

Expand Certified and Credentialed Peer Capacity

Supporting the Retention and Growth of the Peer Workforce in Mental Health
October 2021

The New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) is providing one-time targeted investments to recruit and retain Certified and Credentialed Peer Specialists and Advocates providing services in OMH licensed, funded, and designated voluntary operated programs to improve consumer experience and outcomes. The investments will fall into two distinct categories: Retention Investment and Recruitment Investment.

Eligible Applicants:

Any OMH licensed, designated, or funded voluntary operated program that employs, or intends to employ New York Certified Peer Specialists (NYCPS), Credentialed Youth Peer Advocates (CYPA), or Credentialed Family Peer Advocates (CFPA). Henceforth in this document these peer types will be referred to as NYCPS, CYPA, and CFPA.

OMH licensed, funded, or designated voluntary operated program that employs, or intends to employ individuals who are providing direct services as a Peer Specialist or Advocate who do not currently possess a NYCPS, CYPA or CFPA are also eligible for the funds with the requirement that the employee start participation in the certification or credentialing training for the NYCPS, CYPA, or CFPA within six months of receiving the funds and attain provisional certification or complete the credentialing and certification process within the required time frame set forth by the certification/credentialing body.

Goal of Funds:

- Expand the Certified & Credentialed Peer workforce statewide through retention and recruitment to better provide evidenced based Peer Services in a way that promotes demographically, linguistically, and culturally appropriate connections to the individuals and families served in the public mental health system, including meeting the desire for appropriate credential in services. Specifically, NYCPS, YPA, FPA credentials.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Adopt ongoing Certified & Credentialed Peer workforce recruitment and retention strategies to strengthen and expand capacity in the community mental health system, including relevant interagency group supervision opportunities, employee development and promotion initiatives, enhanced job benefits (e.g., health insurance for part-time and full-time workforce), paid training time, and other job satisfaction strategies

- Develop or utilize strategies to recruit and retain a racially and ethnically diverse and culturally competent workforce, with adequate levels of demographic and linguistic representation based on the individuals and families served in the provider's catchment area.

Retention Investment

A one-time, targeted workforce retention investment of \$3,000 for full time employees in Peer positions and \$1,500 for part time employees in Peer positions will be paid directly to eligible applicants for employees who commit via an attestation to continue providing direct Peer services in OMH licensed, designated, or funded voluntary operated programs for a minimum of one year after receiving the retention investment.

This one-time targeted retention investment will be available for New York Certified Peer Specialists (including provisional), Credentialed Youth Peer Advocates (including provisional), and Credentialed Family Advocates (including provisional) who deliver direct Peer services in OMH licensed, funded, and designated voluntary operated programs.

Individuals working in a Peer Specialist or Advocate role who are not certified or credentialed are eligible to receive the payment with the requirement that they pursue a New York Certified Peer Specialist Certification, Youth Peer Advocate Credential, or Family Peer Advocate Credential within six months of receipt of the funds and obtain the minimum of provisional certification.

Applicants will qualify for the grants with the commitment that the retention investment funds will be paid directly to the Peer employees. Payments will be made based on provider's attestation regarding the numbers of employees who qualify for the investment with the commitment that the retention investment funds will be paid to the Peer employee directly.

Agencies must implement a policy to document their employee's commitment and that funds are used for workforce recruitment and retention activities as outlined in this guidance. It is strongly recommended that the [program/provider] stagger payments to encourage retention. Examples are to provide the retention payments in biannual installment amounts (\$750 for part-time employees and \$1500 for full-time employees), in such a way that enables the provider to verify eligibility and use of funds consistent with the guidelines and renders recoupment unnecessary. Any funds subsequently recouped can be reprogrammed by Agencies to backfill for any peer staff departures.

Agencies will also receive a one-time payment of \$1,000 per every full-time employee and \$500 per every part time employee to offset paid training time, interagency group supervision, or continuing education costs related to facilitating certification or credentialing.

Recruitment Investment

A one-time, targeted recruitment investment of \$3,000 for full time employees in Peer positions and \$1,500 for part time employees in Peer positions will be paid directly to eligible applicants for employees who commit via an attestation to continue providing direct Peer services in OMH licensed, designated, or funded voluntary operated programs for a minimum of one year after receiving the recruitment investment.

This one-time targeted recruitment investment will be available for New York Certified Peer Specialists (including provisional), Credentialed Youth Peer Advocates (including provisional), and Credentialed Family Advocates (including provisional) who deliver direct Peer services in OMH licensed, funded, and designated voluntary operated programs.

