Peer Support Core Competencies

Nelson Spence | April 19, 2023
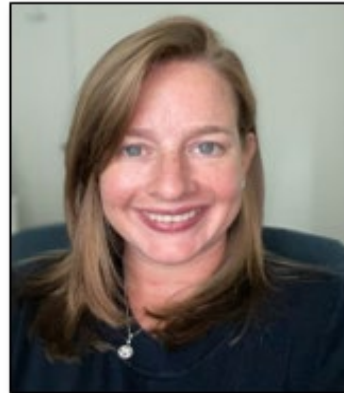
PWI/EPOC Team at Advocates for Human Potential (AHP)
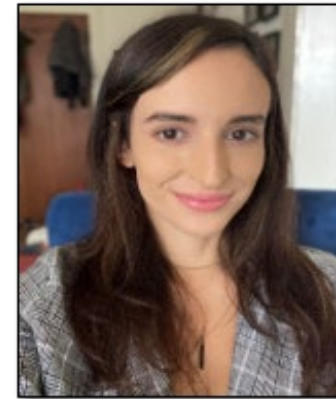
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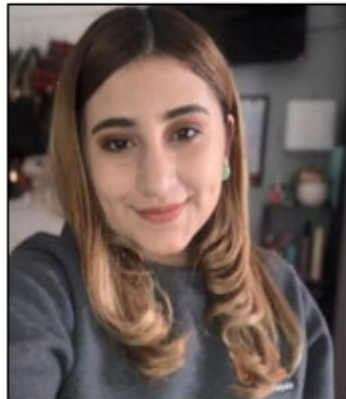
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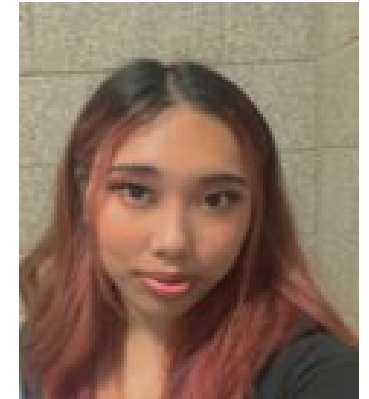Grantee Liaison

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Nelson Spence

Nelson Spence is a man in long-term recovery from both substance use and mental health challenges and a certified Recovery Support Peer Specialist in Texas. He first joined the Faces & Voices of Recovery team as the Accreditation Services Coordinator where he used his experience in technology and science education to grow and support recovery community organizations and peer recovery support service programs in their CAPRSS accreditation process. Now as the Recovery Resource Manager, Nelson leads projects designed to support the peer workforce nationally and multiple programs across Faces & Voices of Recovery.

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Learning Objectives

Upon completion of today's learning collaborative, participants will:

- **Identify the applicable skills and field examples for each of the Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies.**

- **Examine their current practice, how it aligns with the Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies, and where there are areas for improvement.**

- **Apply the relevant core competency field examples in their practice and service delivery.**

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What are Core Competencies?

- Fundamental knowledge, ability, or expertise in a specific subject area of skill set.

- Defining capability or advantage that distinguishes an organization from others

- Unique ability that an organization acquires from its founders or develops that cannot be easily imitated.

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What are Core Competencies?

Core

- "the central or most important part of something"

Common Foundational Principles

- Recovery-Based
- Person-Centered
- Self-Directed
- Trauma-Informed

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SAMHSA's Core Competencies for Peer Workers

- In 2015, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) led an effort to identify the critical knowledge, skills, and abilities (leading to Core Competencies) needed by anyone who provides peer support services to people with or in recovery from a mental health or substance use condition.

- Via its Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale Technical Assistance Center Strategy (BRSS TACS) project—it convened diverse stakeholders from the mental health consumer and substance use disorder recovery movements.

- In conjunction with subject matter experts conducted research to identify Core Competencies for peer workers in behavioral health.

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California Medi-Cal Peer Support Origin Story

- Senate Bill 803 - "Mental Health Services: Peer Support Specialist Certification Program Act of 2020" by State Senator Jim Beall
  - Peer Support benefits individuals and families

- Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)
  - Certification of Peer Support Specialists
  - Reimbursable through Medi-Cal (Medicaid)

- CalMHSA's Peer Certification Landscape Analysis
  - Analyzed core curriculums, training standards, required skills, and best practices
  - Developed the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Core Competencies

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California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

1. The concepts of hope, recovery, and wellness.

2. The role of advocacy.

3. The role of consumers and family members.

4. Psychiatric rehabilitation skills and service delivery, and addiction recovery principles, including defined practices.

