Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
Peer Support Specialist Role

1Q. Who is considered to be a “peer”?
A. Peer is the recognized term in Arizona and much of the nation for persons who are receiving or have received a mental health and/or substance use diagnosis and services through the public or private behavioral health systems.

2Q. What is a Peer Support Specialist?
A. A Peer Support Specialist is a peer who works within Arizona’s public behavioral health system to model recovery and provides support, encouragement and hope to others on their journey of recovery. A Peer Support Specialist often has varied roles and titles within agencies. Employees in this position can facilitate group discussions; provide independent skills training; help a person learn to navigate the behavioral health system; assist an individual in learning to self-advocate and to step back into community life. Some other position titles found in agencies that are unique to the Peer Support Specialist role are:

- Recovery Support Specialist
- Peer Navigator
- Recovery Wellness Coach
- Peer Support Partner

3Q. What are the basic qualifications of a Peer Support Specialist?
A. There are five basic qualifications:
1. Must be a peer (see definition of “peer” above);
2. Must be receiving OR have received treatment in either the public or private behavioral health system for a diagnosed condition;
3. Is currently stable in recovery (see definition of “recovery” below);
4. Self-identifies as a peer and shares their lived experience of recovery to help others; and,
5. Has completed Peer Employment Training and received certification by an approved training entity OR does so within 90 days of their hire date.

4Q. Is there a guidance document in place for Peer Support/Recovery Support Specialist positions?

A. Yes. The Peer Worker/Recovery Support Specialists within Behavioral Health Agencies (effective April 1, 2007) is the current guiding document issued by the Arizona Department of Health Services/Division of Behavioral Health Services. This document provides an overview of the role of the Peer/Recovery Support Specialist position. Click on this link to view the document: [http://www.azdhs.gov/bhs/guidance/peer.pdf](http://www.azdhs.gov/bhs/guidance/peer.pdf). Utilization of trained peers to provide peer support services is also required of Providers as outlined in their contracts with NARBHA and in the ADHS/DBHS contract with NARBHA.

5Q. Who provides Peer Employment Training for these positions in northern Arizona?

A. NARBHA currently contracts with NAZCARE who provides training for Peer Employment in Northern Arizona. Please be aware that there are other Peer Employment Training Programs that are available throughout the state. We suggest that you contact NAZCARE directly to obtain information about the training and their training schedule or you may obtain information from your Case Manager.

   NAZCARE: 928-442-9205; [www.nazcare.org](http://www.nazcare.org)

6Q. Is training available for persons who supervise Peer Support Specialists?

A. Yes. NAZCARE offers training for employees who supervise people in Peer Support positions. Contact them directly for details and schedules.

7Q. If I meet the definition of “peer” but do not hold the position of Peer Support Specialist (or similar title—see #2 above), can I bill the Peer Support codes?

A. Yes, providing you meet the definition of peer and have completed Peer Employment Training, received certification and are providing a direct peer support service.

8Q. Is there a formal career ladder in place for Peer Support Specialists?

A. At this time, there is not a formal career ladder in place for this position. However, many employees who began in Peer Support positions have advanced into other positions in the behavioral health field, such as Vocational Rehab Specialist, Case Manager, IT Specialist and Recovery Center Manager, just to name a few.

9Q. What is “recovery” and what does it mean to “be in recovery”?

A. The nationally recognized definition of recovery comes from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA; [www.samhsa.org](http://www.samhsa.org)):

   a. A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.
B. SAMHSA has identified four major areas that support a life in recovery:
   1. *Health*: overcoming or managing one’s disease(s) as well as living in a physically
      and emotionally healthy way;
   2. *Home*: a stable and safe place to live;
   3. *Purpose*: meaningful daily activities, such as a job, school, volunteerism, family
      caretaking, or creative endeavors, and the independence, income and resources to
      participate in society; and,
   4. *Community*: relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship,
      love, and hope.

NARBHA and its service providers incorporate these National principles as well as the
Arizona principles of recovery into our work with members and families. Click here to
review the ADHS/DBHS Guiding Principles for Recovery-Oriented Adult Behavioral
Health Services and System: