SITUATIONS:** Individuals with disabilities and/or religious obligations that require modifications in exam administration may request specific procedure changes, in writing, to the IC&RC prior to scheduling their exam date. With the written request, applicant must provide official documentation of the disability or religious issue. Contact the IC&RC on what constitutes official documentation. IC&RC will make arrangements for appropriate modifications to its procedures when documentation supports this need and will work with the State of Nebraska DBH OCA to provide accommodations and cover associated costs.

**CANCELLATION/RESCHEDULING POLICY:** Applicants are required to arrive on time for their exam and MUST provide an acceptable proof of identification as outlined on the IC&RC website. See the IC&RC site for cancellation and rescheduling policy.

**RETEST:** Applicants who do not pass the IC&RC Peer Recovery exam can retest after a mandatory 90-day wait period from the previous exam date. Candidates will be sent retest instructions from the IC&RC if the candidate did not pass the test. Additionally, candidates will have three (3) opportunities to re-take an examination beyond their original first failed examination. If a candidate retests their allotted three times and fails on their third and final opportunity, the candidate must submit a plan of study to State of Nebraska DBH OCA and wait a mandatory one-year from the date of the final failed examination before they will be permitted to re-test again.
IV. PEER SUPPORT CORE CURRICULUM SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Peer Support Core Curriculum training standards have been implemented to ensure consistency and competency among all Nebraska peer workers. Any person or organization in the State of Nebraska wanting to provide Peer Support Core Curriculum training should complete the online application for review and approval by the DBH OCA.

As a trainer of the peer support curriculum, it is important to assess the competency of trainees by including competency measures for the entirety of the curriculum submitted. Upon the DBH OCA’s receipt and review of the submitted curriculum, means of delivery which could include power point slides, videos, handouts, etc., competency measures, and total number of hours, the DBH OCA will issue either feedback seeking additional information or approval of the curriculum. The contact information for all DBH OCA approved Core Curriculums as well as approved trainers will be posted on the DBH OCA web page for public access.

The Peer Support Core Curriculum training must detail the sixty (60) hours of minimum training using the Peer Support Core Curriculum Training Submission online application and must include the following:

- Ten (10) hours of ethics must be included.
- Forty (40) hours; must be live interactive hours.
- Any hours in excess of 40 may be provided in a form other than live interactive hours and as specified by the approved curriculum.
- Any video or other media to be used within the curriculum should be listed and submitted for review and approval by the DBH OCA.
- A “method of delivery” should be specified for the delivery of each competency i.e., page 3 of 18-page Power Point file named ‘Domain 1 Power Point’, 16-minute video file name ‘Engagement Methods’, handout on mutuality file name ‘mutuality handout’, Role play exercise B file name ‘Motivational Interviewing Role Play Instructions’ page 4, etc., listed under the thirteen (13) Domains.
- Identify the ‘competency measure’ that will be used for each Domain to include the passing score – i.e., 20-question quiz with a 75% minimum passing score.
- List the total number of hours spent in each of the thirteen (13) Domains to equal a minimum total of sixty (60) hours of Peer Support Core Curriculum training.
- Attendance rosters that list trainees’ legal names and include AM and PM sign-in.
- Course Evaluations provided by the DBH OCA.
- Cancellation/Rescheduling Policy.

The following is a list of the thirteen (13) Domains that must be included within the Peer Support Core Curriculum. To view the specific competencies within each domain, click on the Peer Support Core Curriculum Guidelines.
### Domain 1: Engagement
### Domain 8: Crisis Management
### Domain 2: Support
### Domain 9: Communication
### Domain 3: Lived Experience
### Domain 10: Collaboration & Teamwork
### Domain 4: Personalize Peer Support
### Domain 11: Leadership and Advocacy
### Domain 5: Recovery Planning
### Domain 12: Professional Growth & Development
### Domain 6: Resources, Services & Supports
### Domain 13: Ethics
### Domain 7: Health, Wellness & Recovery Skills

- Interactive teaching strategies are recommended for the core competencies.
- A minimum of one trainer should hold the Nebraska Certified Peer Support and Wellness Specialists (CPSWS) or Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) credential.
- All trainers should be identified with their legal name on the Peer Support Core Curriculum Submission Form with detailed contact information and credentials.
- There shall be a minimum a 1:10 trainer-to-student ratio.
- Trainings offered via videoconference must be conducted at a business location for example, at the employer’s office or the regional offices, and must include a minimum of two trainees per training.
- A description of how competency measures, for example a test or quiz, will be conducted for trainees attending via videoconference must be included with the curriculum submission.

### V. PEER SUPPORT CORE CURRICULUM TRAINER RECORD RETENTION GUIDELINES

All curriculum trainers shall maintain a secure system of recordkeeping that include the following:

- Attendance rosters that list trainees legal name and to include AM and PM sign in sheets.
- Course Evaluations of each participant.
- Approved Peer Support Core Curriculum submission form and all attachments.
- Any OCA approved changes to trainers or curriculum content.
- Competency measures documentation.
- The legal name of all trainees that successfully complete the training and are issued a certificate of completion.
Trainer must retain the above records for a minimum of three (3) years. All approved curriculum and course work are subject to audit by the Division of Behavioral Health. Nebraska approved curriculums will be posted on the DBH OCA website. Curriculums will be approved for a period of three (3) years.

If there is a change in trainers or curriculum content, the change needs to be submitted to the DBH OCA for approval within thirty (30) days prior to implementing the proposed change or presentation of the curriculum. Curriculum providers will need to reapply for curriculum approval every three years by completing the Peer Support Core Curriculum Submission online application.

All Curriculum Submission forms will be reviewed in the order in which they are received and within approximately thirty (30) business days from the date of receipt. The person submitting the curriculum will be notified via the email address provided on the curriculum submission application once the curriculum is approved, denied, or should additional information need to be provided.

VI. OPTIONAL APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

The purpose of the optional application review process is to determine if the Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) Office of Consumer Affairs (OCA) accurately, adequately and fairly reviewed the application content. A letter sent to the DBH OCA requesting a review must be received by the division within 30 days of the notification of the denial determination letter sent to the applicant from the DBH OCA. A person shall be considered notified of the DBH OCA determination three days after the relevant date of mailing. The written request for review by the applicant will be sent to the DBH OCA Administrator who will thoroughly review the complete application and supplemental materials to determine whether or not applicant’s denial or approval were just. The DBH OCA Administrator will consult with the DBH administrative team and applicant will be notified in writing as to the findings of the administrative team.