

CERTIFIED PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The life experience of someone living with a mental illness or co-occurring diagnosis is best understood by someone who has also experienced a similar journey. Professional certification lends credibility to the individual professional and ensures quality services are received by the individual in care.

WHO CAN BE A CERTIFIED PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST?

Peer Support Specialists:

- Are at least eighteen (18) years of age and able to work legally in the United States
- Have a high school diploma or GED at minimum
- Have lived experience with a mental illness and recovery
- Have completed the approved Idaho Peer Specialist training
- Have completed the requirement for hours worked depending upon education
- Have completed the required hours of supervision
- Have submitted an application for certification

WHY SHOULD I GET CERTIFIED?

To provide Peer Support Specialist services in the State of Idaho, you must be certified in the State of Idaho. Certification allows for Peer Support Specialist services to be billed and payment received for rendering those services.

CAN I GET A JOB WITHOUT CERTIFICATION? The State of Idaho requires certification of Peer Support Specialists for Peer Support services to be funded by state and federal funds. Most agencies in Idaho that provide Peer Support Specialist services and receive state or federal funds or reimbursements from third party payers do require certification. Check with your potential employer. Your employer should know and/or have the requirements listed in the job description.

If you have obtained a certificate in another state and are applying by reciprocity, you must have completed training and a certification exam for that certificate in the last two years from the date you are applying for reciprocity in the State of Idaho. Please contact Jannus, Inc. for information about upcoming trainings.

HOW DO I APPLY TO BE A CERTIFIED PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST?

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) will accept applications by mail at:

450 W. State St.

Boise, ID 83702

Attn.: Peer Support Specialist Oversight Committee

Applications are accepted by email at PeerSpecCert@dhw.idaho.gov

Applications submitted by email must be in a jpeg or pdf format. Applications submitted in any other electronic format than listed above cannot be processed.

The state of Idaho offers a certification for one year.

- **Full certification:** This applies to an applicant who has completed a Idaho approved training, provided supporting documentation and has completed the requirements regarding work experience with supervision. If the application is for reciprocity (previously certified), the applicant has also provided documentation any continuing education/training obtained since their original Peer Support Specialist training.

If you apply for certification and do not have the required work or volunteer experience and supervision, you may apply for certification and be granted a 6-month certificate which will allow you to obtain the required work/volunteer experience.

The state of Idaho has two types of applications.

Initial application: This form is used when someone has never been certified as a Peer Support in the state of Idaho, or a certification has expired and there is need to reapply.

Renewal application: This form is used to renew an active certification for another full year.

Please ensure that you have the most up to date address, phone number and email address on your application.

WHERE DO I GET AN APPLICATION AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

Visit

- <http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Medical/MentalHealth/PeerSpecialistsFamilySupportPartners/tabid/2935/Default.aspx>, or
- PeerSpecCert@dhw.idaho.gov

Or contact:

Peer Support Specialist Oversight Committee (208)-639-5720

HOW LONG WILL THE PROCESS TAKE? The DBH Peer Certification Oversight Committee will make all efforts to process your application within approximately twenty-eight (28) days of receipt of application.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF I AM CERTIFIED?

- If your application for certification is granted, you will receive an official certificate in the mail with an accompanying congratulatory letter. Please include on your application a current email in the event a certificate is emailed to you.
- If your application for certification is denied, the letter you receive will include your rights to grieve the decision.
- Located on the DBH Peer Support Specialist website is a list of those with an active certification. To access the list, you will be directed to a page regarding a disclosure and once submitted, you may be granted access to the list.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE ALL THE REQUIREMENTS WHEN I SUBMIT AN APPLICATION?

If you have completed your required training, but do not have a way to obtain your required work/volunteer experience and/or supervision hours, you may apply for certification and be granted a certification that is valid for six months. In those six months, you will be able to work to obtain your required work experience and supervision hours.

If you do not have the following documents at the time of initial application, your application may be denied due to being incomplete.

- A signed complete application (2 pages)
- Documentation of your education (transcript or diploma)
- A copy of your training certificate

- A copy of your letter of notification from your training entity
- A signed Acknowledgment of the Code of Ethics and Behavioral Health Standards.

When you come to the end of the six (6) month certificate, you just need to submit the remaining documents. There is no need to submit any continuing education requirements. Continuing education/training hour requirements are for those applicants that are renewing their certification and have been practicing longer than 6 months as a Peer Support Specialist. The six (6) month certificate is still part of the initial application.

You are required to submit the Work/Volunteer Experience Summary form which reflects the completion of your work hours and supervision hours by the expiration date on your six month certificate. Failure to do so will result in a lapse in your certification and you will need to reapply in order to reactivate your certification.

WHAT DO I NEED TO SUBMIT ONCE I HAVE FINISHED MY WORK/VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE? Once you have completed your work/volunteer experience, please submit a Work/Volunteer Experience Summary Form documenting the work you have completed and the supervision received. Please **DO NOT** submit any time sheets, pay stubs, or any documentation that includes protected health information. If you do so, this is a HIPPA and ethical violation and may impact your ability to receive certification and employment.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN BY SUPERVISION HOURS? Depending upon your level of education you may be required to complete 100 or 200 hours of supervised work/volunteer experience. A Peer Support Specialist is also required to have twenty (20) supervision hours to ensure quality and consistency of services delivered. Typically this would mean 1 hour of supervision for 40 hours of work.

Supervision may be obtained in a one-on-one and/or group format. A group format consists of more than one individual in direct contact with the identified supervisor. Supervision should not be comprised of only group supervision. No more than one half of the required 20 hours is permitted to be in a group format.

If you participate in a group supervision format, please include documentation of topics covered in the group supervision.

You can document your work/volunteer experience and supervision hours on the Work/Volunteer Experience Summary Form. This form is best if submitted after your required hours are completed.

WILL MY PREVIOUS WORK EXPERIENCE COUNT TOWARDS MY REQUIRED SUPERVISED WORK EXPERIENCE? The State of Idaho requires that once a Peer Specialist has completed an Idaho approved training, then they must obtain supervised work/volunteer experience for certification. The supervised work/volunteer experience is to be completed following your training, however, should you have experience that directly correlates with Peer Support Services, The Division of Behavioral Health may review your application with documentation of experience on a case by case basis. You will need to submit a Work/Volunteer Experience Summary form to document your hours worked, and hours of supervision following completion of supervised work hour requirement.

WHAT TYPE OF CREDENTIALS DOES MY SUPERVISOR NEED TO HAVE? The Division of Behavioral Health recommends the following qualifications for an appropriate supervisor as someone who is a degreed professional with a degree in a Human Services field and has supervisory capacity in the respective agency.

If you will be billing for the Peer Services you provide, please check with your agency to ensure that they have completed the appropriate steps regarding supervision with the corresponding payment sources.

WHAT IF I CAN NOT PASS A BACKGROUND CHECK? The Division of Behavioral Health does offer a background check waiver. This waiver is available for those who are applying for a work/volunteer position **only** at a state regional office or those applying for employment at a substance use disorders agency.

The background waiver is not recognized by the behavioral health managed care contractor in the State of Idaho and therefore not available for those working in a community mental health agency.

WHAT IF I GET DENIED? If you receive a denial letter from the DBH regarding your Certification application, you have a right to submit a formal grievance requesting an administrative review. Please seek out the grievance process details at the website

<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Medical/MentalHealth/PeerSpecialistsFamilySupportPartners/tabid/2935/Default.aspx>

- You may submit a grievance via email to: PeerSpecCert@dhw.idaho.gov

Or in writing to

Division of Behavioral Health
Grievance Process

450 W. State St. 3rd floor
Boise, ID 83702

RECIPROCITY:

The Division of Behavioral Health will accept an application for reciprocity if you were certified in another state.

If you are seeking certification through reciprocity because you were previously certified in another state or practiced in another state, please submit documentation of your previous certification training. Provide documentation regarding the certifying body or organization in order for this information to be verified.

- An appropriate applicant will have completed and passed a training and certification exam within the last two years from the date of application.
- Complete the Statement of Personal Experience which is included in the application.
- Provide documentation of any Continuing Education/training hours you have received since your certification up to your application through the DBH.
- Provide documentation of Education completed.
- Complete the Code of Ethics and Behavioral Health Standards affidavit.

Please submit a complete application with the above requirements. Applications that are missing any parts of the requirements for reciprocity will be denied for being incomplete.

I ATTENDED A PREVIOUS PEER SPECIALIST TRAINING AND RECEIVED A CERTIFICATE. IS MY CERTIFICATION FROM THAT TRAINING STILL VALID? If you attended a previous training for Peer Support Specialist in the State of Idaho and received a certificate, your certificate from that training and certification exam will be valid until December 31, 2015. Beginning January 1, 2016, you will need to complete the Idaho approved training for Peer Support Specialists and apply for certification following the completion of the Idaho approved training.

I ATTENDED TRAINING FROM A DIFFERENT TRAINING ENTITY; WILL I BE ABLE TO APPLY FOR CERTIFICATION? The Division of Behavioral Health recognizes that there is a need for Peer Support Specialist Services in the community and recognizes the need for training in addition to the Idaho –Approved trained through Jannus. In response to the need, the Division has implemented a process to allow for other available trainings to be considered for certification requirements.

You may request technical assistance at PeerSpecCert@dhw.idaho.gov whether the training you have taken or intend to take will meet the training requirements set forth in the DBH standards.

You may be able to apply for certification if the training you attended or desire to attend meets the DBH standard and had the following requirements: The curriculum used by the desired training entity is based upon the Appalachian Group/DBSA model, there is a process for screening all training applicants for first-person lived experiences with a mental illness or co-occurring, and a process for assessing a trainees' knowledge and skill level. Speak with the organization offering the training to inquire about whether the training meets the standards set forth by DBH.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY CONTINUING EDUCATION OR TRAINING HOURS WILL QUALIFY?

