

# What a Peer Support Specialist does in a CSP and CCS program.

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First we must define "Peer Support" in order to understand how Peer Support can help others with chronic and debilitating Mental Health and/or Substance use disorders.

"Peer support is a system of giving and receiving help founded on key principles of respect, shared responsibility, and mutual agreement of what is helpful. Peer support is not based on psychiatric models and diagnostic criteria. It is about understanding another's situation empathically through the shared experience of emotional and psychological pain. When people find affiliation with others they feel are 'like' them, they feel a connection. This connection, or affiliation, is a deep, holistic understanding based on mutual experience where people are able to 'be' with each other without the constraints of traditional (expert/patient) relationships." (Mead, 2001)

A Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) is a person who has not only lived the experience of mental illness but also has had formal training in the peer specialist model of mental health/substance use supports. They use their unique set of recovery experiences in combination with solid skills training to support peers who have mental health and/or substance use disorders. Peer Specialists actively incorporate peer support into their work while working within an agencies team support structure as a defined part of the recovery team.

A CPS is not a mental health technician limited to providing ancillary services without a clear therapeutic role, (i.e. driving people, laundry, and medication deliveries), but an active participant on the consumer's treatment and recovery team.

A CPS in a Community Support Program and Comprehensive Community Services program will support with recovery goals, aspirations and desires of their peers. In short we strive to assist an individual with the things they identify that will make life more fulfilling and their recovery path more satisfying. Simple things for most people can be frightening for others. Supporting peers with cleaning out a car, because every time they get in it they become stressed or depressed, can be a recovery goal for someone. Major topics like how to make friends, or maintain sobriety, are areas of one's recovery that a CPS can support. With the person centered focus, and support of professional and non-professional members of a team, goals are achieved and recovery is moved forward.

The following video will further define the description of a Certified Peer Specialist and the movement in Wisconsin.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJAOWR\\_kN6U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJAOWR_kN6U)

With hard work, skills and support, recovery is possible.