Individuals working in a Peer Specialist or Advocate role who are not certified or credentialed are eligible to receive the payment with the requirement that they pursue a New York Certified Peer Specialist Certification, Youth Peer Advocate Credential, or Family Peer Advocate Credential within six months of receipt of the funds and obtain the minimum of provisional certification.

Applicants will qualify for the grants with the commitment that the recruitment investment funds will be paid directly to the Peer employees. Payments will be made based on provider's attestation regarding the numbers of employees who qualify for the investment with the commitment that the recruitment investment funds will be paid to the Peer employee directly.

Agencies must implement a policy to document their employee's commitment and that funds are used for workforce recruitment and retention activities as outlined in this guidance. It is strongly recommended that the [program/provider] stagger payments to encourage retention. Examples are to provide the recruitment payments in biannual installment amounts (\$750 for part-time employees and \$1,500 for full-time employees), in such a way that enables the provider to verify eligibility and use of funds consistent with the guidelines and renders recoupment unnecessary. Any funds subsequently recouped can be reprogrammed by Agencies to backfill for any peer staff departures.

Agencies may also receive a one-time payment of \$1,000 per every full-time employee and \$500 per every part time employee to offset paid training time, interagency group supervision, or continuing education costs related to facilitating certification or credentialing.

Recruitment and Retention:

Timeframe:

- Date that applications must be received by: January 3, 2022
- Project must be completed by: March 31, 2023

Evaluation and Reporting:

- Agency applications to include:
- Eligibility criteria and baseline of current Peer staff employees; note those with and without credentials, in direct Peer service positions prior to receipt of these funds.

Providers will need to document:

- Baseline # of employed credentialed and non-credentialed peer employees
- # of planned Peer hires under project funds
 1. How funds were expended
 2. How funds reduced turnover rates of Peer staff
 3. Increased Peer supervisory capacity
 4. Increased the number of staff with professional Peer credentials or certifications and/or attracted new Peer workers,
 5. Amount of unspent funds that were returned
- OMH may implement sample post audit reviews that will be conducted using certified cost reports to ensure funds were used as intended.
- To improve the quality and skills of the Certified & Credentialed Peer workforce, this one-time grant program will pay providers that demonstrate increased Certified & Credentialed Peer workforce completion of standardized credentials or demonstrated competencies. OMH anticipates that grant funds will be released no later than the first quarter of CY 2022.

*Due to the time-limited nature of these funds it is strongly recommended that these funds are not used for on-going salary or fringe benefit increases that cannot be

supported beyond the grant period. Funds awarded under this scope of work may not be transferred or used for any other project or purpose.

****These funds can be used in combination with other Workforce Grant awards for eligible community support programs to enhance recruitment and retention bonuses for Certified and Credentialed Peer Specialists and Advocates. Providers must submit documentation to verify expenses are not duplicated.**

Providers must submit reports as follows:

- Interim Report: the report must be submitted by August 15th, 2022
- Final Report: the report must be submitted by February 15th, 2022.

Reports must include the following data and narrative descriptions on completed activities and achieved outcomes during the quarter:

- Number of peer FTEs
- Number of additional/new peer FTEs hired by the program
- Whether they are credentialed/certified
- Date(s) for which staff began training for credential/certification/Status of credential/certification completion
- Number of clients served by peers providing direct peer services

Application Process: OMH is allocating a total pool of \$4.0M for this funding opportunity. Applications will be reviewed on a first come/first serve basis. Approved applicants will receive notification of acceptance/rejection of application for funding within 30 days of application submission.

Failure to be responsive to any section below will disqualify applicant from funding.

Eligible providers must submit an application requesting funding. Applications will be reviewed against the criteria below:

- Background
 - **Agency name, address**
 - **Grant opportunity applying for (retention and/or recruitment)**
- Baseline data

- Provide baseline of current Peer staff employees; note those with and without credentials, in direct service positions prior to receipt of these funds.
 - Provide baseline data of number of clients served by peers providing direct peer services.
- Summary of proposed methods to meet intended goal of increased to recruit and retain Peer employees.
 - Types of recruitment/retention methods to be utilized
 - Cost of each recruitment/retention methods to be utilized
 - Projected increase in Peer staffing.

****Applications should be no more than 4 single-sided pages in length.****

- **Applications should be submitted to: PeerSupportGrants@omh.ny.gov no later than January 3, 2022**

Questions regarding the application should be directed to Carol Swiderski at Carol.Swiderski@omh.ny.gov.