



Successfully Employing and Financing Peer Specialists in Behavioral Health

The inclusion of peer providers on behavioral health care teams can significantly improve client engagement and outcomes, including symptom reduction, improved self-esteem, and community integration. However, behavioral health providers sometimes struggle to maintain a strong peer workforce, leading to diminished productivity and increased stress for all staff. As agencies adjust to the inclusion of peer specialists, managers must help reconcile different approaches to disclosure and boundaries; address staff confusion about the essential functions of the peer role; and support the recovery journey of the peers themselves.

By introducing appropriate supports and encouraging some key shifts in workplace culture, providers will not only promote peer job success, but strengthen their organizations overall. **Successfully Employing and Financing Peer Specialists in Behavioral Health** is a training for behavioral health provider agencies, managed care organizations, and state and county behavioral health authorities. TAC's employment-related training and consultation can help your team take the following essential steps:

- Define and clarify the peer specialist role for all staff
- Recruit and hire qualified candidates
- Establish a supportive workplace culture
- Address job difficulties and improve productivity
- Strengthen supervisory practices
- Educate and support non-peer staff
- Build critical elements into organizational infrastructure

To discuss your peer provider training and consultation needs, contact TAC Senior Associate Jonathan Delman at jdelman@tacinc.org, 617-877-4148.

Dr. Delman, Ph.D., is a mental health researcher and program developer who works with providers to improve peer role performance and retention. A person with lived experience of mental illness, he served as the executive director of Consumer Quality Initiatives, a peer-led research and evaluation organization, and has helped lead efforts to introduce the peer specialist role in Massachusetts. Dr. Delman is co-author of Effectively Employing Young Adult Peer Providers: A Toolkit (University of Massachusetts Transitions Research & Training Center, 2017).

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