

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

“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

PEER SUPPORT CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION	2
II.	REQUIREMENTS FOR CPSS CERTIFICATION	3
III.	PEER RECOVERY EXAM	6
IV.	CPSS RECERTIFICATION INFORMATION AND APPLICATION	7
V.	CPSS REINSTATEMENT INFORMATION AND APPLICATION	8
VI.	PEER SUPPORT CORE CURRICULUM SUBMISSIONS GUIDELINES	10
VII.	PEER SUPPORT CORE CURRICULUM TRAINER RECORD RETENTION GUIDELINES	12
VIII.	APPEALS	13

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 certification of peer support professionals.

This certification is intended for self-disclosed consumers 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 Certified Peer Support Specialists (CPSS) must be prepared to share their experience and knowledge with others while working as part of an organized clinical and non-clinical care team.

The Certified Peer Support Specialist 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 and 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 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, and encourages continued professional growth and development as well as a recognized and billable professional certificate.

The guidance document lays out expectations and instructions for testing, Continuing Education Units (CEU), the initial certification, recertification, and reinstatement processes. It also includes the guidelines for trainers that include the minimum required Peer Support Core Curriculum competencies.

II. REQUIREMENTS FOR CPSS CERTIFICATION

Applicants will be required to complete an application located on the OCA website at <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Consumer-Advocacy.aspx>. Applicants will be asked to create a NIC ID. Applicants will be asked to provide the following:

AGE: Applicants must be at least 19 years old.

LAWFUL PRESENCE: Applicants must be United States citizens or qualified aliens and provide supporting documentation as requested.

RECOVERY/LIVED EXPERIENCE: This certification is designed and intended for self-disclosed consumers 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 must 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 having lived experience is required within the application.

BASIC EDUCATION: Applicants must provide verification of successfully completing a high school diploma or obtaining a GED.

PEER SUPPORT CORE CURRICULUM TRAINING: Applicants must obtain a certificate of completion of DBH OCA approved Peer Support Core Curriculum training. **NOTE: Peer Support Core Curriculum Training must be completed within 12 months immediately prior to the date of the application for the CPSS certification.**

ADULT AND CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES PORTAL REGISTRY: Applicants must successfully complete the Adult and Child Protective Services Portal Registry background check *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 the applicant has any misdemeanor(s) or felony convictions. Please provide all lifetime felony convictions and misdemeanor convictions within the last seven years immediately prior to the date of your CPSS application.

The Office of Consumer Affairs and Division of Behavioral Health understand, and value lived experience as a provider of peer services and a conviction does not automatically disqualify applicants from obtaining certification.

It does not matter whether the applicant reported the conviction on a previous application. Infractions, diversions, and dismissals do not need to be listed. Applicants who have pleaded guilty or who have been convicted of a criminal offense should check with the court system to determine if the conviction appears on their record as a misdemeanor. Misdemeanors can be processed through traffic courts; therefore, the application must include misdemeanor traffic violations.

Examples of Common Misdemeanors: This list is provided to help 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
- Unauthorized Use of Financial Transaction Device
- Assault
- Disorderly Conduct/Disorderly House
- Reckless Driving
- Driving under Suspension/Revocation
- License Vehicle without Liability Insurance
- Failure to Appear in Court
- False Information or Reporting
- Leaving the Scene of an Accident
- Operator not Carrying License
- Unlawful Display of Plates/Renewal Tab
- Park Rule Violation/Curfew Violation
- Dog at Large/Failure to Vaccinate Animal
- Littering/Fireworks
- Writing a Bad Check

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

- List the date of conviction(s) including the county and state in which the conviction(s) occurred. 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.
- If the applicant has had any conviction(s) outside of the State of Nebraska, a copy of the court record that includes the statement of charges and the final disposition must be included with the application.

Upon review of the application, additional information *may be requested* by the DBH OCA including: a copy of the entire court record related to all reportable felony and misdemeanor convictions, and an explanation of the circumstances leading to the conviction.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION(S) OR LICENSURE(S): If the applicant has ever held or currently holds another professional license or certification (for example: a medication aide, licensed alcohol and drug counselor, mental health practitioner, registered nurse, etc.), 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. Including, but not limited to, an official copy of the disciplinary action, including any charges, sanctions, and disposition.

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

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

CPSS CERTIFICATE EFFECTIVE DATES: Upon successful completion of the IC&RC Peer Recovery exam, the applicant will receive a certification card from the State of Nebraska DHHS Licensure Unit. This certification card will list the effective date and the date of expiration. The CPSS Certification will expire on September 1 in odd-numbered years.