5. Cultural and structural competence trainings.

6. Trauma-informed care.

7. Group facilitation skills.

8. Self-awareness and self-care.

9. Co-occurring disorders of mental health and substance use.

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California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

10. Conflict resolution.

11. Professional boundaries and ethics.

12. Preparation for employment opportunities, including study and test-taking skills, application and résumé preparation, interviewing, and other potential requirements for employment.

13. Safety and crisis planning.

14. Navigation of, and referral to, other services.

15. Documentation skills and standards.

16. Confidentiality.

17. Digital literacy.

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How are Core Competencies used?

- Promote best practices in peer support.
- Guide peer training programs
- Provide standards for peer certification
- Inform job descriptions and performance evaluations
- Organizations can use them to build career ladders for peer workers
- Supervisors can use to appraise peer workers' job performance
- Provide peers with a clear sense of the expectations of their roles.

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California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 1
  - The concepts of hope, recovery, and wellness

- Skills
  - Know the difference between treatment goals and recovery goals.
  - Know the ten guiding principles of recovery as defined by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

- Field Examples
  - Assist individuals to develop decision making strategies and function as an active member of their own recovery team, to include the selection of traditional and non-traditional recovery strategies, supports, and providers.
  - Articulate what has been helpful and what has not been helpful in their own recovery.

California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 2
  - The Role of Advocacy

- Skills
  - Develop a working knowledge of the SAMHSA and NAPS guiding principles, practice guidelines, and core values of peer support.
  - Know the civil and human rights foundations from which the peer support movement arose, including issues related to prejudice, discrimination, and stigma associated with behavioral health.

- Field Examples
  - Model how to self-advocate.
  - Encourage individuals to advocate for their needs and desires in treatment team meetings, community services, living situations, and with family.

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California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 3
  - The role of consumers and family members

- Skills
  - Use personal stories of lived experience to support and empower the person receiving services.
  - Demonstrate a working knowledge of relevant rights and laws to ensure that the individual's rights are maintained.

- Field Examples
  - Participates in efforts to eliminate prejudice and discrimination of people who have behavioral health challenges and their families.
  - Promote self-determination and person-centered services when communicating with other members of the individual's care team.

California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 4
  - Psychiatric rehabilitation skills and service delivery, and addiction recovery principles, including defined practices.

- Skills
  - Understand and utilize the values Person-Centered, Self-Determination, and Voluntary in service delivery.
  - Be able to help a Peer articulate, set and accomplish his/her goals, including whole health and wellness goals.

- Field Examples
  - Assure that all recovery-oriented tasks and activities build on the individual's strengths and resiliencies.
  - Apply Motivational Interviewing skills to assist individuals in various stages of change.

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California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 5
  - Cultural and structural competence trainings.

- Skills
  - Recognize and understand your own personal values, culture, and spiritual beliefs; how they may contribute to your own judgements, biases, and beliefs about others; and how to respond if they inhibit your ability to effectively serve another individual.
  - Knowledge of and sensitivity to how cultural identity shapes the helping process.

- Field Examples
  - Advocate for multiple pathways to recovery/wellness.
  - Assure that interpersonal relationships, services and supports, reflect individual differences and cultural diversity.

California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 6
  - Trauma-informed care.

- Skills
  - Understand the prevalence of trauma and its impact on physical, behavioral, and emotional wellness.
  - Understand cultural considerations and the effect of trauma on how we view our cultural experiences and the lens in which we view the world.

- Field Examples
  - Use patience and compassion in all interactions.
  - Teach coping skills of mindfulness, stress reduction, anxiety management, and relaxation techniques.

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California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 7
  - Group facilitation skills.

- Skills
  - Understand the difference between treatment goals and recovery goals and be able to create and facilitate a variety of group activities that support and strengthen recovery.
  - Understand how to facilitate peer support/self-help groups.

- Field Examples
  - Apply basic group facilitation techniques. Practice effective communication skills. Be non-judgmental.
  - Facilitate the entry of new members and the transition of exiting members.

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California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 8
  - Self-awareness and self-care.

- Skills
  - Understand burnout and using self-awareness to prevent compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and secondary traumatic stress.
  - Understand the concept of dual/complex relationships.

- Field Examples
  - Communicate to support network personal challenges that impact ability to perform job duties.
  - Respond to any setbacks on their recovery journey as an opportunity for learning additional techniques or strategies to achieve and maintain their whole health goals.

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California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 9
  - Co-occurring disorders of mental health and substance use.

- Skills
  - Understand the prevalence of trauma in the lived experience of people with co-occurring disorders.
  - Be able to communicate their lived experience in a way that is supportive.

- Field Examples
  - Support peers to be part of recovery groups and communities to stay active and around others in recovery when not in contact with a Peer Supporter or engaged in treatment.
  - Be able to help individuals navigate the substance use system, public and private so they can receive the services they want.

Questions?

Breakout Discussion

- **Room # = Core Competency #**
  - Core Competencies 1-9

- **Brief Introductions (5 min)**
  - Name & Pronouns
  - Title/Position
  - Organization

- **Reflection Questions (10 min each)**
  - What challenges have you faced in applying this core competency in your practice?
  - What successes have you had in applying this core competency in your practice?

Breakout Groups
Report Out

Core Competencies 1-9

California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 10
  - Conflict resolution.

- Skills
  - Understand the dynamics of power, conflict, and integrity in the workplace.
  - Understand the concept of "seeking out common ground."

- Field Examples
  - Be able to personally deal with conflict and difficult interpersonal relations in the workplace.
  - Utilize de-escalation techniques.
  - Use organizational / departmental chain of command to address or resolve issues.

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California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 11
  - Professional boundaries and ethics.

- Skills
  - Understand how to establish, negotiate, and maintain appropriate interpersonal limits and boundaries that are necessary to promote effective peer support services.
  - Understand the Peer Support Specialists' scope of service (i.e. know what you can and cannot do as a credentialed Peer Support Specialist).

- Field Examples
  - Certified Peer Specialists will not enter into dual relationships or commitments that conflict with the interests of those they serve.
  - Certified Peer Specialists will establish and maintain peer relationships rather than hierarchical relationships.

California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 12
  - Preparation for employment opportunities, including study and test taking skills, application, and resume.

- Skills
  - Know community resources for employment skills development.
  - How to use shared experience to leverage social capital and networking.

- Field Examples
  - Utilize employment development resources such as job centers, community colleges, and others.
  - Teach, coach, and model the skills and attributes needed to attain and maintain long-term, stable employment and housing.

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California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 13
  - Safety and crisis planning.

- Skills
  - Understand basic de-escalation techniques.
  - Recognize signs of distress and threats to safety among peers and in their environments.

- Field Examples
  - Take action to address distress or a crisis using knowledge of local resources, treatment, services and support preferences of peers.
  - Demonstrate consistency by supporting individuals during ordinary and extraordinary times.

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California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 14
  - Navigation of, and referral to, other services.

- Skills
  - Develop and maintain up-to-date information about community resources and services.
  - Collaborate with individual to identify, link, and coordinate choices with resources.

- Field Examples
  - Partner with individuals to access the services and supports that will help them attain their personal recovery goals.
  - Provide information regarding community resources that support goal achievement, e.g., education, recreation, job training, housing, etc.

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California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 15
  - Documentation skills and standards.

- Skills
  - Understand current documentation requirements for submitting bills to Medi-Cal
  - Understand and follow Mandatory Reporting requirements.

- Field Examples
  - Document information as required by program policies and procedures for billing and treatment purposes.
  - Evaluate individual satisfaction with their progress toward recovery/wellness goals.

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California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 16
  - Confidentiality.

- Skills
  - Understand basic federal, state, employer regulations regarding confidentiality.
  - Understand the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Substance Abuse Confidentiality rules (42 CFR Part 2).

- Field Examples
  - Inform and explain to individuals confidentiality rights, program procedures that safeguard them, and the expectations imposed by regulations.
  - Exchange relevant information with the agency or professional to whom referrals are being made in a manner consistent with confidentiality rules and regulations and generally accepted professional standards of care.

California Medi-Cal Peer Support Core Competencies

- Core Competency 17
  - Digital literacy.

- Skills
  - Understand digital platforms that can be used for service delivery, benefits acquisition, and resource connections.
  - Understand digital privacy protections.

- Field Examples
  - Use online and virtual tools to provide access to a range of activation and self-care tools and resources that the individual may find useful in achieving their whole health goals.
  - Maintain familiarity with software and platforms such as Microsoft Office Suite, Adobe Acrobat, Zoom, etc.

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Questions?

Breakout Discussion

- **9 + Room # = Core Competency #**
  - Core Competencies 10-17

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- **Reflection Questions (10 min each)**
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Breakout Groups Report Out

Core Competencies 10-17

References & Resources

References

- [Core Competencies for Peer Workers | SAMHSA](#)

- [Core Competencies - CA Peer Certification](#)

- [Landscape Analysis General Peer Certification Training Curriculum - CA Peer Certification](#)

Resources

- [SAMHSA's Working Definition of Recovery](#)

- [National-Practice-Guidelines-for-Peer-Specialists-and-Supervisors-1.pdf (peersupportworks.org)](#)