

Formalizing Certification for Peer Support Services in Pennsylvania

- Peer Support Services (PSS) in Pennsylvania
 - 2,112 trained Certified Peer Specialists (CPS) in Pennsylvania (Sept 2011)
 - Estimated 58% employment rate among CPSs versus 15 - 25% for non-CPS with Serious Mental Illness
 - OMHSAS-approved vendors issue a certificate upon completion of required 10-day training program
- Certificate versus certification
 - No ethical code of conduct or accompanying legal structure and tracking system with a certificate-based program
 - Formal certification entails an official ethical code, legal structure, and tracking system to address accountability
 - Other differences: grandfathering, examination/initial certification, recertification
- Pennsylvania Certification Board (PCB)
 - Private, not-for-profit corporation (est. 1979)
 - Specializes in credentialing behavioral health professionals
 - Currently certifies Recovery Specialists (i.e. drug and alcohol peer specialists) in PA
- Exploratory Committee
 - Came together over the past year to investigate the feasibility of instituting a formal certification process under the PCB
 - Composed of OMHSAS staff, vendors, PCB staff, CPSs
 - Concluded that certification is feasible and recommended
- Exploratory Committee findings
 - Advantages of PCB certification
 - Enhanced prestige and professionalism
 - Semiannual newsletter and networking events
 - Ethical code and formal disciplinary procedure
 - CPS registry maintains service quality
 - Possible disadvantages
 - Fees
 - Two-step certification process
- CPS Feedback
 - Working CPSs on the Exploratory Committee and in the statewide PSS Workgroup support the proposal, recognizing the advantages of certification and believing the fees to be very affordable
- Next steps
 - Obtain a signed MOU from the Deputy Secretary
 - Insert new language into the MA Handbook, if deemed necessary
 - Conduct statewide informational presentations/discussion sessions
 - Develop a uniform CPS exam