There were 25,317 Certified Mental Health Peer Specialists nationally as of 2016. By 2017, over 10% of peer programs at U.S. mental health facilities were offering peer services. And for more than a decade, peer support workers under various titles in multiple systems of care and institutions, and through many payers, have yet to been fully documented. The true number of peer support workers cannot be accurately captured by the U.S. Department of Labor without a single standard occupational classification.

Proposed Definition of a Peer Support Specialist

A Peer Specialist is Someone Who:

- Has Personal Experience: Discloses personal experiences of overcoming challenges in areas such as major life change, unemployment, and poor health.
- Engages Individuals: Engages in personal, peer-to-peer relationship that support development and use of skills to manage crises and achieve recovery, wellness, and the goals.
- Connects: Primarily directs personal experiences to support systems and one-to-one, small group, and family engagement.
- Provides Certain Services: Provides recovery-oriented, non-clinical support services to individuals and/or groups, and may engage in facilitating technical rights and systems advocacy.
- Engages Clients and Families: Engages in personal, peer-to-peer relationship that support development and use of skills to manage crises and achieve recovery, wellness, and the goals.
- Educates Clients and Families: Engages in personal, peer-to-peer relationship that support development and use of skills to manage crises and achieve recovery, wellness, and the goals.
- Educates Educators: Engages in personal, peer-to-peer relationship that support development and use of skills to manage crises and achieve recovery, wellness, and the goals.
- Involves Peer Support: Engages in personal, peer-to-peer relationship that support development and use of skills to manage crises and achieve recovery, wellness, and the goals.

Benefits of including Peer Support Specialist as a Department of Labor Standard Occupational Classification

- Establishes a sector- Wide or the number of occupational codes for peer support workers and their compensation.
- Increases professional identity and recognition.
- Provides the opportunity for sustained employment and future professional development.

References


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N.A.P.S. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PEER SUPPORTERS

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