



Certified Peer Specialists Providing Peer Support to Individuals in Dual Recovery

This product is meant to accompany the 'Certified Peer Specialists Providing Peer Support to Individuals in Dual Recovery Panel' which is available for viewing [here](#).

Overview of Providing Peer Support to Individuals in Dual Recovery

In recognition of **SAMHSA's National Recovery Month**, the Southeast MHTTC hosted a panel event entitled '**Providing Peer Support to Individuals in Dual Recovery**' to examine the challenges and benefits of providing a person-centered approach in recovery from both mental health and substance use disorders.

Moderators:

- Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network (GMHCN)
 - Roslind D. Hayes, (Statewide Coordinator of the GMHCN's Peer Support, Wellness, and Respite Centers)
 - Chris Johnson, (Director of Communications)



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Defining Mental Health Recovery and Substance Use Recovery

What is Mental Health Recovery?

- Mental Health Recovery is a **holistic** approach to improving overall quality of life for individuals living with mental health disorders.
- It is a **person-centered approach**. Recovery should be oriented to the person's goals. Rather than focus on eliminating symptoms, this approach gives way to creating meaning in one's life.¹
- Individuals on their mental health recovery journey can gain knowledge and learn strategies on how to best **manage** their illness from others, including peers and providers.



What is Substance Use Recovery?

- Substance Use Recovery is the process in which an individual completely eliminates or abstains from any drug or alcohol use in order to achieve improved quality of health and life.²



Defining Certified Peer Specialist

Who is a Certified Peer Specialist?

- Certified Peer Specialists (CPS) are individuals who are trained to share their **lived experience** with others to promote a safe and healthy environment in recovery. Peer specialists can provide hope, education, and improve connectedness from a personal perspective and guide individuals through their recovery journey.³

Dual Recovery and the Role of Certified Peer Specialists

What is Dual Recovery in Mental Health and Substance Use?

- Dual Recovery means to be in recovery from **both** a mental health disorder and a substance use disorder.
- It is important to acknowledge the many **complex intersections** between mental health recovery and substance use recovery, such as barriers to access, the effects of substance use on certain mental illnesses, etc.
- Individuals in dual recovery need to not only **acknowledge** their mental health and substance use issues, but also gain the necessary knowledge in order to move forward through this journey.⁴

What does it mean to be a Certified Peer Specialist in Supporting Dual Recovery?

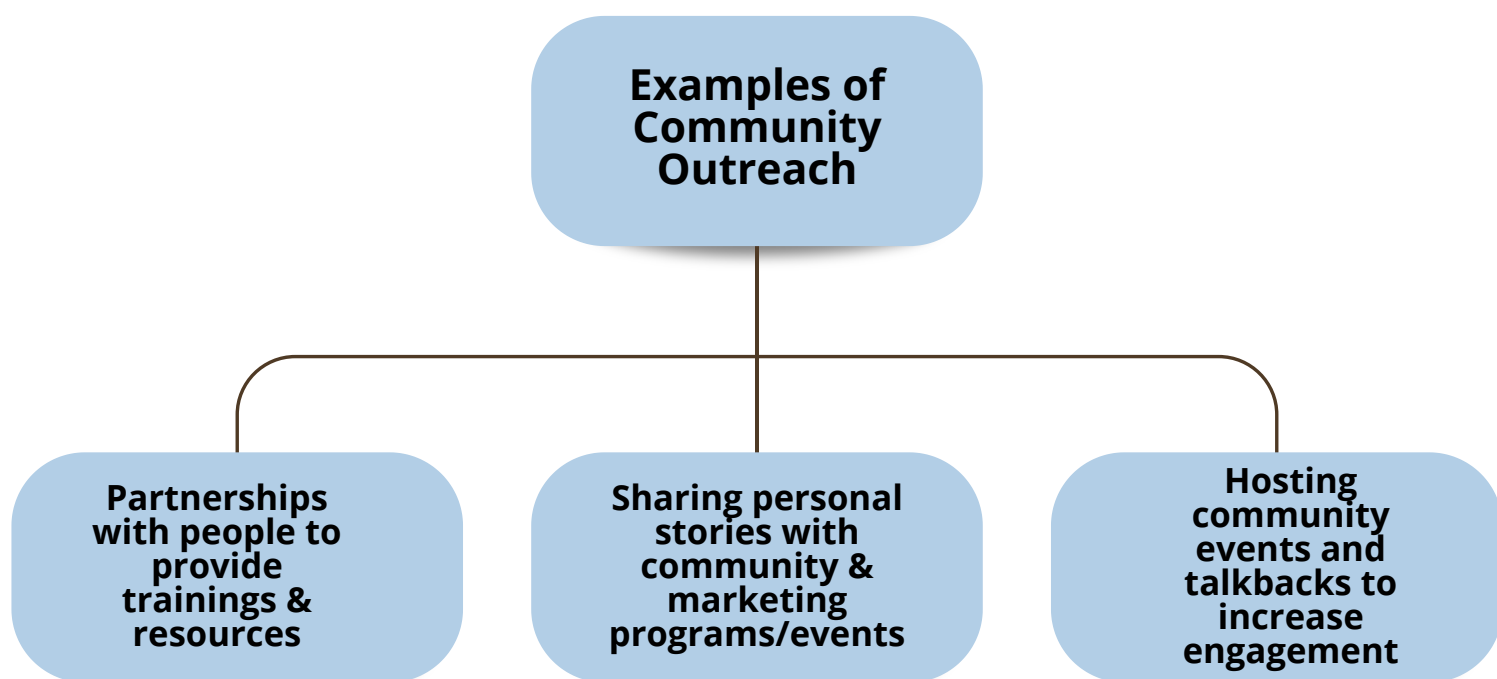
- Individuals with mental health disorders are at increased risk of developing substance use disorders.
- CPS in dual recovery share their lived experience with both mental health and substance use, **provide support** on the terms of the individual, and maintain a whole person perspective by meeting the individual where they are.
- CPS attempt to **shift the narrative** and language of recovery to reflect both mental health and substance use.
- CPS in dual recovery also
 - Provide resources and education that are tailored to and **meet the needs** of the individual.
 - Create an **inclusive** environment from all angles, but especially in encapsulating both mental health and substance use.
 - Work to dismantle stigma and discrimination by **educating** individuals about substance use or mental health to promote safe environment.
 - Demonstrate the **intersectionality** of substance use and mental health disorders and how a dual recovery space can expose traumas.



