



Doors to Wellbeing Quarterly

Newsletter

NEW NATIONAL OVERVIEW OF THE UNITED STATES CERTIFIED PEER SPECIALIST WORKFORCE

University of Illinois Chicago, Center on Mental Health Services Research and Policy, with the help of Live & Learn, Inc., have developed a National Overview of the United States Certified Peer Specialist Workforce!

The behavioral health peer support workforce is growing rapidly, currently numbering over 100,000 certified peer specialists. Peer specialists are people with lived experience who have initiated their own recovery and received training to support the recovery of others. As of 2024, 49 states and the District of Columbia have established statewide programs to train and certify peer specialists with lived experience of mental health and substance use challenges. Moreover, 47 states and the District of Columbia also fund at least some of their peer services using Medicaid dollars.

The new website holds a map of the US providing information for the following:

- Whether the state has a statewide peer certification program
- The number of trained and certified peer specialists in each state
- Types of peer certification available (e.g., mental health, substance use, youth, family, forensic)
- Whether peer services are Medicaid-reimbursable

Listen to a podcast on national peer support training and certification programs or download the transcript.

View the National Overview of the United States Certified Peer Specialist Workforce, here!



DOORS TO
WELLBEING

STAYING KIND IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES

A Peer Specialist's Perspective written by Katie Wilson

"How did you even get my number? Nevermind, never call me again." She said sharply. My face reddened, even though I was on the phone. I felt myself recoil. I've made more than 1000 calls to people to talk with them about the quality of the services they've received and I'd never felt that way on the other side of the phone before.

As a peer specialist, I've learned that kindness isn't just something we extend when it's easy—it's a practice, a skill, and sometimes, a challenge. In my work, I meet people from all walks of life, including those who are hurt, defensive, and closed off. Some are outright mean, dismissing my support or lashing out in frustration. It would be easy to take it personally, to let their negativity wear me down. But I try not to let that happen. Instead, I remind myself: their words and actions are often reflections of their pain, not of my worth.

Early in my journey, I used to feel the sting of harsh words. It felt unfair—after all, I was only trying to help. But over time, I've learned that staying open and kind in these moments isn't about them; it's about me. It's about who I choose to be, regardless of the energy others bring into the space.

So how do I do it?

First, I practice **self-awareness**. When someone is rude or dismissive, I check in with myself: Am I feeling defensive? Am I carrying their energy as my own? Taking a breath and grounding myself reminds me that I don't have to mirror their negativity.

Second, I embrace **curiosity over judgment**. Instead of labeling someone as mean or closed-minded, I ask myself, "What might be going on beneath the surface?" Many times, resistance comes from fear, past trauma, or a sense of powerlessness. When I approach with curiosity rather than frustration, I create space for understanding instead of division.

Third, I set **healthy boundaries**. Kindness doesn't mean accepting mistreatment. If someone is being verbally aggressive, I calmly but firmly let them know that I'm here to support, not to argue. If they're not in a place to receive that support, I respect where they are while protecting my own emotional well-being.

Lastly, I remind myself of my **own humanity**. I won't always get it right. Sometimes, someone's words will hit me harder than I expect. When that happens, I give myself grace, step away if needed, and return to my own self-care practices. Staying open-hearted in a tough world isn't about perfection—it's about intention.

At the end of the day, my role as a peer specialist isn't to change people but to be a steady presence of hope. Kindness isn't always easy, but in a world that can feel harsh and disconnected, it's one of the most radical and powerful things we can choose.



Taking Action for Whole Health and Wellbeing

Research Study

**Attention
College
Students
of All Ages!**



**YOU MAY BE
COMPENSATED UP TO
\$105 IN E-GIFT CARDS
AS A THANK YOU FOR
YOUR TIME!**

Taking Action is an online peer facilitated group process that supports individuals in creating a personalized system for recovering, sustaining, and/or improving their whole health and enhancing their lifestyle

We are looking for participants who:

- Are currently enrolled in college in the US and have at least 2 semesters left**
- Experience significant mental health challenges**
- Are 18 years or older**
- Have no prior Taking Action experience**

Participation entails:

- 3 online interviews**
- 5 online Taking Action group meetings if assigned to the intervention group, which will be delivered on the following dates:**

SUN MARCH 16 - APRIL 13 , 4:30-7PM EST

OR

THURS MARCH 20 - APRIL 17 4:30-7PM EST



**Temple University
Collaborative**
On Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities

**If you are interested or have any questions,
please contact takingaction@temple.edu**

Fill out the **eligibility screening [here!](#)**

This study was approved by the Temple IRB under protocol number: 31680

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE ON COMMUNITY INCLUSION HAS RELEASED A NEW 2025 CALENDAR!

This year's calendar celebrates the stories of individuals who experience serious mental health conditions who have made a difference in their communities. These stories highlight the power of community participation to foster connections, a sense of purpose, and a feeling of mattering. We're inviting you to explore these stories and reflect on what you connect with.

This year's calendar is weekly calendar and journal, designed to encourage you to reflect, plan, and act in ways that are meaningful to you. As you move through the year, we encourage you to use this calendar to explore your interests, document your progress, and celebrate your contributions. Each step, no matter how small, strengthens your connections to others and reminds you that your voice and actions matter!

You may realize that the calendar is not labeled by months! This is intentional! You are invited to start using the calendar in January, but we know things get busy and you might not get started until February! That's ok! The stories are too good to miss!

To view the Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion 2025 calendar, [click here!](#)



Peer Specialist Webinar Series

Join us for our monthly webinars - last Tuesday of each month!

[Click here to view our webinars](#)

**LOOK FORWARD
TO OUR NEXT
NEWSLETTER!
...APRIL 2025**



This newsletter was developed under grant number 1H79SM082653-01 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The views, policies, and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.