North Carolina
Certified Peer Support
Specialist Program

PROGRAM POLICIES

Behavioral Health Springboard (BHS) 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 Behavioral Health Springboard (BHS) at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill (UNC-CH). The Program adheres to policies of the State of North Carolina, DMH/DD/SUS and the UNC-CH. The Program reserves the right to amend and modify its policies. When the NCCPSS Program makes any changes, the Program staff will post all changes on the PSS website.

VISION FOR THE NCCPSS PROGRAM

To develop a qualified Peer Support Specialist workforce that has the support, access, credibility, competency, respect and the valued role within the mental health and substance use disorder service delivery system to positively impact the lives of individuals experiencing mental health and addiction challenges. This is accomplished through the NC Certified Peer Support Specialist Program.

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 that are created for peers within the service system should fully utilize the lived experience of the peer supporter, viewing it as a credential that the individual brings to the work that they do.
- Lived experience is necessary and on-going skill development for peer supporters is essential.
- ❖ The recovery environment of the workplace is fundamental to the success of peer supporters and recovery for the individuals served.
- Peer supporters are highly valued members of an agency; therefore, are fully integrated members of the mental health/substance use disorder delivery system.
- Equality and respect between peer supporters and traditional professionals must be reciprocal.
- Choice and self-determination are important components in everyone's recovery, including individuals receiving and providing services.
- Self-directed recovery does happen, with or without professional help.

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PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST

The NCCPSS Program defines Peer Support Specialists as people living in recovery from mental illness and / or substance use disorder who support others who can benefit from their experiences. The Program certifies persons with lived recovery experience in Serious Mental Illness (SMI), Substance Use Disorders (SUD), or both.

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 this definition, not all conditions experienced by individuals may be considered 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. It may lead to a mental health/substance use situation if it begins to negatively impact the individual's life 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 a) work, b) carry out daily activities, or c) engage in satisfying relationships.

SMI may be grouped under the following categories:

- Mood disorders depressive disorders, bipolar disorders
- Anxiety disorders posttraumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder
- Psychotic Disorders schizophrenia, delusional disorder, schizoaffective disorder

Substance Use Disorders (SUD)

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines SUDs 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
- Tobacco
- Opioids (Oxycodone, Oxymorphone, Hydrocodone, Hydromorphone, Fentanyl, Morphine, Codeine, Methadone, Tramadol, Buprenorphine, Heroin)
- Cocaine
- Methamphetamine

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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

In the State Peer Support Service definition, the NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services (DMH/DD/SUS) explains that "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 their services, to make decisions
 concerning their health and well-being, and to have help to make decisions from
 whomever they choose.
- Self-Advocacy identifying and purposefully asking for what one needs.
- Health learning to overcome, manage or more successfully live with the symptoms and making healthy choices that support one's physical and emotional well-being.
- *Community* Developing and building upon relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope.

Recovery is a process that means different things to different people. Similarly, recovery is personal, and the individual may use various tools or pathways to move toward positive

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outcomes. The NCCPSS Program acknowledges many pathways to recovery, including harm reduction. Below are the paths to recovery recognized by the NCCPSS Program.

Pathway	Examples
Clinical Pathways - Recovery procedures are supported by the expertise of a healthcare provider, clinician, or other qualified professional.	Examples of clinical pathways of treatment include: • Medication therapy • Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) • Counseling
Non-Clinical Pathways - Recovery procedures are peer-supported and frequently based in the community but do not include a licensed clinician.	 Examples of Non-clinical Pathways include: Faith-based recovery Peer-Support services
Self-Management – Recovery processes may be considered "natural recovery" because they do not involve conventional services.	Spontaneous Recovery

The above definitions and premises form the basis for implementing the NCCPSS Program.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

PURPOSE

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

POLICY

The NCCPSS Program is an initiative of the NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services (DMH/DD/SUS). The Behavioral Health Springboard (BHS) in the School of Social Work at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill is contracted to implement the NCCPSS Program.

