



Peer Support in Alabama

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.”³

What do peer support workers do?

The role of peer support workers varies widely, but many peer support workers:²

- 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

Alabama's Peer Support Programs

What is the history of peer support in Alabama?¹

Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) employed its first peer support workers at Greil Hospital in 1994. Its peer support service provider network further expanded in 2008, leading to the creation of its credentialing program. The ADMH Office of Peer Programs was established in 2016, and all of its staff members are peers.

How does Alabama Department of Mental Health promote peer support services?¹

ADMH organizes the annual [Alabama Institute for Recovery conference](#), which has been hosted for over 25 years. ADMH also [trains peer support workers](#) and organizes [annual educational conferences](#) for both substance abuse service consumers and peers. The Office of Peer Programs further recognizes exceptional individuals and organizations who support people in recovery by granting several awards.

What is the role of peer support workers in Alabama?

Peer support workers in Alabama work with people in recovery from both mental and substance use disorders.¹ The exact clinical role may vary depending on the provider organization, but peer support workers generally share their recovery story, teach coping skills, interface with other care providers, and serve as a recovery mentor.⁴



The Status of Peer Support in Alabama

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

As is true in many states, relatively few mental health care facilities in Alabama offer peer support services.⁵ Hospitals, residential treatment centers, and community mental health centers in Alabama have room for improvement in this area.

Facility type	Total count	# with peer services	% with peer services	% in Southeast	National %
Psychiatric hospital	12	2	17%	24%	29%
Inpatient psychiatric unit of a general hospital	27	2	7%	11%	16%
Residential treatment center for children	4	1	25%	8%	9%
Residential treatment center for adults	30	3	10%	24%	26%
Other residential treatment facility type	1	0	0%	0%	14%
Veterans Administration medical center	9	5	56%	53%	54%
Community mental health center	63	9	14%	39%	36%
Partial hospitalization/day treatment facility	6	2	33%	18%	15%
Outpatient mental health facility	19	4	21%	19%	21%
Multi-setting mental health facility	6	1	17%	32%	31%

Medicaid Coverage

Alabama Medicaid does not cover peer support services.

Becoming a Peer Support Worker in Alabama

ADMH [trains Certified Peer Specialists \(CPS\)](#)¹, who are mental health peer support workers. A 5-day training is provided free of charge for Alabama residents who meet certain [requirements](#). People interested in CPS training may apply using the [Certified Peer Specialist Training Application](#). Quarterly continuing education training is required to maintain certification.

ADMH also trains [Certified Recovery Support Specialists \(CRSS\)](#), who are substance use peer support workers. This training is provided free of charge for Alabama residents who meet [requirements](#). The training is 40 hours long, and CRSS certification requires 16 annual continuing education hours.

For additional information on peer support training and certification contact:

The Office of Consumer Relations
Alabama Department of Mental Health
100 N. Union Street
P.O. Box 301410



Southeast (HHS Region 4)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Montgomery, AL 36130-1410

(334) 242-3456

Fax: (334) 242-3025

1-800-832-0952

michael.autrey@mh.alabama.gov

kay.baker@mh.alabama.gov

References

1. Alabama Department of Mental Health. Peer Programs. <https://mh.alabama.gov/peer-programs/>.
2. Substance Abuse and Mental Helath Services Administration. Peers. 2019; <https://www.samhsa.gov/brss-tacs/recovery-support-tools/peers>. Accessed January 17th, 2020.
3. Substance Abuse and Mental Helath Services Administration. Recovery Support Tools and Resources. 2018; <https://www.samhsa.gov/brss-tacs/recovery-support-tools-resources#what-is-recovery>. Accessed January 17th, 2020.
4. Office of Peer Programs. Guidelines and Requirements of the Alabama Certified Peer Specialists Training Program. 2015.
5. Substance Abuse and Mental Helath Services Administration. National Mental Health Services Survey 2018. In. Rockville, MD2018.