Certified Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Program

Certification Process & Resources

Last updated September 2023

Background

In alignment with the passage of Senate Bill 803 (SB 803), the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) recognizes certified Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialists as a new Medi-Cal provider type and Peer Support Services as a Medi-Cal benefit, effective July 1, 2022. California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) is the certifying entity for the state-approved Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification (PSSC) program.

California Mental Health Services Authority

CalMHSA

For more information visit:
CA Peer Certification
History of the Peer Movement
CalMHSA Program Overview

GettyImages-1152840785

> **Certified Medi-Cal Peer Support Services (CMPSS) are culturally competent individual and group services delivered by Certified Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialists.**

> **These services augment the SUD treatment services patients receive by promoting:**

- **Recovery**
- **Resiliency**
- **Engagement**
- **Socialization**

- **Self-sufficiency**
- **Self-advocacy**
- **Development of natural supports**
- **Identification of strengths**

> **CMPSS are provided through structured activities such as group and individual coaching designed to set and make progress toward recovery goals.**

1.Retrieved from Guidelines, Standards & Procedure Manual - CA Peer Certification on 5/26/2023

CalMHSA Certification website: CA Peer Certification

- Must be at least 18 years of age
- Posses a high school diploma or general equivalency degree (GED)
- Self-identify as an individual with lived-experience with process of recovery from a mental illness or substance use disorder, either as a consumer of these services or as parent, caregiver or family member of a consumer
- Have strong dedication to recovery and is willing to share their own experience of recovery
- Agree in writing to adhere to Medi-Cal Code of Ethics for Peer Support Specialists in California
- Complete training requirements for peer support specialist
- Pass state certification exam for Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification

Click here for the CalMHSA Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
More information about certification and how to apply at: About the Certification - CA Peer Certification

1.Guidelines, Standards & Procedure Manual - CA Peer Certification
2.LACDMH Peer Certification Workshop 8.17.2022. CalMHSA presentation

3

Initial Certification Requirements

> **All candidates are required to fill out an application to take the certification exam.**

1. Must be at least 18 years of age
2. Posses a high school diploma or general equivalency degree (GED)
3. Self-identify as an individual with lived-experience with the process of recovery from a mental illness or substance use disorder, either as a consumer of these services or as the parent, caregiver or family member of a consumer
4. Have a strong dedication to recovery and is willing to share their own experience of recovery
5. Agree in writing to adhere to the [Medi-Cal Code of Ethics for Peer Support Specialists](#) in California
6. **Complete the training requirements for a peer support specialist**
   1. **Training must be from a CalMHSA approved training entity. Click [here](#) for a list of approved training entities.**
7. Pass the state certification exam for Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification

1. [Initial Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Process – CA Peer Certification](#)

- **Plan to set aside at least 50 minutes to complete the application**
- Application time breakdown:
  - 5 minutes for registration
  - 30 minutes to watch the mandatory introduction video
  - 10-15 to upload all the necessary documents

  Click here for the Initial Process Website Navigation

  Substance Abuse and Prevention Control (SAPC) is no longer accepting names for scholarships at this time. If you are interested in being notified if additional scholarships become available, please contact: SAPC_ASOC@ph.lacounty.gov

GettyImages-1098407382

The following documents must be uploaded in jpeg, jpg, or pdf format only:
- ✓ Proof of identification (government issued ID, driver's license, passport)
- ✓ High school diploma, GED or any other advanced degree

1. Initial Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification with Scholarship – CA Peer Certification

Application Process Best Practices

- ❑ Create a new empty file folder on your desktop, as you find them, to place required documents to be uploaded to your application
- ❑ For the CA Peer Certification website save your log-in information and make sure to log-in with the same information each time
  - ➢ Right below the log-in you can click "Don't remember your password?" for assistance
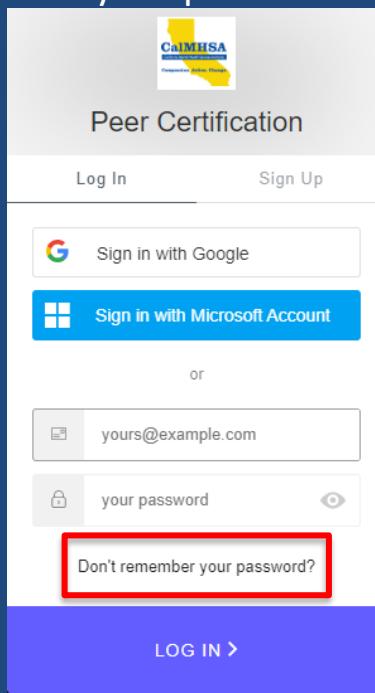
- ❑ Once registered you are required to confirm your email. Make sure to go to your email inbox and confirm.
- ❑ Notifications from CalMHSA will be sent to the email you provided
- ❑ Application revision requests
  - ➢ Applicants will be notified at least one (1) time within the thirty (30) calendar day processing time from the time the application was submitted
  - ➢ The notification will include information on what needs to be revised
  - ➢ Incomplete applications will be held by CalMHSA for ninety (90) calendar days after date of submission
  - ➢ Those that remain incomplete will be voided, fees forfeited, and will require submission of a new application, documentation and fees.

1. LACDMH Peer Certification Workshop 8.17.2022. CalMHSA presentation
2. Initial Certification Requirements - CA Peer Certification

6

Exam Information

When do I need to take the exam by?

- 12 months from your scholarship date of approval to take your exam

- To find out your date of approval:
  - Look for an email from CalMHSA with this info
  - Log into your CalMHSA profile
  - For questions, email peercertification@calmhsa.org

- If your date of approval was before December 18, 2022, then you have an automatic extension to take the exam BEFORE December 18, 2023.

Peer Support Specialist Certification Exam

[Peer Support Specialist Certification Exam - CA Peer Certification](#)

The Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist (PSS) Exam is 2.5 hours with 120 multiple choice questions

Offered through on-line proctoring or in-person testing centers

Results of the exam are provided immediately after taking the exam either in person or on-line

Approved candidates can take the exam up to 3 times during the 12-month approval period

To learn more about the development of the exam visit:
[Peer Support Specialist Certification Exam - CA Peer Certification](#)

Exam Administration

- The PSS Certification exam is administered by CalMHSA with third-party proctoring by Pearson VUE
- On the day of the exam, candidates must provide a valid, government-issued photo ID matching first and last name of letter of approval

On-line (live proctoring)

- Encouraged to use personal computer
- Review the Online Exam Instruction Guide - CA Peer Certification prior to testing
- Watch this short video to learn what to expect for testing on-line
- You'll be asked to take a photo of yourself, your ID and your testing area
- Must have an operational webcam, so that the proctor can see you at all times during the exam

In-person (testing center)

- For exam in-person locations visit: Exam In-Person Locations - CA Peer Certification
  - Alhambra
  - Pasadena
  - Culver City
  - Gardena
  - San Dimas
  - Westlake Village
- Watch this short video to learn more about the check-in process and testing experience for taking the exam in person

Exam Accommodations

- For candidates requesting reasonable accommodations, look at the Exam Comfort Aid List. If your request is listed in on this list, you don't need to submit an accommodation request.

- If your accommodation request wasn't listed on the Exam Comfort Aid List, complete CalMHSA Reasonable Accommodations form and submit it by email to PeerCertification@calmhsa.org **prior** to scheduling your exam

- Review the reasonable accommodations policy

- CalMHSA can take **up to 30 days** to review requests and will respond to candidates via email

ThinkstockPhotos-457528851.jpg

1. Retrieved from https://www.capeercertification.org/exam-accommodations/ - on 2/2/23

Canceling, Rescheduling, & Missed Exams

- **On-line (live-proctoring) exam:** can cancel or reschedule exam up to <mark>one hour before</mark> your scheduled appointment

- **In-person testing center:** can cancel or reschedule exam up to <mark>48-hours before</mark> your scheduled appointment

- If you miss cancellation window, you forfeit entire exam fee and will be considered a no-show

- If you miss your exam, you won't be able to reschedule until you submit a retake request and pay the associated fees to CalMHSA

- More information on how to reschedule or cancel your exam appointment can be found at Peer Support Specialist Certification Exam - CA Peer Certification

**Medi-Cal
Peer Support
Specialist Certification
Preparation Guide**

Exam Preparation Guide - English
Exam Preparation Guide - Spanish

The Guide is divided into 3 sections:

1. Knowledge to be tested in exam
2. Tips for preparing for exam
3. Examples of exam questions

The Guide is meant to help prepare for exam by highlighting what to expect. It isn't intended to be used as study material

13
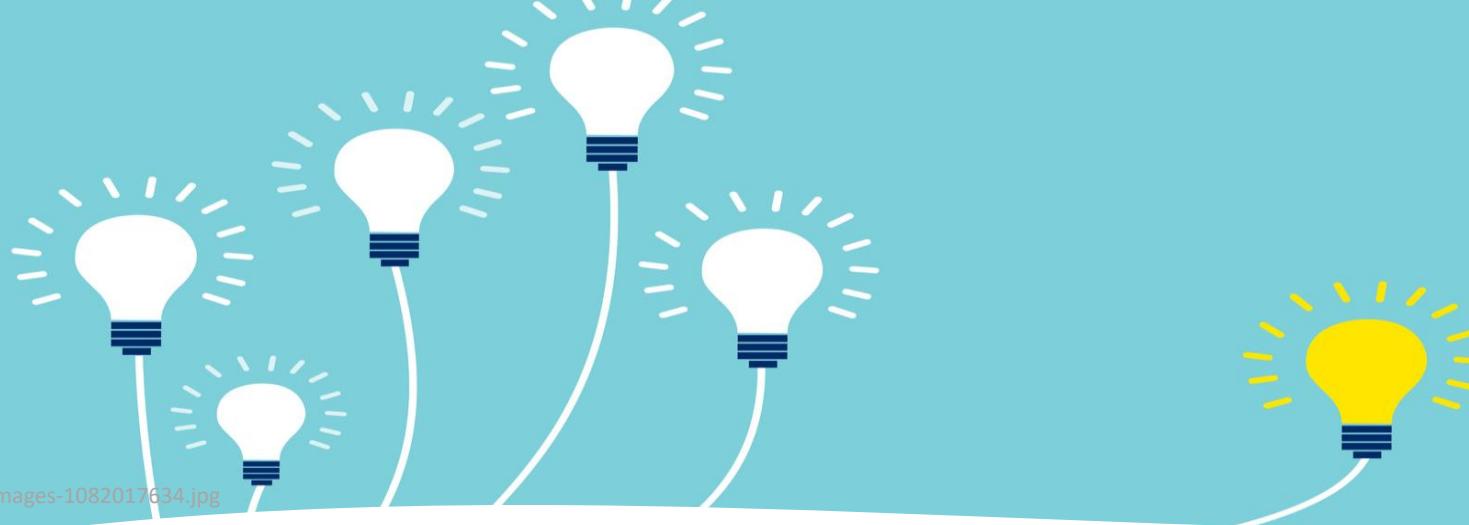
Concepts to be Familiar With

o Peer Support Specialist Core Competencies
  o [Core Competencies - CA Peer Certification](#)
o Peer Support Specialist Code of Ethics
  o [Code of Ethics - CA Peer Certification](#)
o Harm Reduction
  o [SAPC Harm Reduction](#) and [Harm Reduction | SAMHSA](#)
o Motivational Interviewing (MI)
  o [Motivational Interviewing | Psychology Today](#)
  o Visit [SAPC Trainings and Events](#) for information on the "Introduction to Motivational Interviewing: A Journey Through Meaningful Change" training
o Having a person-centered approach
  o [Person-Centered Care](#)

Note: Click on the links above in blue for more information.