Creating Shared Approaches and Outreach in Dual Recovery

How is dual-recovery approached and managed through Certified Peer Specialists?

- CPS with different lived experiences can provide **perspective** to individuals living with similar symptoms when another CPS may be unable to relate.
- Programs that develop policies which reflect an **inclusive, person-centered** approach and emphasize education and expansion of thought patterns are important additions.
 - **Example:** *The Comfort Agreement assesses what is needed to make an environment or conversation comfortable so that lived experiences can be openly discussed with respect.*
- It involves incorporating **various** types of meetings such as 12-step, faith meetings and Double Trouble Recovery (DTR) to aid in the process of recovery for the individual.
 - **DTR** is a unique environment where individuals with dual diagnoses can openly discuss both issues -- unlike Narcotics Anonymous or Alcoholics Anonymous, which may only focus on the substance use.
- It seeks to **expand** the horizon of support and education by continuing to take trainings and being able to find the commonality between the CPS and the person in recovery.
- It encourages engaging in **community outreach** to educate others about dual recovery programs and the impact of CPS.



Challenges for Certified Peer Specialists in Dual-Recovery

- It may be difficult to **bridge the gap** between needs and resources as certain programs will have limited resources available to serve peers in the community and improve outcomes.
- Creating **inclusivity** may be difficult as attitudes about mental health recovery and substance use recovery are largely separated and can differ within these spaces.
 - For example, referring to those with substance use disorders as “those people”
- Stigma and discrimination are consistent challenges for CPS, especially from **external** sources.
- There is currently no uniform or accredited dual recovery training program, leading CPS to depend on continued education trainings and shared learning with specialists who have **different lived experiences**.



The Future of Certified Peer Specialists in Dual-Recovery

- Developing a **dual recovery focused** peer support specialist training and certification
- Continuing to engage with the community to educate and **minimize** stigma and discrimination
- Building **communication between** both recovery communities to better serve CPS, improve service delivery, and develop deeper understandings about both fields of recovery
- Effectively using resources to help peers succeed personally and professionally
- Overall **unification** of both communities to fight against stigma and misinformation



References

1. Davidson L. The Recovery Movement: Implications for Mental Health Care and Enabling People to Participate Fully in Life. *Health Affairs*. 2016;35(6):1091-1097.
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3. Bellamy C, Schmutte T, Davidson L. An Update on the Growing Evidence Base for Peer Support. *Mental Health and Social Inclusion*. 2017;21(3):161-167.
4. Green CA, Yarborough MT, Polen MR, Janoff SL, Yarborough BJ. Dual Recovery Among People with Serious Mental Illnesses and Substance Problems: A Qualitative Analysis. *Journal of Dual Diagnosis*. 2014;11(1):33-41.