



## Helpful Information for Individuals Completing the Peer Support Counselor Certification Process

### How do I apply to become a Certified Peer Counselor?

- You need to complete the two-page application provided by the Washington State Mental Health Division. The application can be downloaded at <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/peer.shtml>.
- The application must be submitted to the address listed on the back of the form.
- There is always a waiting list for the trainings. Be sure to submit your application as soon as possible so that you can be placed on the waiting list.
- You do not need to submit anything else with your application. You do not need to include letters of recommendation, certificates of completion, resumes, etc.

### What can I expect after I submit my application?

- You will receive a letter acknowledging the receipt of your application.
- You will receive a letter letting you know that your application was accepted and you have been placed on the waiting list.
- When your name is ready to come off the waiting list, you will receive a letter about a month before the actual training letting you know that you are scheduled for that training.

### How does the waiting list work?

There are four priority groups for the waiting list as determined by the Mental Health Division:

- First priority is given to Individuals employed by a licensed community mental health agency or their subcontractor(s);
- Second priority is given to Individuals from an RSN with low numbers of certified Peer Counselors;
- Third priority is given to individuals currently volunteering in a licensed community mental health agency or their subcontractor(s), or in the public mental health field;
- Lowest priority is given to all other applicants based on date the application was received.

### Registered Counselor Credential

- Under current law, a Certified Peer Counselor has to be a Registered Counselor through the State Department of Health. However the Registered Counselor (or R.C.) credential is being abolished and replaced with a number of new credentials. As of July

1, 2009, the Department of Health is no longer issuing new Registered Counselor credentials.

- It is not yet clear what the new legal definition of a Certified Peer Counselor will be or when the definition will be changed. However it is no longer possible to obtain a Registered Counselor credential.
- Unfortunately there is currently no solution to this problem. If you wish to become a Certified Peer Counselor it is suggested that you go ahead and start the process. You can complete the additional requirements (if any) once they have been developed.

## **Volunteer Work**

- If you are not working or volunteering in the mental health field, it might be helpful to start volunteering in order to get your foot in the door. This will give you valuable experience in the mental health field, as well as bump your name up on the waiting list. CVAB (Consumer Voices Are Born) has a wide range of volunteer opportunities available. They can be reached at (360) 397-8050. You can also visit their website for more information at [www.cvabonline.com](http://www.cvabonline.com).
- If you start working or volunteering in the mental health field after you have already submitted your Certified Peer Counselor application, make sure to contact Bonnie Staples at the Mental Health Division and let her know so that you can be moved up on the waiting list. Bonnie can be reached at 1-888-713-6010 or [staplba@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:staplba@dshs.wa.gov).

## **What can I expect at the Peer Support Certification Training?**

- The training is currently being offered through the Washington Institute for Mental Health Research and Training and is usually held in Tacoma, WA.
  - This training lasts 5 days for 8 hours per day.
  - There are frequent breaks, usually one every hour or so.
  - The Mental Health Division will pay for your hotel room and meals will be provided.
  - You will be asked to share a hotel room with another individual taking the training.
- During the training, you will listen to a variety of presenters and speakers as well as have the opportunity to work in small groups and do some role-playing.
- A maximum of 25 people attend each training.

## **What can I expect from the Peer Support Certification Test?**

- Once you complete the training, you'll come back home and have some time to study.
- The test usually takes place in Tacoma about 3 weeks after the training.
- The test consists of a combination of multiple choice and true/false questions as well as an oral interview.

- You need to score at least an 80% on your test in order to pass.
- If you do not pass the test on your first try, you have 2 more chances.
- If you do not pass the test by your third try, you can take the training again and get 3 more chances to test.

### Helpful contact information related to the Peer Support Certification Process

#### **Bonnie Staples, Washington State Mental Health Division**

Role: Peer Support Program Manager, receives and approves applications, manages the waiting list, sends the letters letting folks know when their application has been approved, when they will be invited to the training, when they are certified, etc.

Address: c/o DSHS Mental Health Division  
PO Box 45320  
Olympia, Washington 98504-5320

Phone: 1-888-713-6010

E-mail: staplba@dshs.wa.gov

#### **Melanie Green, Clark County Regional Support Network**

Role: Coordinates peer support efforts in Clark County

Address: c/o Department of Community Services  
PO Box 5000  
Vancouver, WA 98666

Phone: (360) 397-2130

E-mail: melanie.green@clark.wa.gov

Peer Support program information on the Mental Health Division website:

<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/peer.shtml>

Peer Support information on the Clark County website:

<http://www.clark.wa.gov/mental-health/recovery/peer.html>

If you have **any** questions about this process, please do not hesitate to contact

Melanie Green

Mental Health Recovery Coordinator

Clark County Regional Support Network

(360) 397-2130 or melanie.green@clark.wa.gov

This information is meant to be a compilation of helpful tips from the perspective of those who have gone through the process of becoming a Certified Peer Support Counselor. The Washington State Mental Health Division manages the program and the process and has the ultimate authority of the peer support counselor certification process.