III. PEER RECOVERY EXAM - INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATION & RECIPROcity CONSORTIUM (IC&RC) PEER RECOVERY EXAMINATION:

IC&RC Peer Recovery Examination *must be passed within 12 months* from the date the applicant receives the IC&RC test registration link. *It is recommended to register to test as soon as possible as test openings do fill up quickly.*

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://internationalcredentialing.org/exams>

The email notification the applicant receives from IC&RC includes instructions for exam registration and payment. Applicants must adhere to all IC&RC policies and procedures as outlined on the IC&RC web page

(<https://internationalcredentialing.org/>) 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 throughout Nebraska, thereby allowing applicants to test on a date, time, and location that is convenient for them. Applicants will receive information from IC&RC on registering for testing once an application for certification is approved by the State of Nebraska DBH OCA.

RETEST: Applicants who do not pass the IC&RC Peer Recovery (PR) exam can retest after a mandatory 90-day wait period from the previous PR exam date. Applicants will be sent retest instructions from the IC&RC if the applicant did not pass the exam.

NOTE: *All applicants must successfully complete the Peer Recovery exam within 12 months of the date the applicant is notified by IC&RC of approval to test and provided exam registration directions.*

For more detailed testing information including the study guides, please visit the IC&RC website: <https://internationalcredentialing.org/> or call IC&RC directly at (605)777-2039

IV. CPSS RECERTIFICATION:

Applicants will be required to complete an application located on the Office of Consumer Affairs website at <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Consumer-Advocacy.aspx>. Applicants will be asked to sign in with their existing NIC ID.

To re-certify, CPSS certificate holders will be required to complete an online CPSS recertification application along with an attestation of the completion of 20 continuing education units (CEUs) within the thirteen (13) Peer Support Core Curriculum domains. Six (6) CEUs must be in the domain of ethics.

Peer Support Core Curriculum domains include the following:

1. Engagement
2. Support
3. Lived Experience
4. Personalize Peer Support
5. Recovery Planning
6. Resources, Services & Supports
7. Health, Wellness & Recovery Skills
8. Crisis Management
9. Communication
10. Collaboration & Teamwork
11. Leadership & Advocacy
12. Professional Growth & Development
13. Ethics

NOTE: If an applicant was certified within 12 months of the expiration date of September 1 in odd-numbered years, the continuing education hours (CEUs), inclusive of six CEUs in Ethics, will be waived until the following renewal period. *The CPSS certificate holder will still need to complete the online re-certification application prior to the expiration of the certification on September 1 in odd-numbered years.*

CPSS RECERTIFICATION APPLICATION FEE: No application fee is charged by the State of Nebraska for recertifying as a CPSS.

CPSS RECERTIFICATION EFFECTIVE DATES: Upon successful CPSS recertification, the applicant will receive an email notification from the Office of Consumer Affairs (OCA) on their CPSS Recertification status. All approved recertifications can be found on the [State of Nebraska License Information System Search](#) where a copy of approved recertifications can be printed. This Recertification card will list the effective date and the date of expiration. The CPSS Recertification will expire on September 1, in odd-numbered years.

V. CPSS REINSTATEMENT

Applicants will be required to complete an application located on the Office of Consumer Affairs website at <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Consumer-Advocacy.aspx>. Applicants will be asked to sign in with their existing NIC ID.

Individuals with expired CPSS certifications have the option to request a reinstatement of their CPSS credential if they meet the following eligibility requirements:

- The expiration date of their CPSS certification is less than or equal to 24 months from the date of submitting the CPSS Reinstatement application; and
- The applicant must have completed the 20 Continuing Education Units (CEUs), with six of those hours being in ethics within the **24 months preceding the date of the [CPSS Reinstatement Application](#) submission.**
 - *For example: If a Peer's certification expired on September 1 of 2021, they would have until September 1 of 2023 to submit their reinstatement application. CEUs obtained between September 1 of 2021 and September 1 of 2023 would count towards the reinstatement process as long as they complete 20 CEUs with six of these CEU's being in the area of ethics.*

NOTE: *Any expired CPSS certification holder who has not applied for reinstatement within 24 months of their CPSS expiration date must complete the original CPSS certification process as outlined in [Section II. REQUIREMENTS FOR CPSS CERTIFICATION](#) of this document. This would include retaking a State of Nebraska-approved CPSS Core Curriculum training, completing the CPSS application, completing the IC&RC Peer Recovery exam, and submitting information related to prior misdemeanor and felony charges, in addition to other required components in [Section II of the CPSS Guidance Document](#).*

The applicant will need to upload a copy of each of the CEU classes 'Certificate of Completion'. The completion of 20 CEUs must fall within the 13 domains and related competencies. To view the specific competencies within each domain, click on the [Peer Support Core Curriculum Guidelines](#).

