

Senate Government Oversight Committee

Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS)

Occupational Licensure Review

June 26, 2024

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Government Oversight Committee, my name is Jonathan Baker. I serve as the Chief Business Officer for the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and appreciate the opportunity to provide additional information about Ohio's peer support workforce.

OhioMHAS certifies three types of Peer Supporters:

1. Certified Peer Recovery Supporter, an individual who has lived experience with behavioral health issues, is in recovery, and is at least 18 years of age. They are employed in community behavioral health organizations, homeless shelters, supported living facilities, hospitals, prisons, veteran's services organizations, specialized dockets, first episode psychosis teams, emergency rooms, and more.
2. Certified Youth Peer Supporter, an individual who has lived experience with the behavioral health care system, the foster care system, the juvenile court system, and the criminal justice system. They are more commonly employed in youth serving organizations, provide substance prevention-based work in high school settings, work as part of Mobile Response Stabilization Services (MRSS) teams, and as part of Intensive Home-Based Treatment Services (IHBT).
3. Certified Family Peer Supporter, the caregiver of a person with behavioral health challenges who has experience navigating service systems on behalf of an individual. They are employed in environments connected to children serving organizations.

Wages for peer supporters vary from employer to employer and range from \$14 to \$30 an hour.

As part of our efforts to streamline services and provide more efficiency in our operations, OhioMHAS is currently exploring transitioning Ohio's peer certification process to the Ohio Chemical Dependency Professionals (OCDP) Board. The OCDP Board licenses and certifies prevention and substance use disorder treatment professionals. In 2019, OhioMHAS held listening sessions across the state to better understand the challenges and barriers experienced by the peer profession. The transition to the CDPB was recommended as a result of feedback provided during those sessions that a licensing board is better equipped to provide the necessary applications, renewals, protections, benefits, and continued ethical oversight. The CDPB has an established infrastructure and experience in managing and administering multiple certifications, licenses, and endorsements.



On May 20, the Controlling Board approved a transfer from OhioMHAS of \$99,883 to support a full-time position at the CDPB. This position will support the current certification and licensure needs of the Board, while also working with OhioMHAS to prepare and implement a plan to transition peer support certifications from OhioMHAS to the CDPB.

Additionally, OhioMHAS has made the following changes to the peer certification process with a focus on removing barriers and providing support for the profession:

- Established a certification training requirement of 40 hours, lower than the number of training hours required in 30 other states. Most states require between 40 and 80 hours of training according to a [2024 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration \(SAMHSA\) report](#).
- Reduced the time from 5 years to 2 years of required experience to become a supervisor of the peer support workforce.
- Provided flexibility by allowing the training and exams to be administered online instead of in-person only.
- Partnered with community organizations to provide continuing education trainings at no cost to the peer support workforce.
- Aligned educational requirements with other licensing boards and employers to reduce the barrier of individuals becoming certified and not able to qualify for employment.
- The SFY 2024-25 biennial operating budget created a new mental health peer recovery support service, creating parity for mental health and substance use disorder peer supporters.

Some examples of certified peer supporters in the workforce include:

- OhioSTART (Sobriety, Treatment and Reducing Trauma), a program that helps public children services agencies bring together caseworkers, behavioral health providers, and family peer mentors to help families struggling with co-occurring child maltreatment and substance use disorder.
- The eTMS program initiated by former State Senator Frank Hoagland, this program includes peer supporters as part of the provider network team to treat veterans, first responders, and law enforcement officers. Perry Behavioral Health Choices is the provider who OhioMHAS has contracted with to lead this program, and they are working with us to certify peers for the program.
- The Centers in Cuyahoga County, Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health, and the Nord Center in Lorain County all employ peers who serve on First Episode Psychosis (FEP) teams. FEP provides treatment and support to individuals and families affected by a first episode of psychosis.
- RI International, a provider that serves individuals in a mental health and/or substance use disorder crisis in Franklin County, employs peers and peer supervisors.



- Hospitals including MetroHealth, St. Vincent Charity Medical Center, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, University of Toledo Medical Center, and University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center all employ peer supporters.

Thank you, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

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