Continuing education or training following certification is a component to maintain your certification. You may participate or attend webinars, classroom-based education or training, or workplace training. Possible training topics are, but not limited to: Recovery, Trauma Informed Approaches in Mental Health, Interpersonal Skills and Communication, Relationship Dynamics, Empowerment, Diversity, Cultural Sensitivity, Local & State Behavioral Health system topics, Ethics, Use of Recovery Story, Responding to Crisis, and or Wellness. At least one hour of the Continuing Education/training hours is required to be in Ethics, annually. You can view the Behavioral Health standard for Peer Support Specialist Services on the website indicated below. There you can see a more detailed list in Standard 1.9.

<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Medical/MentalHealth/PeerSpecialistsFamilySupportPartners/tabid/2935/Default.aspx>

- Submit with your Renewal application a copy of your certificate of attendance or certificate of completion. Ensure that the certificate documents the topic/title of the training, who provided the training, and how many hours you participated.

Continuing Education Units/Training hours do not need to be submitted if you have a 6-month certificate in order to gain work/volunteer experience.

HOW LONG IS MY CERTIFICATION GOOD FOR?

Your full certification is valid for one year from the date of issuance. If you were granted a six-month certificate, your six-month certificate and letter will indicate when your six-month certificate will lapse. If you have a six-month certificate, it is your responsibility to

submit the remaining requirements to be granted for the remaining six-months for a total of a year.

It is your responsibility to keep track of your recertification date; no reminders will be sent.

When it is time to renew your year certificate, you will need to go to:

<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Medical/MentalHealth/PeerSpecialistsFamilySupportPartners/tabid/2935/Default.aspx> and complete your renewal application. This includes documenting your continuing education/training hours earned during the last certification period.

The renewal application must be postmarked on or before the expiration date as shown on your certificate. It is recommended that you submit the application well in advance of the expiration date. For example: certificate will expire 10/31/2016, submit your application or additional documents by 10/15/2016 at the latest to allow for processing.

If your application is not complete and received on or by the date shown on your certificate, any Peer Support services provided may not be reimbursable due to your Certification being invalid.

WHAT IF MY NAME, ADDRESS, E-MAIL OR SUPERVISOR CHANGES? If you have had a change in your demographic information or change in employment that affects your supervised work/volunteer hours, please call the Peer Support Specialist Voice Mail (208) 639-5720 or email PeerSpecCert@dhw.idaho.gov with the changes to your application information. **It is your responsibility to update the Division of Behavioral Health regarding any of these changes.**

If your supervisor changes due to a change in the agency you are obtaining your Supervised Work experience under, you may submit as many Work/Volunteer Experience Forms as needed to document your supervised work.

CAN SOMEONE CALL ABOUT THE STATUS OF MY APPLICATION? We will not divulge information about an individual's application to anyone unless that individual calls inquiring about their own application. Additionally, we will not divulge pertinent information such as demographic information about an applicant to anyone other than that applicant.

If an agency representative desires to check the status of an applicant, they may apply to view the list of certified Peer Specialists at the Health and Welfare Peer website. The link is below.

<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Medical/MentalHealth/PeerSpecialistsFamilySupportPartners/tabid/2935/Default.aspx>

IS THERE A LIST OF CERTIFIED PEER SPECIALISTS? Yes, you may apply for access to the list of certified Peer Specialist through the Health and Welfare Website for Peer Specialists.

<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Medical/MentalHealth/PeerSpecialistsFamilySupportPartners/tabid/2935/Default.aspx>

THE APPLICATION STATES I NEED TO SUBMIT A LETTER OF NOTIFICATION.

WHAT IS THAT, AND WHERE DO I OBTAIN IT? The Letter of Notification is documentation from your training entity that you passed the certification test and your skills in the training were assessed. It is a process where a newly trained Peer Support Specialist can receive notification about their newly acquired skills as a Peer provider or areas that may need improvement. If you attended the training through Jannus, you will receive a letter in the mail regarding your test and skills assessment. If you attended training from another training entity, please inquire with the training entity about this type of notification letter.

CAN I LOSE MY CERTIFICATION? Your certificate may be Denied, Revoked or Suspended based upon the following determinations.

Applications may be denied when:

- The application does not contain all the required documentation for certification or renewal.
- The applicant has not attended the training, or the training attended did not meet Idaho's minimum requirements.

Applications may be revoked or suspended when:

- There has been a Code of Ethics or Behavioral Health standards violation.
- An individual has requested their certification to be revoked or suspended.

If the Peer Certification Oversight Committee has made a determination that enacts a denial, revocation or suspension of a certification, the person affected by the determination has an opportunity to grieve the decision.

The individual affected by the denial, revocation, or suspension disposition will receive a disposition letter within thirty (30) days of receipt of determination.

IF I WANT TO FILE A COMPLAINT, HOW DO I DO THAT? A complaint is a concern about a potential violation of the Code of Ethics or the Behavioral Health standards. If you desire to file a complaint, you may contact the Peer Certification Oversight Committee at 208-639-5720 or at PeerSpecCert@dhw.idaho.gov.

You will be asked information about the nature of the complaint, who is involved, when the issue occurred, whether you wish to remain anonymous or other pertinent information related to your complaint. You will be asked to submit this information in writing.

The Peer Certification Oversight committee will review the complaint within twenty-eight (28) days of receipt.