

# North Carolina Certified Peer Support Specialist Program

## **PROGRAM POLICIES**

**School of Social Work  
The University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill**

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## INTRODUCTION

The North Carolina Certified Peer Support Specialist (NCCPSS) Program is an initiative of the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services (DMH/DD/SUS). The Program is implemented by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work (UNC-CH). The Program adheres to the policies of the State of North Carolina, DMH/DD/SUS, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH). The Program reserves the right to amend and modify its policies at any time. Changes will be posted by Program staff on the NC CPSS Programs website.

## NCCPSS PROGRAM VISION STATEMENT

To develop a qualified Certified Peer Support Specialist workforce that has support, access, credibility, competency, respect, and a valued role within the mental health and substance use disorder and behavioral health service system. CPSS uses their lived experience to positively impact the lives of individuals experiencing mental health and addiction challenges.

## GUIDING VALUES OF THE NCCPSS PROGRAM

The NCCPSS Program values:

- Individuals with lived experience have an essential role to play in the public mental health/substance use disorder system and are considered peer supporters.
- The roles within the service delivery system should fully utilize the lived experience of the peer supporter, viewing it as a credential that the individual brings to work.
- Lived experience is necessary, and ongoing skill development and training for peer support are essential.
- A recovery-friendly environment in the workplace is essential to the success and recovery paths of peer support and the individuals it serves.
- Peer supports are highly valued members of an agency; therefore, they are to be fully integrated members of the mental health/substance use disorder delivery system.
- Equality and respect between peer support and traditional professionals must be reciprocal.
- Choice and self-determination are essential components in everyone's recovery.
- Self-directed recovery does happen, with or without professional help.

## DEFINITIONS

The NCCPSS Program defines Peer Support Specialists as people living in recovery from mental health and/or substance use disorders. They provide support to others who can benefit from their lived experiences. The Program certifies persons with lived recovery experience in Serious Mental Illness (SMI), substance use disorders (SUD), or both who have completed the required training.

Certified Peer Support Specialists are people in recovery from a mental illness and/or substance use disorder who meet the criteria outlined by the DMH/DD/SUS and are approved to provide support to others who can benefit from their experiences. The North Carolina Certified Peer Support Specialist Program ensures that the peer has met a set of requirements necessary to support individuals with mental health or substance use disorders.

### **Serious Mental Illness (SMI)**

The National Institute of Mental Health defines "Serious mental illness (SMI) as a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder resulting in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities. The burden of mental illnesses is particularly concentrated among those who experience disability due to SMI." Based on the definition of SMI, not all conditions individuals experience qualify as SMI. For example, sadness resulting from life stressors such as divorce and losing a loved one may not necessarily mean an individual has an SMI. However, it still could potentially lead to a mental health/substance use situation if it begins to impact the individual's life negatively or becomes disabling.

The emphasis is on the disabling aspect of mental illness. The illness must significantly affect the person's thinking, emotional state, and behavior. The condition must disrupt the person's ability to work, carry out daily activities, or engage in satisfying relationships.

SMI may be grouped under the following categories:

- Mood disorders – depressive disorders, bipolar disorders
- Anxiety disorders – posttraumatic stress disorder, for example
- Psychotic Disorders – schizophrenia, delusional disorder, schizoaffective disorder

### **Substance Use Disorders (SUD)**

SAMHSA defines SUD's as "a mental disorder that affects a person's brain and behavior, leading to a person's inability to control their use of substances such as legal or illegal drugs, alcohol, or medications."

Examples of substances are:

- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Opioids (Oxycodone, Oxymorphone, Hydrocodone, Hydromorphone, Fentanyl, etc.)
- Cocaine
- Methamphetamine

## RECOVERY

SAMHSA states, "Recovery signals a dramatic shift in the expectation for positive outcomes for individuals who experience mental and substance use conditions or the co-occurring of the two." SAMHSA outlined four dimensions of recovery as follows:

### Health:

- Overcoming or managing one's disease(s) or symptoms, and making informed, healthy choices that support physical and emotional well-being

### Home:

- Having a stable and safe place to live

### Purpose:

- Conducting meaningful daily activities, such as a job, school volunteerism, family caretaking, or creative endeavors, and the independence, income, and resources to participate in society

### Community:

- Having relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope

The NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services (DMH/DD/SUS) developed the State Peer Support Service definition which states "Recovery is a process of change through which an individual improves their health and wellness, lives a self-directed life and strives to reach their full potential; to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities." The State also defines the following concepts relevant to recovery:

- **Self-Determination** - the right of an individual to direct his or her own services, make decisions regarding their health and well-being, and receive assistance in decision-making from whomever they choose.
- **Self-advocacy** – identifying and purposefully asking for what one needs.
- **Health** - involves learning to manage, overcome, or live more effectively with symptoms while making healthy choices that support both physical and emotional well-being.
- **Community** – Cultivating and enhancing relationships and social networks that offer support, friendship, love, and hope.

Recovery is a process that holds different meanings for different people. It is also personal; individuals may use various tools or pathways to progress toward positive outcomes in their lives. The NCCPSS Program recognizes many pathways to recovery, including harm reduction. Below are the recovery paths acknowledged by the NCCPSS Program.

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Pathway	Examples
<b>Clinical Pathways - Recovery procedures are supported by the expertise of a healthcare provider, clinician, or other qualified professional.</b>	Examples of clinical pathways of treatment include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medication therapy</li> <li>• Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)</li> <li>• Counseling</li> <li>• Medication for Opioid Disorder (MOUD)</li> </ul>
<b>Non-Clinical Pathways - Recovery procedures are peer-supported and often community-based but do not involve a licensed clinician.</b>	Examples of Non-clinical Pathways include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faith-based recovery</li> <li>• Peer-Support services</li> <li>• Mutual-aid Programs (NA/AA)</li> </ul>
<b>Self-Management - Recovery processes may be considered "natural recovery" because they do not involve conventional services.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spontaneous Recovery</li> </ul>

The NCCPSS Program supports recovery-friendly organizations and is available to help understand the various pathways to recovery. It requires all certification applicants to meet the Program's eligibility requirements and submit a complete certification application by mail or online.

**Please note that the Program does not certify individuals recovering from caffeine or tobacco misuse.**

### VIOLATIONS OF POLICIES

The NCCPSS Program will impose sanctions on individuals, course owners, or trainers who violate the policies governing Program implementation. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, denial of certification for applicants.

**Denial of Certification (see Denied Applications policy):** Certification will be denied to applicants who:

- Do not meet the eligibility criteria established by DMHDDSUS, or
- Submit false or misleading information as part of their application.
- References do not support recovery experience or cannot attest to the applicant's ability to perform the functions of a peer support. The applicant may not have another

opportunity to submit an updated reference letter, and the NCCPSS Program does not share reference letters with applicants.

Applicants who do not meet the required criteria must wait until they are eligible before reapplying. Those found to have submitted misinformation, or inaccurate details will be ineligible for certification for **two years**.

### VIOLATIONS OF TRAINING/TRAINER POLICIES

The NCCPSS Program requires course owners and trainers of certification courses to review and follow the NCCPSS Program Policies. By receiving a certificate of approval or submitting a signed copy of the Trainer Code of Conduct, course owners or certified trainers of certification courses agree to comply with all NCCPSS Program policies. Violating any policy or taking actions that contradict the spirit and ethics of peer support and the NCCPSS Program will result in the following penalties.

- **Written Reprimand** - A formal rebuke issued to a course owner or trainer found to have violated specific policies during an investigation. The Program will send a formal reprimand to the course owner or trainer, who will have 30 business days to respond with a correction or a plan of action. If the issue is not resolved after the correction plan is implemented, the Program will escalate to the next level of sanction.
- **Suspension:** A suspension occurs when the course owner or trainer receives a written reprimand, and the issue remains unaddressed. A suspension means the certification course or trainer will be removed from the PSS Website effective the suspension date. The Program will not recognize training certificates earned through a certification course during the suspension period. A certification course or trainer may be suspended under the following conditions:
  - A suspension of three (3) months will occur if the certification course or trainer fails to follow corrective action. Additionally, they may be suspended for violating two policies simultaneously or for consecutive policy violations after receiving a written reprimand.
  - A six-month suspension will be imposed if the certification course or trainer fails to comply with a second corrective action plan. The Program, certification course, or trainer will develop a new plan. A certification course or trainer may be suspended for three months if they violate more than two policies at the same time.
  - One-year suspension if a second corrective plan is not satisfactorily completed. A certification course or trainer may face a one-year suspension if they violate the policies more than three times within a year.

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- **Revocation of State Approval for Course or Certified Trainer Status** - The Program will revoke the certification course approval if the course has been suspended and the issue remains unresolved. Additionally, a trainer's certification will be revoked if they violate policies following suspension. The revocation of the trainer's certificate means they cannot train the certification course for two (2) years.

**The NCCPSS Program will adhere to a complaint process to determine any violations and notify the course owner or trainer in writing of the breach and applicable sanctions.**



# PROGRAM DECISION-MAKING

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to describe the decision-making process about policies, courses and stakeholder management of the NC CPSS Program.

## POLICY

The NC CPSS Program leadership consists of the following:

- The University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill School of Social Work (UNC-CH) Staff (aka NCCPSS Program staff)
- Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services (DMH/DD/SUS)
- NCCPSS Workgroup (CPSS)

Final decisions about the NC CPSS Program are made by DMHDD/SUS in collaboration with the Workgroup and executed by NC CPSS Program staff.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### DMH/DD/SUS:

- The Division may make changes to decisions made by the Workgroup depending on policies, funding, and other conditions.

### NCCPSS Workgroup:

- The Workgroup (CPSS, UNC-CH, and DMH/DD/SUS staff) discusses and drafts policies for implementation by NC CPSS Program staff.

### BHS (Program):

- The NCCPSS Program staff provides behavioral health and management expertise to implement the NC CPSS Program.

# ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that applicants meet the certification requirements set by the State of North Carolina.

## POLICY

The NC CPSS program requires applicants to meet the following conditions:

- Must be 18 years or older
- Have lived experiences in significant mental health or substance use disorder
- Be in recovery for at least 18 months (cannot complete training or process certification before the 18 months)
- Have a high school diploma or equivalent

## RESPONSIBILITY

### CPSS Applicant:

- It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide information to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria.

### NCCPSS Program:

The Program will determine eligibility using the following:

- Application Form (Demographics)
- Recovery Statement
- Reference Letters
- High School Diploma or Equivalence or Official Transcript
- Signed Code of Ethics and Conduct

# CERTIFICATION TRAINING

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the required courses/training for certification.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program accepts certificates from an Approved Course (at least 50 hours, including 40 hours of face-to-face instruction and 10 hours of prework or homework) or the NCCPSS Program Foundations of Peer Support (Part I & II) Course. The course owners are responsible for managing their approved courses and trainers; the NCCPSS Program staff manages the Program's standard course.

All approved courses must provide training at least three times per year or receive a written warning, which will be sent to the course owner. They will have three months to schedule at least two training sessions. Failure to comply will result in suspension from the approved training list.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner

- It is the responsibility of the course owner to manage their course and trainers.
- The course owners must adhere to the training requirement in a year to keep their state approval.

### NCCPSS Program

- The Program staff will manage the NCCPSS Program course.
- The NCCPSS Program will establish any violation and communicate in writing to the course owner.

# TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that applicants applying for new certification meet all training requirements for certification.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires all approved training certificates presented for certification to be completed within one (2) year of application (i.e., 2 years starting from the training completion date as listed on the approved training certificate). Exceptions to this rule include failed examinations, and canceled examination dates.

**Training cannot be completed before attaining 18 months in recovery.**

In addition, the Program requires 20 additional training hours (at least 3 hours of ethics training). training must be related to mental health, substance use, or health and human services, focusing on adults. The training certificate must include the title, training hours, and the trainer's signature. A maximum of eight (8) hours of training related to children and families will be accepted. Applicants can also use coursework if related to the work of a NC CPSS and will enhance the ability to provide services to people with mental health and/or substance use disorder. The applicant must submit an official transcript for review with the application either in a sealed envelope from the college or electronically emailed to [nccpssprogram@unc.edu](mailto:nccpssprogram@unc.edu)

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Applicant:

- It is the individual's responsibility to provide evidence of completing all training requirements.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program staff will verify the completion of required training through certificates of completion, course completion lists, and other means.

# ETHICS TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

## PURPOSE

This policy requires all NC CPSS to complete ethics training annually. The goal is to ensure every NC CPSS understands ethics in general, including the NC CPSS Code of Ethics.

## POLICY

The NC CPSS Program requires all NC CPSS to complete ethics training for certification and recertification.

- Individuals applying for certification must submit at least 3 hours of ethics training, which will be counted towards the 20 hours of additional training required for certification.
- CPSS renewing their certificates must submit at least 3 hours (1.5 hours every year), which will be counted towards their 20 hours of additional training requirements for recertification.

The NCCPSS Program has a list of approved [ethics training](#) for this requirement.

All applicants must submit a certificate of completion of an approved Ethics training to the Program.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### CPSS:

- It is the individual's responsibility to complete the training and provide evidence of completing the training requirement.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The Program will provide a list of approved Ethics trainings on the NC CPSS website.
- The Program staff will verify the training certificate to ensure it meets current standards.

# CERTIFICATION

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the requirements for a CPSS certification after an applicant has met the eligibility criteria.

## POLICY

The NC CPSS program requires all CPSS to meet eligibility requirements, complete required training, and fulfill other necessary requirements for certification. In addition to meeting the eligibility requirement, the following applicant must submit the following:

- Complete the CPSS application online
- Training certificate for an approved course or completed the State Standardized Curriculum and passed the examination
- Training certificates or course transcripts for 20-hours of additional training
- Reference letters (2) must be completed by individuals who are 18 years or older, have known the applicant for at least 1 year, and can speak to their recovery journey.
- Non-refundable application fee (\$20) (Paid Online).

The NC CPSS Program permits individuals incarcerated to complete the training requirements and to become certified.

**The application for certification must be submitted by the applicant via the online portal on the NC CPSS Program webpage. No mailed applications will be accepted.**

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Applicant:

- It is the responsibility of the applicant to review and ensure they meet all requirements of certification before applying.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to apply for certification.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to answer or provide information to the best of their ability for all questions within the application.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The Program staff will process all applications for certification and mail certificates to successful applicants. If your application is denied, the Program will notify you as to the reasoning for the denial.
- The Program staff will mail back any mailed application to the applicant using the application fee paid.

# CERTIFICATION EXAM

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the process for completing the certification exam after completing Foundations of Peer Support (Part II)

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires applicants who complete Track A to pass a certification exam before recertification. The exam consists of 80 multiple-choice questions, with a passing score of 75% (60 correct), and must be completed in 2.5 hours. Applicants may ask for accommodations.

Please note the following:

- The applicant must pay a \$50 exam fee (non-refundable) to the NCCPSS Program using an online portal before taking the exam.
- Applicants must complete Foundations of Peer Support (part II) before taking the exam.
- The exam will be implemented and proctored in partnership with MonitorEdu.
- The exam is available on demand.
- The applicant will receive the results as soon as the exam is completed and made available to the program.
- Applicants may take the certification exam up to three times. Each exam attempt requires a \$50 exam fee. If you do not pass:
  - The second attempt can occur no sooner than 14 days after the first attempt.
  - The third attempt may occur no sooner than 30 days after the second attempt.

**After three unsuccessful attempts, you must restart the certification process.**

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Applicant:

- It is the responsibility of the applicant pay the non-refundable exam fee.
- The applicant is responsible for taking the exam on demand.
- If the applicant schedules the exam, they must adhere to the cancellation policy of MonitorEdu.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will receive the non-refundable exam fee using the online portal.
- The NCCPSS Program staff will add qualified applicants to the pool.
- The NCCPSS Program staff will obtain the results from MonitorEdu.

# RECERTIFICATION

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that CPSS renews its certification every two- years, or their certification will lapse.

## POLICY

The NC CPSS program requires all CPSS to renew their certification every two years using their most recent certification date. CPSS may begin renewal within 90 days of the certificate's expiration date.

CPSS must submit a complete application:

- Application Form
- Training certificates (copies) from continuing education programs or official transcripts (sealed and signed by the college). A maximum of eight (8) hours of training related to children and families will be accepted. **All training certificates and college courses must be completed within the past two years.**
- Reference letters - Reference letters must be completed by individuals who are 18 years of age or older, have known the applicant for at least 1 year, and can speak to their recovery journey. One of the referees must not reside in the applicant's household.
- Pay an application fee (\$20) (Online)

Failure to submit a complete recertification application by the end date of their current certification will result in the certification lapsing unless they apply for late recertification.

**Please note that the NCCPSS Program cannot recertify CPSS while an investigation into an alleged Code of Ethics violation is ongoing. CPSS may be recertified depending on the outcome of the investigation. Additionally, recertification may be denied if a submitted reference letter does not support the CPSS's capacity to continue serving in the role.**

## RESPONSIBILITY

### CPSS:

- It is the responsibility of the CPSS to review all requirements for recertification.
- It is the responsibility of the CPSS to renew before their certification expiration date.
- It is the responsibility of the CPSS to answer all questions or provide information as required to the best of their knowledge.

### NCCPSS Program:

- All NC Certified Peer Support Specialists will receive an email with a Recertification Notice 60-90 days before their certification expires.
- The NCCPSS Program will not approve or renew certification applications that fail to meet the requirements outlined in the policy.
- The program staff will process recertification applications and mail updated certificates to CPSS.

# LATE RECERTIFICATION

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to allow CPSS additional time to renew their certification.

## POLICY

The NC CPSS Program requires CPSS to recertify every two (2) years. After the last day of the month that a CPSS is due for renewal, the CPSS may apply for late recertification in the month following their recertification due date.

The CPSS must submit the required documents for recertification and pay a late fee of \$20 (in addition to the \$20 processing fee).

If a CPSS does not renew their certification within the late recertification period, their certification will lapse, and the CPSS will have to apply as a new applicant to reinstate their status as a CPSS.

You will NOT be required to submit a new training certificate for a certification course unless your certification has lapsed.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### CPSS:

- It is the responsibility of the CPSS to renew their certification.
- CPSS must process recertification before continuing in the role of a CPSS.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The Program staff will process late recertifications in accordance with the policy.

# PENDING APPLICATIONS

## PURPOSE

This policy explains the process for pending applications for certification and recertifications.

## POLICY

The NC CPSS Program will process completed applications within 5-7 business days of receipt. An application is not considered complete until the Program staff has received all required documents.

Program staff will contact applicants with incomplete applications within three business days of receipt to request the necessary documents. Applicants must respond to the request within six months to continue the certification or recertification process.

All incomplete applications not rectified within six months of submission will be deemed inactive and **require resubmission** by the applicant.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Applicant:

- It is the applicant's responsibility to submit the required documents for certification.
- Applicant is responsible for checking the status of their application.

### NCCPSS Program:

- Program staff will contact pending applicants for additional information as needed, within the required timeframe.
- Program staff will contact the applicant if additional information is needed to process the application. If no response is received from the applicant within six months, program staff will close out the application.

## DENIED APPLICATION

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear, consistent criteria for denying NCCPSS certification applications when eligibility or suitability requirements are not met. This policy ensures the integrity of the certification process by confirming that certified individuals meet established standards of lived experience, recovery, and readiness to provide peer support services. This policy applies to all individuals applying for Peer Support Specialist certification or recertification.

### POLICY

The NCCPSS Program reserves the right to review all application materials and make determinations regarding approval or denial based on established certification standards and program requirements. **Denied applicants cannot submit a new application for 2 years, or as otherwise stated in the denial letter.** An application for certification or recertification may be denied for any of the following reasons, including but not limited to:

- **Failure to Meet Lived Experience Eligibility Criteria:** The applicant does not meet the required criteria for lived experience, including:
  - A self-identified history of significant mental illness and/or substance use disorder, as defined by program standards; or
  - Insufficient documentation or disclosure demonstrating that the applicant meets the eligibility requirements for lived experience necessary to fulfill the peer role. **Please note that recovery dates or answers to the qualifying questions cannot be changed after the application is submitted.**
- **Recovery Status Not Adequately Supported:** The applicants cannot demonstrate a level of recovery experience sufficient to provide support to others. An application may be denied if:
  - One or more required references do not attest to the applicant's recovery, stability, or readiness to serve in a peer support role; or
  - A reference explicitly indicates that the applicant is not currently suitable to function as a Peer Support Specialist; or
  - Reference responses raise concerns regarding the applicant's ability to model recovery, maintain appropriate boundaries, or fulfill the responsibilities of the role.
- **Overall Application Review:** The applicant may be denied when, after a holistic review of the application, including documentation, references, and other required materials, the NCCPSS Program determines that the applicant does not currently meet certification standards. The NCCPSS Program does not share reference letters with applicants.

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- **Lack of Authenticity of Recovery Statement:** Recovery statements must be written entirely by the applicant and reflect their genuine lived experience and personal recovery journey. The use of artificial intelligence tools, automated writing software, or assistance from others is not permitted. Any statement found to be AI-generated, significantly assisted, or not authentically authored by the applicant may result in denial of the application.
- **Active/Pending Complaint:** An application for certification or recertification may be denied if there is an active complaint, investigation, or regulatory review involving the applicant with the State that calls into question the applicant's eligibility, professional conduct, or suitability for certification. In such cases, the Program may defer or deny a decision until the matter is resolved. Determinations will be made based on the nature of the complaint and any available information, in accordance with program standards.

### RESPONSIBILITY

#### Applicant:

- The applicant is responsible for selecting referees who can speak to their recovery.
- The applicant is responsible for providing accurate information, including recovery time, resources utilized, and a description of their recovery experience, to accurately reflect the mental health or substance use challenge experienced.
- The applicant may appeal the decision within **10 business days** by writing to the Director at [nccpssprogram@unc.edu](mailto:nccpssprogram@unc.edu) with the subject line "Appeal for Certification Denial." Appeals submitted more than 10 business days after the due date may not be reviewed.

#### NCCPSS Program

- The NCCPSS Program Staff is responsible for reviewing applications against the criteria outlined by the DMH/DD/SUS. This is done using a standardized evaluation process to ensure consistency, fairness, and objectivity to the best of their ability. Denial decisions are based on objective criteria and documentation submitted by the applicant, including required references. No single factor is determinative unless it directly disqualifies the applicant under the established certification requirements. The following process determines denial:
  - Application is flagged
  - Application is evaluated by three (3) staff members, including the Program Manager
  - A minimum of two (2) out of three (3) reviewers need to agree that the application does not meet the criteria for certification
- The NCCPSS Program staff will notify applicants who are denied certification in writing, to include:
  - The application review process in its entirety.
  - Indicate which certification requirements were not met at this time; and
  - Clarify that denial does not necessarily prevent future reapplication.

**Please note that specific reference content or confidential details will not be disclosed.**

# LAPSED CERTIFICATION

## PURPOSE

The policy is to clarify when a CPSS's certification has lapsed and the steps to take to reinstate their certificate.

## POLICY

A CPSS certification is considered lapsed if it is not renewed within the month of expiration or 30 days after the last day of the month in which the certificate expired. For example, if the certification expires on June 15, a CPSS must recertify by July 30 at the latest.

However, after June 30, a \$20 late fee will be added to the recertification. After this date, the certification lapses, and the applicant must reapply for a new certification.

The requirements for reinstating a lapsed certification will be the same as those for an applicant certifying for the first time.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### CPSS

- If a certification has lapsed, it is the responsibility of the CPSS to reinstate their certification before working as a CPSS.
- CPSS may NOT use the title of a Certified Peer Support Specialist if their certification has lapsed.

### NCCPSS Program

- The Program will manage lapses and process applications for reinstatement as a new certification.

# DESIGNATION

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the requirements for the Military/Veteran Designation.

## POLICY

The NC CPSS Program currently has the Military/Veterans Designation (MD). The Program requires applicants requesting the designation to:

- Meet the requirements for PSS certification
- Complete the required training or documentation for the designation

To maintain the designation, the applicant must complete 8-hours of continuing education credits prior to each recertification period.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### CPSS

- It is the responsibility of the CPSS to provide the required documents or training to obtain the designation.

### NCCPSS Program

- The Program will process and review documents to award designation.

# SPECIALTY TRAINING

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the requirements for specialty train.

## POLICY

The NC CPSS Program currently has one specialty training. The Program requires applicants requesting specialty training:

- Complete certification
- Complete the required training or documentation for the designation

Specialty training will be renewed with certification.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### CPSS

- It is the responsibility of the CPSS to provide the required documents or training complete specialty training.

### NCCPSS Program

- The Program will process and review documents to ensure the applicant has completed specialty training.

# CREDENTIAL VERIFICATION

## PURPOSE

This policy is to ensure that potential employers and community stakeholders can verify the status of an applicant's certification.

## POLICY

All names of CPSS will be posted to the NC CPSS Program website. The information posted includes:

- Name of CPSS
- Year of Initial Certification
- Date of Latest Recertification
- Expiration Date
- Any other information relevant to the CPSS status

An individual or organization may contact the Program if they require additional verification or are unable to locate a specific individual. Program staff can be reached via email at [nccpssprogram@unc.edu](mailto:nccpssprogram@unc.edu).

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Stakeholders

- It is the responsibility of the CPSS to know their certification status
- It is the responsibility of the employing agency or community stakeholder to check the status and request a copy of the CPSS certificate.

### NCCPSS Program

- The Program staff will update CPSS status weekly to ensure CPSS is current.

# RECIPROCITY

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the reciprocity of certification between North Carolina and other states.

## POLICY

Currently, the State of North Carolina does not recognize certifications from other states. Individuals certified in other states must complete certification in North Carolina to be recognized as a CPSS in North Carolina.

However, training completed in other states may count towards the 20 additional hours required for certification.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### CPSS

- It is the responsibility of the CPSS to apply for certification in NC if they meet the eligibility criteria.
- CPSS may not use the title of a Certified Peer Support Specialist unless certified by the state of North Carolina.

### NCCPSS Program

- The Program will only certify persons that meet the criteria of the state of NC.

# STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the processes and content of communication with our stakeholders.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program communicates with stakeholders in partnership with the DMH/DD/SUS. Communication from the Program staff must align with the policies of both DMH/DD/SUS and UNC-CH.

The Program staff does not disseminate information that involves advocacy or legislative information and does not participate in such activities.

Requests for information dissemination are evaluated and decided in consultation with the DMH/DD/SUS and UNC-CH BHS.

Communications with the media about the Program are directed to DMH/DD/SUS.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Stakeholders

- It is the responsibility of the stakeholder to review the communication policy.

### NCCPSS Program

- The Program staff will explain the policy to stakeholders.

# DATA/INFORMATION SHARING

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the process for obtaining, maintaining, and utilizing data or information to support informed decision-making.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program collects data through application forms and surveys. The data gathered is presented in aggregate form for confidentiality purposes.

Data may be presented on the NCCPSS Program website, and data that is not posted on the website may be shared upon request, depending on the reason for obtaining the information.

Program information is posted on the NC CPSS website or sent to CPSS through the listserv. All CPSSs are enrolled in the listserv using the email address they provided during certification.

The Program data is kept in a secure location at UNC-CH for 3 years. Information may not be available after 3 years of the Program receiving it.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Stakeholders

- It is the responsibility of the stakeholder to request any needed data.

### NC CPSS Program

- The Program staff disseminates information through emails or postings on the website.
- The Program staff will review requests and provide data in accordance with the policy.

# QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Program staff follow the policies and procedures outlined for programming and identify any additional needs for new policies

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program will complete quality checks at least once a quarter. Activities for quality check include, ensuring that files are saved on the right drive, files have required documentation, and protocols are being followed. The outcome of these checks will be discussed in team meetings for improvement plans.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### NC CPSS Program

- The Program Manager will complete these quality checks and discuss the outcome with the Program Director.
- The team will discuss the results of the check and develop a plan to address any issues that arise from these checks.

# MISINFORMATION

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to describe the consequences of providing fraudulent or falsified documentation to the Program.

## POLICY

The NC CPSS Program requires all applicants to provide accurate information to the best of their ability.

Any false information or omissions of information may be grounds for rejection of application or corrective action. Any misinformation (fraudulent or falsified) provided by an applicant may result in the applicant's inability to process certification for two (2) years.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Applicant/CPSS

- It is the responsibility of the applicant or CPSS to provide accurate information.

### NC CPSS Program

- The Program staff will investigate any misinformation.
- The Program staff and/or DMH/DD/SUS will communicate any misinformation and consequences to the applicant through email and mail.

# COMPLAINT PROCESS

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain the process for receiving and addressing complaints about training or program activities.

## POLICY

The NC CPSS Program encourages individuals with concerns regarding the Program, training, trainers, and so on to submit a written complaint to the BHS Program staff. Complaints may be submitted online (<https://pss.unc.edu/contact-us>) by completing the complaint form or by phone.

The NCCPSS Program may require additional information. Please ask the course owner, to respond to the concern or forward the complaint to the following teams at the State:

- State-funded Program Integrity (PI) Team
- Division of Health Benefits – Program Integrity Team
- Customer Service and Community Rights Team

The NC CPSS Program may consult with staff of the DMH/DD/SUS as needed to identify steps to take depending on the violation. The NCCPSS Program can be contacted at [pssregistry@unc.edu](mailto:pssregistry@unc.edu) or 919-843-3018.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program may request information from the party involved.
- The NCCPSS Program will establish any violation(s) and communicate in writing the sanctions to the party involved.

# REFUNDS

PURPOSE	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>The purpose of this policy is to explain the process for handling application processing fees.</p>	<p><b><u>APPLICANT:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The applicant is responsible for ensuring they understand this policy.</li></ul> <p><b><u>NC CPSS Program:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The NCCPSS Program will credit the applicant with the amount for future use.</li></ul>
<p><b>POLICY</b></p> <p>Processing fees for certification, recertification, or replacement of certificates and wallet cards paid to the NC CPSS Program are <b>non-refundable</b>. However, any excess amount paid will be credited to your account for future use. You can apply this credit toward recertification or any other payment later.</p> <p>If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact us at <a href="mailto:nccpssprogram@unc.edu">nccpssprogram@unc.edu</a>.</p>	



# TRAINING ELIGIBILITY

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clarify eligibility requirements for participating in certification training.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires that training participants be individuals who are 18 years of age or older and are living in recovery from mental illness and/or substance use disorder.

The NCCPSS Program recognizes all pathways to recovery, including Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) programs. Recovery statements, reference letters, or interviews with referees will be the ONLY means of confirming a training participant's lived experience and recovery.

The NCCPSS Program prohibits owners of Approved Courses from requiring clinical assessments and/or verifications, endorsements, Urine Analysis, or recommendations from clinical professionals as proof of a participant's readiness for participation in training.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owners:

- The Approved Course owner will follow the stipulations outlined in this policy.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program staff will determine any violation(s) and communicate in writing to the owner of an approved course the violation(s) and the determined sanctions that will be applied.

# TRAINING APPLICATION

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the enrollment process for certification training and to define the certification requirements for the NCCPSS Program.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires an application process to enroll in certification training. The application must also outline the criteria for certification, and the application must include the following:

- **Completion of an Application Form:** The form must collect biographical data, such as name and date of birth (to confirm that the applicant is at least 18 years old), among other details.
- **Recovery Statement:** The application form must include a section for the applicant to provide information on their lived experience and recovery.
- **A statement that if less than five people are present on the first day of class, the class will be canceled.**
- **A statement regarding the refund policy:** The conditions under which a training participant will receive refunds (see the refund policy).
- **A way to request reasonable accommodations.**
- **An attestation:** An attestation that states, "I understand that I must have lived experience of a mental health and/or substance use disorder to and be in recovery for at least a year to receive the North Carolina's Certified Peer Support Specialist Certification."
- **A certification statement:** A statement saying that completing the certification training does not mean the individual is certified. The participant must meet all other criteria required by the NCCPSS Program.

The Program may request a completed application form if additional information or verification is needed for certification.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owners:

- All courses (approved and standard) will have an application form to collect basic information from participants at registration. Approved course owners will share this form with their trainers.
- The Approved Course owner will review applications submitted by applicants and ensure that they attest to understanding the certification requirement of the NCCPSS Program.
- The Approved Course owner will submit in writing a copy of their established application form to the NCCPSS Program.
- The NCCPSS Program and course owners will keep application documents for a minimum of two years after a participant completes the training.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will determine any violation(s) and communicate in writing to a course owner for correction.

*Note that this application is separate from the NCCPSS Program Certification Application.*

# TRAINING ACCOMMODATIONS

## PURPOSE

The policy is to ensure that participants receive reasonable support and accommodations for training.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires certification trainers and course owners to provide all reasonable accommodations (as required under the ADA) within their capabilities to participants who need them.

The owners and trainers of the certification courses shall inquire about the necessary accommodations in the application process to ensure there is sufficient time for participants to access and utilize community resources to provide accommodations.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owners:

- The trainers will process requests for reasonable accommodations during registration and plan accordingly.
- The trainers will refer participants to the appropriate resources to meet their needs if they are unable to do so themselves.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will provide reasonable to participants who complete the NCCPSS program course.

# PREREQUISITE TRAINING

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that training participants understand any prerequisites for enrolling in the course.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires that any course prerequisites be stated on the application form for the specific course. The NCCPSS Program does not require any prerequisite training for completion of the NCCPSS Program course.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner:

- The Course owner will ensure that information about required prerequisite training for participation in their course is included in the application form.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will ensure the prerequisite training for participation in specific courses is stated on the application form.

# TRAINING CONDITIONS

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on classroom conditions for Approved Course training. This policy will enable the NCCPSS Program to have standards for the classroom learning environment.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program encourages owners of the Approved Courses to make decisions about class ratio based on the skill level of trainers while meeting the following requirements:

- A minimum of five participants must be present on the first day to start training. If there are fewer than five participants, the trainer must cancel the class. Participants must be informed about this policy during the registration process.
- The maximum class size per trainer is 15 participants. If a class size exceeds 15 participants, there must be two trainers (not a shadow trainer).
- Training times **MUST** not exceed 8 hours of instruction time per day. If the training time exceeds 6 hours per day, participants **MUST** have at least an hour for a break.
- All participants who complete the training must receive a certificate of completion unless they have a signed agreement from the participant stating otherwise.

**The NCCPSS Program will make exceptions to class size based on extenuating conditions. This exception must be requested in writing, in advance, along with a full explanation of the situation.**

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner/Certified Trainer:

- The course owner or trainer will manage registration and ensure that the class sizes meet the specified trainer-to-participant ratios.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will review the participant list to ensure compliance with this policy. Course owners who do not comply will receive a written warning.

# TRAINING RESOURCES

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all participants have access to training resources.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires that all participants completing certification training receive a minimum of one participant manual on the first day of training. This manual should be the same manual submitted and approved by the NCCPSS Program as a resource for training participants.

Additionally, each training participant must receive a copy of any additional resources shared by the course owner during training.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner:

- The Approved Course owner will make a copy of their participant manual available to each training participant on the first day of training.
- The Approved Course owner will provide each training participant with any material shared during training.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will provide a manual for each participant completing the Program's course.
- The NCCPSS Program will ensure course owners provide each participant with a manual.

# REQUIRED TRAINING HOURS

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that participants receive a minimum of 40 hours of face-to-face training and receive a certificate of completion.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS program requires participants to complete at least 40 hours of face-to-face instruction and participate in all required activities before receiving a certificate of completion. To ensure that the trainer provides a minimum of 40 hours of instruction to training participants:

- Participants may miss up to **2 hours** of training or an activity in a day without needing a makeup.
- If they miss **more than 2 hours but no more than 8 hours (one day) or a required activity**, they must make up the time or task either before the training ends or in a future class within **3 months**.
- Missing **more than one full day** requires retaking the entire class later.
- Training participant attendance must be tracked in class.
- Training participants will sign an attendance sheet in the morning and after the lunch break.
- The owner and trainers will keep sign-in sheets for two years.
- A training participant cannot be enrolled in another training scheduled for the exact dates of completing the certification course.

**The NCCPSS Program prohibits trainers from:**

- **Awarding provisional certificates when training participants do not complete the course.**
- **Combining certification training with other classes at a reduced rate and time**

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner/Certified Trainer:

- The course owner or trainer will track the attendance of training participants using a sign-in sheet and keep it for at least 2 years.
- The course owner or trainer will not schedule training for more than 8 hours per day and will not schedule training with other training simultaneously.
- The course owner will not issue a provisional certificate for any participant who did not complete the training.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program monitors the training schedule to ensure all training is 8 hours per day.
- The NCCPSS Program WILL NOT ACCEPT any training certificate marked as provisional submitted by an applicant to process their CPSS certification.

# TRAINING CANCELLATION

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that course owners have a process to inform registrants and the NCCPSS Program of any cancellations. This policy will also enable the NCCPSS Program to gather data scheduling training reviews.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS program requires the course owner or trainer of a certification course to inform registrants and the NCCPSS Program of any cancellations or adjustments to the training schedule (submitted in writing) within 48 hours of the start of training. If a class must be canceled, the course owner or trainer will contact participants by phone or verified email, and the participant will confirm receipt of the notice through a read receipt. Additionally, the course owner or trainer will send a follow-up email, providing training participants with options to participate in a later class or receive a refund.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner/ Certified Trainer:

- The Approved Course owner or trainer is responsible for contacting registrants and submitting the information in writing to the NCCPSS Program when training is canceled.
- The Approved Course owner or trainer will provide registrants with options such as joining a similar training course later or getting a refund.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will follow up with the Approved Course owner or trainer if a complaint is received about a training cancellation.
- The NCCPSS Program will compile data on training cancellations and report during the NCCPSS Program Workgroup meetings for decision-making purposes.

# TRAINING REFUND

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that participants receive a refund from the course owner and that this refund policy is presented on the application form or any document developed by the course owner before the training participant registers for the training.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires the course owners to provide a complete refund to a participant if:

- A class is canceled in advance by the course owner or trainer.
- The trainer cannot complete a class due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., weather events, sickness, etc.).
- A participant withdraws in writing at least three weeks before the first day of class.
- Other unforeseen circumstances where justice requires a refund (extenuating medical circumstances where immediate communication is not available)

The NCCPSS Program requires refunds to be issued and sent out to a participant within ten business days of notice of withdrawal or class cancellation.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner:

- The Approved Course owner will adhere to the conditions outlined in the refund policy.
- The Approved Course owner may create a partial refund policy for withdrawals within the final three weeks before the beginning of class
- The Approved Course owner may allow people to cancel one class and enroll in a later class when requested in writing for a good cause in the last three weeks before the class.
- The Approved Course owner will make these policies public and provide them to all training applicants at registration.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will follow up with an owner of an Approved Course when there is a complaint about a refund.

# TRAINING EVALUATION

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the training is evaluated and feedback from participants is implemented for quality improvement.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires course owners to complete evaluation forms at the end of each training session. For training participants to provide feedback without intimidation or fear of retribution, the NCCPSS program requires course owners to use one of these two methods to collect feedback from training participants.

- Send an email to participants no later than 24 hours after the training to request that they complete an evaluation.
- Allow training participants to complete an evaluation form on the last day of the class training. If the Course Owner decides to complete an evaluation in class, the trainer will step out of the training and find a volunteer from the training participants to collect feedback for both the trainer and the Course Owner.

The NCCPSS Program will send out evaluation surveys to graduates of the NCCPSS Program course.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner/Certified Trainer:

- The Approved Course owner will develop an evaluation tool and provide copies to their Approved Course trainers.
- The Approved Course owner will choose one of the two prescribed methods to collect feedback from training participants.
- The Approved Course owner will address any concerns identified in the evaluations.
- The Approved Course owner will maintain training evaluation documents for two years after the applicants complete the training.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will receive in writing the evaluation tool of an Approved Course within 30 business days of signing the training policies and procedure document.
- The NCCPSS Program staff will review the evaluation survey and implement any changes.

# CERTIFICATE VERIFICATION

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to enable the NCCPSS Program to verify training certificates submitted by participants in certification courses for certification purposes.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires course owners and trainers to submit a list of people who completed certificate training to the NCCPSS Program. Each list must be submitted in writing within five business days of training completion and must include the following information:

- Training dates
- Training location (physical address)
- Names of participants who completed the training
- The email address of the participants (if available)
- Names of participants that are not in recovery for 1 year (if any)
- Names of participants who started but did not complete the training
- Trainer(s) name(s)
- Certificate number, if applicable

The NCCPSS Program requires the owner of an Approved Course to submit **ALL** the above regarding a training.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner:

- The course owners and trainers will submit to the NCCPSS Program in writing the graduate list no later than five business days after completing training.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will verify all training certificates submitted for certification by checking with the graduate list submitted by the course owner or trainer.

# TRAINING SCHEDULE

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to enable the NCCPSS Program to coordinate on-site visits and technical assistance for all certificate courses.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires course owners and trainers to submit their training schedules in writing to the NCCPSS Program. The training schedule must be submitted in writing at the beginning of every quarter of the calendar year between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of the month. The course owner is also required to submit in writing any changes to their training schedule within 48 hours of the change to the NCCPSS Program. The training schedule submitted in writing by the course owner or trainers **MUST** include all scheduled training (closed and posted on the website) and the following:

- Dates and times for the training. **Training time should not exceed 8 hours a day. If the training is more than 6 hours a day, participants must have an hour break**
- The physical address of the training
- Name of trainer(s)
- Contact information

The NCCPSS Program will create an internal schedule of all courses to coordinate site visits for technical assistance.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner:

- The Approved Course owner will submit a training schedule in writing between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of the month at the beginning of every quarter to the NCCPSS Program.
- The Approved Course owner will communicate any changes to their training schedule to the NCCPSS Program within 48 hours of the change.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will review all training schedules submitted and compile an internal training schedule for site visits and technical assistance.

# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that trainers use the instructor's manual when facilitating certification courses.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires trainers to facilitate the certification courses as approved by the NCCPSS Program. To ensure that this requirement is being followed, the NCCPSS Program requires course owners to observe each trainer at least twice a year (one unannounced visit), provide feedback, and address any concerns.

The NCCPSS Program Technical Assistance Team (TAT) (CPSS contractors and NCCPSS Program Staff) will conduct unannounced visits to observe training (face-to-face) and provide technical assistance. The course owners must have copies of the instructor and participant manuals, as well as other teaching materials, available at the training site for the TAT.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner:

- The course owner (or their designated person) will observe each approved trainer twice a year.
- The course owner will provide feedback to the trainer and any corrective actions implemented.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program may request training observation reports for two randomly selected trainers from the course owners.
- The NCCPSS Program will conduct unannounced site visits and send a written report to course owners and trainers.

# WEBSITE POSTING OF TRAINING

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the course owners and trainers make information about scheduled training available to the public before registration.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires the owner or trainer of an Approved Course to include the information below in any submission of a training posted on the PSS website:

- Dates of Training
- Time of Training
- Physical address of training (a residential address will be accepted)
- Name of Trainer(s)
- Cost of Training
- Information on scholarships (if any)
- Contact Information for registration
- Cancellation Policy
- Refund Policy
- ADA statement and process for requesting accommodations

**Training for specific organizations may not be posted on the website but must be included in the training schedule submitted to the NCCPSS Program.**

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner:

- The Approved Course owner will provide all information needed to post a training event on the PSS website.
- The Approved Course owner will submit updated information in writing within 48 hours of a change if this change occurs after the original posting on the PSS website.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program staff will ensure the Program's course training schedule is posted on the website.

# COMPLAINT PROCESS

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the course owners have a process to receive and address complaints about training.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires course owners to have a written complaint process for concerns about the course, trainer, or both. The course owner will make the complaint process available to participants on the first day of training. The complaint process may be anonymous.

The NCCPSS Program also requires course owners to respond to a complaint within 48 hours of receipt.

In addition, the NCCPSS Program requires an trainers to inform participants can submit complaints to the NCCPSS Program if they choose to do so (the participant may submit their complaint through contact us on the website (<https://pss.unc.edu/contact-us>) or email the NCCPSS Program at [nccpssprogram@unc.edu](mailto:nccpssprogram@unc.edu)).

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owners:

- The course owner will develop an internal complaint process and share with trainers and participants.
- The course owner will develop an internal disciplinary process for their trainers and share any disciplinary action of a trainer with the Program.
- The course owner will respond to all complaints within 48 hours of receipt.
- The course owner will make the NCCPSS Program complaint process known to all applicants.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program may request information from course owners to resolve complaints. The NCCPSS Program will receive and resolve complaints.

# TRAINER ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to define the eligibility criteria to become a NCCPSS Certified Trainer of an Approved Course.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires a person who is interested in becoming a Certified Trainer of a certification course to meet the following criteria:

- Must be certified as a NC Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) for a minimum of three consecutive years
- Must work, volunteer, or supervise CPSS staff for a minimum of three consecutive years
- Must be selected by the certification course owner or the NCCPSS Program.
- Must have experience training and have knowledge of peer support services.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner:

- The course owner will submit documents to prove that the potential trainer of the certificate course meets the criteria outlined.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will review documents and verify that the potential trainer meets the criteria.
- The NCCPSS Program will contract with approved persons to train the Program course.
- The NCCPSS Program will use the information presented to process trainer certification.
- The NCCPSS Program WILL NOT certify any person as a trainer of a certification course if they do not meet the conditions defined in the policy.

# TRAINER TRAINING

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the training requirements for a prospective trainer of a NCCPSS Approved Course.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires a person interested in becoming a trainer of an Approved Course to complete the following (in the order listed) before applying to become a Certified Trainer:

- Complete the approved NCCPSS course you will be training if you haven't already for certification
- Complete the Training of Trainer (TOT) for a certification course that they wish to teach and receive a certificate of completion
- Co-train a section of the course while being observed by lead facilitators or course owner.

Here's a polished version of your sentence for clarity and professional tone:

The NCCPSS Program conducts a Training of Trainers (TOT) for Certified Peer Support Specialists (CPSS) who meet the eligibility criteria and are selected through an application process prior to certification.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner:

- The course owner will provide appropriate documentation (e.g. certificate of completion for TOT, sign-in sheets for co-training, etc.)

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will review and approve documentation submitted course owner or trainer to certify a prospective trainer.

# HIRING AND TERMINATION OF TRAINERS

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to make trainers aware of the NCCPSS Program's role in the hiring and termination of Certified Trainers.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program contracts with Certified Trainers and can terminate their contract for the Program's course based on violations of training policies, trainer code of conduct, return to use, or any conditions that impact their capacity to train. The course owners are responsible for hiring and terminating trainers.

The NCCPSS Program certifies trainers for the certification courses, and the Program will hold Certified Trainers accountable for any violation of the NCCPSS Trainer Code of Conduct as outlined in the program's policies.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner:

- The course owner will hire and terminate Certified Trainers for their course.
- The course owner will communicate the termination of a Certified Trainer in writing to the NCCPSS Program.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will remove the name of the Certified Trainer from the list of Certified Trainers for an Approved Course.
- The NCCPSS Program Director will contract and terminate contracts for the Program's course.

# TRAINER CERTIFICATION

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain the steps involved in the certification process for a prospective trainer of a certificate course.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires a person who facilitates an Approved Course to be a Certified Trainer of that Approved Course. To become a Certified Trainer of an Approved Course, the owner of the Approved Course must submit the following to the NCCPSS Program for certification:

- Completed application form
- Copy of the prospective trainer's current NC CPSS certificate
- A certificate of completion for all the required trainings (e.g. TOT)
- Training logs for proof of facilitated co-training
- A signed copy of the NC Trainer Code of Conduct Form
- A signed copy of the Trainer Registry Form
- A processing fee of \$20 paid by money order or online to Behavioral Health Springboard (BHS)

The Program will not certify any individual that does not complete these requirements.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner

- The course owner will submit all required documentation to the NCCPSS Program for certification.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program staff will review all documents submitted by the course owner or trainer for certification.
- The NCCPSS Program will process and issue a NCCPSS trainer certificate to the applicant.

# TRAINER RECERTIFICATION

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain the recertification for a Certified Trainer of an Approved Course to enable the Certified Trainer to maintain their certification status.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires a Certified Trainer of an Approved Course to recertify every two years to maintain their status as a Certified Trainer of the Approved Course. To apply for recertification, the Approved Course owner must submit by mail the following to the NCCPSS Program:

- A copy of the trainer's current NC CPSS certificate
- Proof of at least 2 trainings per year which were completed by the trainer (ideally train every six months)
- All training evaluations received from one training session facilitated by the trainer
- Any occurrences (negative evaluations/policy violations) that required supervision from the course owner/lead trainer
- A signed copy of the NC Trainer Code of Conduct
- A processing fee of \$20 paid by money order or online to the NCCPSS Program.

**The course owner may submit the required documents for recertification and pay a late fee of \$20 (in addition to the processing fee) in the month after the recertification due date.**

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner

- The course owner will submit the required documents to the NCCPSS Program for recertification at least 30 business days before certificate expiration date.
- The course owner will disclose to the NCCPSS Program any occurrences (negative evaluations/policy violations) that required supervision from the course owner/lead trainer.
- The course owner **WILL NOT** have a Certified Trainer whose certification has expired to facilitate an approved course training.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will review the required documents submitted by the owner of the course owner and approve renewal.
- The NCCPSS Program will renew certification of trainers for the Program's course.

# TRAINER CPSS LAPSES

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain the process for reinstating a trainer of a certification course when their CPSS certification lapses.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires a trainer of a certification course to be current with their CPSS certifications. A trainer is considered lapsed on the date their CPSS certification expires.

The trainer CANNOT train until their CPSS certification is reinstated.

The trainer is responsible for updating their personal CPSS certificate.

The trainer MAY resume training when the course owner submits a copy of a current CPSS certificate to the NCCPSS Program.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### CPSS/Course Owner/Trainer

- CPSS is responsible for ensuring their CPSS certificate is current.
- The course owner will ensure all trainers maintain their CPSS

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS program staff will ensure all trainers for the standardized course have active CPSS status.
- The NCCPSS Program will not accept training certificates from a lapsed trainer.

# TRAINER LAPSES

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain the process for reinstatement of a trainer of a certification course when their trainer certification lapses.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires a trainer of certification courses to recertify every two years. A trainer is considered lapsed if their trainer certificate expires. If a trainer lapses, they can no longer provide training. To resume training, the course owner **MUST** renew their trainer certification by applying for certification again. The course owner must provide the following:

- Completed application form
- Copy of the prospective trainer's current NC CPSS certificate
- All received training evaluations from one training session facilitated by the trainer
- A signed copy of the NC Trainer Code of Conduct Form
- A processing fee of \$20 paid by money order or online to the NCCPSS Program

**All trainers that lapse MUST not conduct trainings.**

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner

- The course owner will ensure all trainers maintain their CPSS and trainer certification.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will not accept training certificates from a lapsed trainer.

# TRAINER RETURN-TO-USE (RELAPSE)

## PURPOSE

This policy explains the actions the NCCPSS Program staff will take when a trainer of a certification course returns to use or has mental health episodes that distract their recovery journey and training.

## POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires a trainer of a certification course to maintain a minimum of THREE years in recovery as a trainer. A trainer is incapable of training if they return to use or have a mental health episode that distracts their recovery journey and changes their previous recovery date.

The trainer must report any relapse to the course owner for submission to the NCCPSS Program to adjust the trainer's status.

The trainer CANNOT train until they attain THREE years in recovery from the last relapse.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Course Owner:

- The course owner is responsible for ensuring all trainers who relapse meet the recovery requirement of THREE years.
- The course owner must report any trainer set back to the Program.

### Certified Trainer:

- The trainer is responsible for informing the Course Owner and the NCCPSS Program about their set back in recovery.

### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program staff will manage the recovery of trainers of the standard course.
- The NCCPSS Program will not accept training certificates from a trainer who has set back in recovery and has fallen short of the minimum requirement of being THREE years in recovery from the last recovery date.

## TRAINING CANCELLATION - PARTICIPANTS

### PURPOSE

The training cancellation policy outlines the process and requirements for a participant to cancel an in-person Foundations of Peer Support (Part II) training for the NCCPSS Program.

### POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires all registered participants to attend the training for which they are enrolled. Participants who are unable to attend must notify the Certified Trainer in writing **at least five (5) business days** before the start of the training, except in cases of emergency.

Late cancellations or failure to attend without prior notice will be documented and may impact a participant's eligibility to register for future trainings.

If a participant fails to attend three scheduled training sessions (not consecutive) and does not notify the Certified Trainer by email within the required timeframe, they will not be able to register for a class in the future. The participant will wait for **1 year** and will be required to restart the certification process.

### RESPONSIBILITY

#### Applicant:

- The applicant must notify the Certified Trainer within the stipulated timeframe.
- The applicant will communicate any emergency following the procedure outlined.
- The applicant is responsible for reviewing and understanding this policy

#### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will track attendance data related to no-shows.
- The NCCPSS Program will email participants who do not attend or who cancel at the last minute with a reminder of the policy.
- The NCCPSS program staff will follow the procedure in determining emergencies.
- The NCCPSS Program will implement sanctions for no-shows in accordance with this policy.

## EMERGENCIES

For the purposes of this policy, an **emergency** is defined as an unforeseen, unavoidable circumstance that prevents a participant from attending a scheduled training and that could not reasonably have been anticipated or communicated within the required notice period.

Emergencies may include, but are not limited to:

- Sudden personal illness or injury
- Hospitalization
- Serious illness or death of an immediate family member
- Severe weather or natural disasters
- Other critical events beyond the participant's control
- Transportation failure or car accident
- Legal or court obligations that cannot be rescheduled
- Other critical events beyond the participant's control

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

Below are the emergency procedures to be followed by participants:

- Participants should notify the Certified Trainer as soon as possible, even during an emergency, if feasible.
- Documentation may be requested by the NCCPSS Program to verify the emergency.
- Emergencies will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine if the absence is excused.
- Failure to provide notice or documentation when reasonably possible may result in the absence being counted as unexcused.

## TRAINING CANCELLATION - TRAINERS

### PURPOSE

The training cancellation policy outlines expectations for Certified Trainers regarding in-person Foundations of Peer Support (Part II) training when it is canceled.

### POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires all Certified Trainers to conduct classes as scheduled. If a Certified Trainer is unable to hold a class for any reason, they must notify the NCCPSS Program and all registered participants by email at least **48 hours** before the scheduled start time, or Friday, if the class starts on Monday.

Certified Trainers with a roster of more than five registered participants who must cancel a class due to participant no-shows, late cancellations, or inclement weather will be eligible to receive a \$350.00 stipend for their time and effort. To qualify for the stipend, the Certified Trainer must complete the following:

- Inform participants of the cancellation policy during the registration process
- In cases of inclement weather, notify participants of alternative class times
- Send a reminder email to participants at least **48 hours** before the start of class.
- Provide support to participants in enrolling in another training session.
- Submit attendance records to the NCCPSS Program, clearly identifying no-shows.

**The NCCPSS Program may request documentation to verify completion of these requirements.**

### RESPONSIBILITY

#### Certified Trainer:

- The Certified Trainer must notify the NCCPSS Program within the stipulated timeframe.
- The Certified Trainer must provide evidence of completion of the tasks outlined in this policy.

#### NCCPSS Program:

- The NCCPSS Program will review the information submitted by the Certified Trainer.
- The NCCPSS Program will determine eligibility and decide on the payment of the stipend.
- If sufficient evidence is provided, the NCCPSS Program will process the stipend; otherwise, the Certified Trainer will be notified of the decision.

**MODIFICATION OF NCCPSS PROGRAM POLICIES**

The NCCPSS Program staff reserves the right to amend and modify the Program Policies. When changes are made to the NCCPSS Program, Program staff will post them on the PSS website. Additionally, the Program staff will notify all course owners by email of the changes and their effective date.

**If you have any concerns or questions, you may submit them to:**

**NCCPSS Program**

**325 Pittsboro Street CB# 3550**

**Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3550**

**E-mail: [nccpssprogram@unc.edu](mailto:nccpssprogram@unc.edu)**

**School of Social Work | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**