

Wisconsin Public Psychiatry Network Teleconference (WPPNT)

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**Peer Specialists**  
*Igniting Recovery*

Improving Recovery Outcomes

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## What is a Peer Specialist?



**A Peer Specialist** is a person who has not only lived the experience of mental illness but also has had formal training in the peer specialist model of mental health supports. They use their unique set of recovery experiences in combination with solid skills training to support peers who have mental illness.

**Peer Specialists** actively incorporate peer support into their work while working within an agencies team support structure as a defined part of the recovery team.

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## A Brief History of the WI Peer Specialist Movement...

- In 2006 discussion began within the Department of Health Services about developing a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) program. Research of other states regarding their programs was done. Georgia has the most established CPS Program in the country (15 years) with over 1,000 CPS to date. They were the first state to have CPS services billable through Medicaid.
- Other states including Michigan, Minnesota, Kentucky, Illinois and Massachusetts had established programs.

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## A Brief History of the WI Peer Specialist Movement...

- Currently, 60% of the States have CPS Programs.
  - The Peer Specialist Committee of the Wisconsin Recovery Implementation Task Force (RITF) was tasked to begin building the program as an advisory body to the Department of Health Services Bureau of Prevention, Treatment and Recovery.
  - Between the years of 2007-2009 the Core Competencies, Code of Ethics, and generalized job description were developed as well as the review and approval of four existing national trainings that would teach to the WI Core Competencies and qualify individuals to take the WI Peer Specialist Certification Exam.
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## A Brief History of the WI Peer Specialist Movement...

- The first certification exam was proctored in January of 2010.
  - The first year of exams produced approximately 100 Certified Peer Specialists that were prepared to work with peers in the area of Mental Health Recovery.
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## Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialists...

Perform an important role as part of a Mental Health/Substance Use Disorder Recovery Team.

These Include:

- One to one support
- Group facilitation
- Information and education
- Job coaching
- Recovery mentoring
- Social integration
- Working on crisis stabilization

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## WI Certified Peer Specialists...



- There are currently 427 Certified Peer Specialists (CPS) in Wisconsin
- WI-CPS's are required to earn 20 hours of continuing education every two years to maintain their certification status. If their certification lapses they must retake the exam.

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## Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist Employment Initiative...



### Where Certified Peer Specialists are Employed...

- Crisis Services
- In and Outpatient Care
- Veteran's Hospitals
- Independent Living Centers
- Criminal Justice and Forensic Areas
- Community Resource Centers
- Drop In Centers and Clubhouses
- CSP-Community Support Program
- CCS-Comprehensive Community Services
- ADRC's-Aging and Disability Resource Center
- Family Care
- Homeless shelters
- Supported Living Arrangements

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## Peer Specialists on staff...



- According to a March/April 2015 Survey sent to WI Certified Peer Specialists:
- Peer Specialists in Wisconsin are now showing an increase in full-time positions. 46.6% are now working 31-40 hours a week.
- The average hourly wage in WI is now \$13.89/hr.(\$12.56 in 2014)
- WI-CPS are reporting that in 80.6% of employment situations there is more than one CPS on staff.

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## Peer Specialists on Staff...

- Of those CPS that responded almost 70% are employed
  - Only Certified Peer Specialists are billable to Medicaid. Medicaid rules require certification and clinical supervision.
  - WI-CPS are to be an active participant of a team in supporting a peer in their recovery. They are not a mental health technician limited to providing ancillary services without a clear therapeutic role.
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## Peer Specialists on Staff...

- The Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialists Employer Toolkit is being updated in 2016 to coincide with changes in the WI-CPS program. The toolkit offers guidelines for hiring, implementing and supporting CPS's on teams in various areas of employment.
  - Some of the most commonly asked questions by employers are:
    - 1. Do CPS take more sick days than other employees?  
*No. CPS do not require or utilize more sick days.*
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## Peer Specialists on Staff...

2. Should CPS's be included in staff meetings?  
*Yes. They are to be treated as any other employee and part of the ongoing recovery services for a peer.*
3. If I hire a Peer Specialist that used to be a consumer at our agency what should I do about their medical files?  
*Medical files should be secured and protected from viewing by other staff members. Again, the CPS is entitled to the same protections as everyone employed at the agency.*
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## Peer Specialists on Staff...

4. Are CPS's meant to be a cheaper replacement for Social Workers?  
*No. They are meant to be an important addition to a recovery team. Not to replace existing clinical staff.*
5. Are CPS's only capable of working part-time?  
*No. This is a decision to be made by the CPS and employer. If a person has SSI or SSDI benefits that could be affected by increased work, they should meet with a Benefits Counselor.*
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## Improved Outcomes...



- National Studies continue to show that having a Certified Peer Specialist on staff reduces consumers hospital stays, emergency room visits, crisis intervention and assists the consumer in a longer more sustainable recovery.
- This also means improved financial outcomes for the consumer and provider.
- Wisconsin is now considered to be a model for establishing CPS programs across the country.

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## Changes in the WI-CPS Program for 2016...

In 2015 The Core Competencies for WI-CPS program were changed to include the area of Substance Use Disorder. Core Competencies define the parameters of the Certification Exam and trainings. The Scope of Practice and Code of Ethics have also been updated to reflect the addition of Substance Use Disorder.

A new 'Wisconsin' Curriculum is being developed for the training of MH/SUD Peer Specialists.  
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## Changes in the WI-CPS Program for 2016...cont'd

The new curriculum will be the only state-approved one to qualify individuals to take the WI Peer Specialist Certification exam.

The certification exam has been re-written to include the new core competencies relating to substance use disorder. Individuals will have the opportunity to declare their scope of practice as Mental Health, Substance Use Disorder or Co-occurring.

These changes are scheduled to be implemented in 2016.

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## The Website...



The Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist  
Employment Initiative Website

[www.wicps.org](http://www.wicps.org)

- Certification
  - Recertification
  - Employment
  - New developments
  - Links & resources
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## Contact Information...



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Thank you!

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