GettyImages-1082017634.jpg

Test Taking Strategies

Read entire question and possible answer choices first before responding

Read question again and formulate your answer based on your experience

Eliminate unlikely answers first

Watch out for "NOT TRUE" or "EXCEPT" questions

After you've finished, go back and check your answers

Don't forget to breath! Test anxiety is common but doesn't last forever

1.Retrieved from https://flcertificationboard.org/wp-content/uploads/NCPS-Training-and-Test-Self-Assessment-2022.pdf on 2/3/23

Test Taking Reminders

- Trust your gut – You know more than you think you do!

- Use positive self-talk

- Don't forget to breathe – practice taking deep breaths you can use before, during and after test

- Get plenty of rest

- Stay hydrated and eat foods that can reduce stress and help you keep a calm stomach

GettyImages-1202521403.jpg

QUICK TIPS

Certification Renewal & Continuing Education (CE) Requirements

Biennial Certification Renewal

CalMHSA will notify certified Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialists ninety (90) days prior to date of expiration via email.

1. **Recertification is required every 2 years to maintain certification.**
2. Applicants must complete 20 hours of continued education prior to submitting the recertification application.
3. [Fees](#) must be paid at the time of submitting the application.
4. Application must be submitted online through the certification website.
5. Application must be submitted prior to date of expiration. Certifications are considered to expire immediately following the two-year expiration date from the last date of issuance.
6. Applications may be submitted up to 60 days prior to expiration.
7. Applicants must have a current and valid Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification in good standing.
8. Applicants must read and re-sign agreements to adhere to the Code of Ethics for Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialists in California.
9. Applicants attest to having met the twenty (20) hour of continued education requirement, inclusive of the six (6) hours of continued education in law and ethics.
10. Applicants shall maintain records of continued education hours for two (2) years from the date of request for renewal.

1. [Certification Renewal & Continuing Education Requirements - CA Peer Certification](#)

Continuing Education Requirements

- ➤ Must complete twenty (20) hours of continued education every two (2) years from the date of initial certification and thereafter for recertification.
- ➤ Included in the 20 hours a six (6) hour course on laws and ethics is required during each two-year cycle.
- ➤ Click **here** for more information

GettyImages-591837636.jpg

- ➤ For continuing education visit LA County Department of Public Health - Substance Abuse Prevention and Control - SAPC Trainings for a list of trainings available to all those in the SAPC network
- ➤ For questions on SAPC trainings contact: SAPC.CST@ph.lacounty.gov

Continuing Education (CE) Hours

- Training courses offered by the following are accepted by CalMHSA:
    - Any CalMHSA-approved training provider.
    - County Behavioral Health Departments, and its contracted network providers.
    - Accredited schools, including vocational education.
    - Professional certification and licensing boards (i.e., CAADE, CADTP, CAMFT, BBS, APA, Mental Health America (MHA), SAMHSA etc.).

- Evidence of participation must include:
    - Legal name of the CMPSS
    - Title of course, training, and/or event
    - Date(s) of participation and/or course completion
    - Event sponsor and/or training provider name (i.e., SAMHSA)
    - Number of direct instruction hours

- Records should be maintained for a minimum of two (2) years from the date of application for renewal

GettyImages-1202521403

Click **here** for more information

More Information & Contacts

CalMHSA Contact Information	
CalMHSA Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification website:	https://www.capeercertification.org/
Email CalMHSA at:	PeerCertification@calmhsa.org
Phone number: (279) 234-0699	Mon-Fri 8 am – 5 pm, excluding holidays

L.A. County Department of Public Health Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC)
http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/sapc/providers/programs-and-initiatives/certified-support-specialist.htm

GettyImages-1061148948.jpg

- ☐ Peer Services Toolkit: A Guide to Advancing and Implementing Peer-run Behavioral Health Services

- ☐ CalMHSA Peer Certification Program Dashboard

1. Hendry, P., Hill, T., Rosenthal, H. Peer Services Toolkit: A Guide to Advancing and Implementing Peer-run Behavioral Health Services. ACMHA: The College for Behavioral Health Leadership and Optum, 2014

21