

Emergency Department Peer Recovery Services

What is a peer supporter?

Peer supporters, also referred to as peers or Peer Recovery Specialists (PRS), are trained individuals who provide recovery support based on their own lived experienced of substance use and/or mental health disorder and recovery. Peer supporters...



Engage individuals in collaborative and caring relationships



Provide information about skills related to health, wellness, and recovery



Share lived experiences of recovery



Help individuals manage crises



Support recovery planning



Support collaboration and teamwork



Link to resources, services, and supports



Promote leadership and advocacy

What is a peer supporter NOT?

Peer supporters offer a very specific service, so it is important to know what they can offer and what is outside the scope of their role. Common misconceptions incorrectly equate a peer supporter with a:



Untrained Volunteer



Counselor or Therapist



12-Step Program Sponsor

What are the levels of peer supporters?

Based on experience, education, and training peer supporters can achieve different title designations. Below are the three levels of peer support in Virginia and requirements to obtain them.

Peer Supporter or Peer Recovery Specialist
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Successfully completed the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) 72-hour Peer Recovery Specialist (PRS) Training• May be working toward requirements for certification and registration

Certified Peer Recovery Specialist
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certified by the Virginia Certification Board• Completed DBHDS 72-hour PRS Training• Completed 500 hours of supervised peer support work• Passed the IC & RC PRS Certification Exam

Registered Peer Recovery Specialist
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Registered with the Virginia Board of Counseling• Must be a Certified PRS or have similar certification approved by DBHDS• Eligible to bill services to Medicaid

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What are the benefits of peer support services?

Most published studies indicate that the implementation of peers promotes **positive outcomes** for consumers of mental health and substance use recovery services¹. Peer support is associated with:



Reduced inpatient service use



Higher levels of empowerment



Improved relationships with providers



Reduced stigma associated with seeking and providing care



Increased engagement with healthcare and other services



Higher levels of hopefulness for recovery

Why should we bring peer support services into our ED?

Peer supporters offer uniquely specialized contributions for those in mental health or substance related crisis, including:



rapport Building: Because peers come with their own lived experiences, they can help build trust with patients that encourages engagement in other support services.



Bridging Treatment Gaps: Peers can serve as a connection between hospitals and continued recovery care at a CSB by setting patients up with appointments and supports.



Reducing Stigma: Peer supports can help educate hospital staff about recovery by sharing their experiences, offering trainings, and developing relationships with staff.



Trauma-Informed, Patient-Centered Support: Peers are a particularly valuable resource for patients who feel judged, discriminated against, or unwelcome in medical settings.



Additional ED Supports: Peers can assist case managers and social workers with discharge planning and provide warm hand-offs to CSB and community services.

How do I find out more about peer support services?

There are several documents that **share information about peer support and their contributions** in various setting. To access these resources or learn more, visit virginiasorsupport.org/peers or email SORSupport@omni.org.



[Measuring Outcomes of Peer Recovery Support Services Literature Review](#)



[Peer Support Services Implementation Guides](#)



[Bridging the Care Gap: A Toolkit for Developing ED Peer Support Programs](#)

¹ The OMNI Institute (2020). Measuring Outcomes of Peer Recovery Support Services. Submitted to Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Richmond, VA.