



Peer Support in Tennessee

The Basics

Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential. - SAMHSA

Who are peer support workers?

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) describes peer support workers as “people who have been successful in the recovery process who help others experiencing similar situations.”²

What do peer support workers do?

The role of peer support workers varies widely, but many peer support workers:¹

- Support recovery from mental health or substance use disorders
- Teach and practice skills that promote recovery
- Mentor people in recovery both individually and in groups
- Raise awareness of personal, interpersonal, and community resources
- Advocate for and represent people in recovery

Tennessee’s Peer Support Programs

How does Tennessee promote peer support workers?

Tennessee’s Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) credentials [Certified Peer Recovery Specialists \(CPRS\)](#), who are qualified to provide peer support services in Tennessee. Their program began in 2013 and has certified over 1,200 peers to date.³

Who may become a CPRS in Tennessee?

[According to the TDMHSAS CPRS Handbook](#), all CPRS applicants must:⁴

- Be at least eighteen (18) years old.
- Have a high school diploma or General Equivalency Degree (GED).
- Currently or previously have a mental illness and/or substance use disorder.
- Self-identify as a person who is in recovery.
- Have demonstrated self-directed recovery for at least 24 consecutive months.
- Have completed the 40-hour state CPRS training in the past year, which is free for accepted trainees.
- Pass testing and evaluation following the CPRS training.
- Complete at least 75 hours of supervised peer recovery work (paid or volunteer) in the past year.
- Have at least 3 supervision hours (one for every 25 hours of supervised work).
- Agree to the CPRS Scope of Activities and Code of Ethics.
- Submit a complete application, including three professional or personal references.



The Status of Peer Support in Tennessee

How many mental health care providers in Tennessee offer peer support services?⁵

The proportion of Veterans Administration medical centers and community mental health centers offering peer support services in Tennessee is similar to regional and national averages. Peer support uptake for other provider types is lower in Tennessee than in other states.

| Facility type | Total count | # with peer services | % with peer services | % in Southeast | National % |
|--|-------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------|------------|
| Psychiatric hospital | 18 | 3 | 17% | 24% | 29% |
| Inpatient psychiatric unit of a general hospital | 21 | 1 | 5% | 11% | 16% |
| Residential treatment center for children | 20 | 0 | 0% | 8% | 9% |
| Residential treatment center for adults | 11 | 2 | 18% | 24% | 26% |
| Veterans Administration medical center | 8 | 4 | 50% | 53% | 54% |
| Community mental health center | 90 | 30 | 33% | 39% | 36% |
| Outpatient mental health facility | 101 | 8 | 8% | 19% | 21% |
| Multi-setting mental health facility | 8 | 2 | 25% | 32% | 31% |

Does Tennessee Medicaid cover peer support services?⁶

Tennessee Medicaid reimburses for peer services without copayment or limits on services.

References

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3. Tennessee Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services. What is a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist? 2020; <https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/cprs/what-is-a-cprs.html>. Accessed April 10, 2020.
4. Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Program. In. Nashville, TN2020.
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