1. Engagement
2. Support
3. Lived Experience
4. Personalize Peer Support
5. Recovery Planning
6. Resources, Services & Supports
7. Health, Wellness & Recovery Skills
8. Crisis Management
9. Communication
10. Collaboration & Teamwork
11. Leadership & Advocacy
12. Professional Growth & Development
13. Ethics

CPSS REINSTATEMENT APPLICATION FEE: No application fee is charged by the State of Nebraska for reinstating the CPSS credential.

CPSS REINSTATEMENT EFFECTIVE DATES: Upon the successful reinstatement of the CPSS credential, the applicant will receive an email notification from the Office of Consumer Affairs on their CPSS Recertification status. All approved reinstatements can be found on the [State of Nebraska License Information System Search](#) where a copy of approved reinstatements can be printed. This Reinstatement card will list the effective date and the date of expiration. The CPSS Reinstatement will expire on September 1, in odd-numbered years.

***NOTE:** If an individual does not apply for reinstatement within 24 months of their certification expiring, the individual will need to complete the original CPSS certification process as outlined in Section II. REQUIREMENTS FOR CPSS CERTIFICATION including re-taking the CPSS Core Curriculum training and testing.*

VI. 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 wanting to provide Peer Support Core Curriculum training should complete the online application listed below for review and approval by the DBH OCA.

The DBH OCA will either 1) ask for feedback seeking additional information, 2) approve the curriculum, or 3) deny 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 60 hours of the 13 Domains and associated competencies, including 10 hours of ethics. Curriculums will be submitted via the online [Peer Support Core Curriculum Training Submission application](#).

There is a ‘save and continue’ feature that allows for completing the application over an extended period of time. A login and password will need to be created to utilize this feature.

The application information should include the following:

- 10 hours of ethics must be included within the sixty (60) hour total curriculum hours.
- 40 hours must be live interactive hours.
- Any hours more than 40 may be provided as live interactive OR 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.
- Specify the “method of delivery” of each competency. EXAMPLE: page 3 of 18-page PowerPoint file named ‘Domain 1 PowerPoint’, 16-minute video file named ‘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 13 Domains.
- Identify the ‘competency measure’ that will be used for each Domain to include the passing score – i.e., a 20-question quiz with a 75% minimum passing score.
- List the total number of hours spent in each of the 13 Domains to equal a minimum total of 60 hours of Peer Support Core Curriculum training to include a minimum of 10 hours of ethics.
- The training manual.
- Daily training agenda.
- Attendance rosters that list trainees’ legal names and include AM and PM sign-in sheets.
- Cancellation/Rescheduling Policy.
- A minimum of one trainer should hold the Nebraska 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 of one trainer for up to 10 trainees.
- Dates and attendance rosters for each day of the training.
- **Interactive teaching strategies are recommended for core competencies.**

The following is a list of the 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](#).

1. Engagement
2. Support
3. Lived Experience
4. Personalize Peer Support
5. Recovery Planning
6. Resources, Services & Supports
7. Health, Wellness & Recovery Skills
8. Crisis Management
9. Communication
10. Collaboration & Teamwork
11. Leadership and Advocacy
12. Professional Growth & Development
13. Ethics

VII. PEER SUPPORT CORE CURRICULUM TRAINER RECORD RETENTION GUIDELINES

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

- Attendance roster that lists trainees' legal names.
- Curriculum Provider Training Tracking form for every training.
- Course Evaluations, as provided to approved curriculum providers by the DBH OCA, from all training participants.
- Approved Peer Support Core Curriculum submission form and all attachments. Letter of curriculum approval from the DBH OCA.
- Any OCA-approved changes to trainers or curriculum content AFTER the initial curriculum approval.
- Competency measures documentation.
- The legal name of all trainees who successfully complete the training and are issued a certificate of completion.

Trainers must retain the above records for a minimum of three years. All approved curriculum and coursework 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 years.

If there is a change in trainers or curriculum content, the change needs to be submitted to the DBH OCA via the online 'Applicant Additional Information Request' form as listed: https://appengine.egov.com/apps/ne/additional_information_request for approval within 30 days *prior to implementing the proposed change or presentation of the curriculum.* Curriculum providers will need to reapply for curriculum approval every three 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 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 or denied, or if additional information needs to be provided.

VIII. APPEALS

A CPSS applicant or training curriculum applicant who is issued a denial or disciplinary action may request an appeal in writing within 90 days of the date the denial is mailed. Appeals will be conducted according to Title 465 of the Nebraska Administrative Code. The person requesting an appeal may submit a Request for Fair Hearing using DHHS form DA-6 but also may appeal orally (which should be documented by the staff member on the phone call or meeting with the person) or in writing via a letter or email. An appeal should be sent to DHHS.PeerCertification@nebraska.gov.