

Youth Peer Services

Information for Funders

Many youth and young adults face complicated challenges as they transition to adulthood and current events are posing unprecedented challenges for them. Youth aging out of foster care and those with behavioral health conditions have a unique set of needs that likely go unmet without support and guidance.

Youth peer services offer a unique opportunity to support youth and young adults who are transitioning to adulthood. As young adults move from the child to the adult system or graduate from system involvement, youth peers provide a “bridge” to support the transition. Youth peers provide youth-centered support to navigate systems and resources necessary to achieve and sustain wellness, guided by their own lived experience in the child and adult systems.

In 2013, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) issued guidance for states on how to establish peer support services as a Medicaid benefit for children, youth, and young adults with significant behavioral health conditions.¹ CMS and SAMHSA recognize the utility and benefit of having peers with formal training and lived experience provide support and coaching to persons with behavioral health conditions as part of a team.

An Integrated Approach

Peer supporters often work as part of a multidisciplinary team to maximize a peer’s value for individuals receiving services. These teams may consist of both clinical and non-clinical services and should also include linkage to community supports. Each team member provides a separate service or function, and the team works in a non-segregated and cohesive fashion, to complement each other’s distinct discipline.

Goals of Youth Peer Support

- Support youth empowerment;
- Assist youth in developing skills to improve quality of life; and
- Work collaboratively with others involved in delivering the youth’s individual care.

Role of Youth Peer Supporters

- Provide one-on-one support and encouragement through stories of hope, recovery, and healing;
- Assist with setting goals and identifying positive environments and social connections;
- Advocate for active youth engagement in team meetings and services;
- Facilitate group meetings of youth and young adults; and
- Advocate for youth voice and the value of lived experience within agencies, communities, and systems.

¹ SAMHSA-HRSA - Peer Providers: <https://www.integration.samhsa.gov/workforce/team-members/peer-providers>

Outcomes for Peer Support Services

Although most research on the benefits of peer services in behavioral health has focused on adults, there are some research studies that show the positive impact of youth peer services across multiple areas.

- Youth peer services have increased hope and belief in the possibility of recovery; empowerment and self-esteem; self-efficacy and self-management of difficulties; social inclusion; engagement; and social networks.²
- Young people with mental health conditions who had access to peer advocates—as compared to those who lacked such access—had more favorable views regarding access to services, appropriateness of and participation in services, as well as higher overall/global satisfaction.³
- Youth and young adults with mental health conditions are more likely to turn to their peers for help and express a desire to have peer support services available to them.⁴ Additionally, a study found that youth who had access to peer services were more satisfied with their services than youth who did not.⁵

Funding for Youth Peer Services

Many states began implementing youth peer services through their SAMHSA Children’s System of Care grants in an effort to develop a comprehensive and responsive children’s mental health system of care. Florida currently leverages multiple funding streams for children’s services, which provides a framework to implement, diversify, and sustain youth peer support services.

❖ Florida Medicaid

- Peer Services are an “In Lieu Of Service” (ILOS) offered by some managed care plans.
- Peer support for some services is also covered by Florida Medicaid as a required benefit.
- Medicaid uses the term, “Certified Recovery Peer Specialists,” and certification is necessary for reimbursement.
 - For more information about Peer Support Services, see Florida Medicaid’s policy for Behavioral Health Community Support Services which can be found here: <http://ahca.myflorida.com/medicaid/review/Specific/59G-4.031.pdf>
 - The Fee Schedule for Behavioral Health Community Support Services can be found here: http://ahca.myflorida.com/medicaid/review/Reimbursement/2020-01-01_Fee_Sched_Billing_Codes/Community_Behavioral_Health_Services_Fee_Schedule_2020.pdf

² Peer Support Services for Youth and Young Adults Who Experience Serious Mental Health Conditions: State of the Science: <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/state-of-the-science-articles-2018-amp-plus>

³ Peer Support Services for Youth and Young Adults Who Experience Serious Mental Health Conditions: State of the Science: <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/state-of-the-science-articles-2018-amp-plus>

⁴ Peer Support Services for Youth and Young Adults Who Experience Serious Mental Health Conditions: State of the Science: <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/state-of-the-science-articles-2018-amp-plus>

⁵ Natl. Institute of Health: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24522553>

❖ Department of Children and Families

- The Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health covers a variety of services that include peer support, provided primarily by Certified Peer Recovery Specialists. These services are designed to support and coach an adult or child and family to regain or develop skills to live, work and learn successfully in the community, per 65E-14 F.A.C, which can be found here: <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/RuleNo.asp?ID=65E-14.021>
- The Managing Entities (MEs) and Community Based Care (CBC) Lead Agencies may be willing to discuss how you can partner in your community to bring up these services.
 - Link to detailed information about MEs can be found here:
<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/samh/managing-entities/>
 - Link to detailed information about CBCs can be found here:
<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/community-based-care/lead-agency-map.shtml>

Resources

1. Youth Support 101: Ontario Center of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0d4dvrkp9c>
2. Youth Peer Support - Youth MOVE: <https://youthmovenational.org/youth-peer-support/>
3. Youth and Young Adult Peer Support: What Research Tells Us About Its Effectiveness in Mental Health Services: <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/proj-5-AMP-peer-support-faq.pdf>
4. *Practice Brief: Supporting the Youth Peer Workforce (2/26/20)*: Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network: <https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/MHTTC-Supporting-Youth-Peer-Workforce.pdf>
5. Financing Recovery Support Services - SAMHSA: https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/partnersforrecovery/docs/RSS_financing_report.pdf
6. Florida Dept. of Children and Families: Peer Services: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/samh/publications/>
7. Florida Certification Board: Certified Recovery Peer Specialist-Youth (CRPS-Y) designation and certification process: <https://flcertificationboard.org/certifications/certified-recovery-peers-specialist/>