The DMH/DD/SUS created the NCCPSS Program Workgroup (made up of staff of BHS and DMH/DD/SUS, and CPSS) to make recommendations for programming. Below are theconstitutes of the NCCPSS Program Workgroup and their roles:

- BHS Staff (also known as NCCPSS Program staff)

 manges the certification and recertification,
 courses/trainings and stakeholder engagement
 and evaluation.
- DMH/DD/SUS staff Liaison with the DMH/DD/SUS and the Workgroup and ensure synergy with other statewide programs.
- Certified Peer Support Specialists (CPSS) Provide input based on their lived and work experience

The NCCPSS Program Workgroup makes recommendations about programming to the DMH/DD/SUS leadership for implementation.

RESPONSIBLITY

DMH/DD/SUS:

 DMH/DD/SUS leadership make decisions about the NCCPSS
 Program.

NCCPSS Workgroup:

 The NCCPSS Program Workgroup (CPSS, BHS and DMH/DD/SUS staff) makes recommendations about programing DMH/DD/SUS leadership.

BHS

 BHS implements decisions about the NCCPSS Program.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that applicants meet the requirements for certification set by the state of NC.

POLICY

The NCCPSS program requires applicants to meet the following conditions:

- Be 18 years or older
- Have lived experiences in significant mental health or substance use disorder
- Be in recovery (check the website on guidance about recovery) for at least one year (may complete training before a year but cannot process certification before a year)
- Have a high school diploma or equivalent

RESPONSIBLITY

CPSS Applicant:

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

- The Program will determine eligibility using the following:
 - Application Form
 - Recovery Statement
 - Reference Letters
 - Proof of education

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 applicants to complete an Approved Course and submit their certificates with their application. The training must be completed within two (2) years of the application (i.e., 2 years starting from the date of training completion as listed on the Approved Course certificate).

Training may be completed before attaining one (1) year in recovery but an individual cannot become certified before achieving one (1) year in recovery.

In addition, the Program requires 20 additional training hours.

- Training must be related to mental health, substance use, or health and human services with a focus on adults. The training certificate must include title, training hours and trainer signature. You may include a training transcript or log with signatures.
- A maximum of eight (8) hours of training related to children and families will be accepted.
- Applicants can also college courses in mental health and/or substance use disorder. The applicant must submit an official transcript (sealed envelope from college or electronically emailed to <u>pssregistry@unc.edu</u>) with their application.

RESPONSIBLITY

Applicant:

 It is the responsibility of the individual to provide evidence of completing the training requirements.

Course Owner:

 The Approved Course Owner will submit a graduate list to the NCCPSS
 Program after each training.

- The NCCPSS Program staff will verify the completion of the Approved Course using the graduate list.
- The NCCPSS Program staff will verify additional hours from training certificates, and official transcripts.

CERTIFICATION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the requirements of certification after an applicant meets the eligibility requirements.

POLICY

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

- Complete application online or by mail
- Proof of education
- Training certificate for an Approved Course
- Training certificates for 20 additional hours of 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.
- Non-refundable application fee (\$20) (Online or Money Order/Check)

Application for certification MUST be submitted by the applicant.

RESPONSIBLITY

Applicant:

- It is the applicant's responsibility to review all requirements of certification.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to apply for certification.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to answer all questions and provide information required to the best of their knowledge.

NCCPSS Program:

 The NCCPSS Program staff will process applications for certification and mail certificates to successful applicants.

RECERTIFICATION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that applicants renew their certification every two years.

POLICY

The NCCPSS program requires all CPSS to renew their certification every two years after their certification date. CPSS may begin renewal 90 days before the expiration date on their certificate.

CPSS must submit a complete application:

- Application Form
- Training certificates (copies) from continuing education program 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.
- New reference letters Reference letters 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. One of the reference latters must be from someone who does not reside in your household or closely related and can attest to your continued recovery.
- Application fee (\$20) (Online or Money Order/Check)

Failure to submit a complete recertification application by the end date of the current certification will result in lapsed certification.

RESPONSIBLITY

CPSS:

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

- As a courtesy, all NC Certified Peer Support Specialists will receive an email with a Recertification Notice 60-90 days prior to the expiration date on their certificate.
- The Program staff will process applications for recertification 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 NCCPSS 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 the month after their recertification is due. 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 (requirements posted under the certification tab on the PSS Website) to reinstate their status as a CPSS. You will NOT be required to submit a new training certificate for an approved 40-hour course unless your certification has lapsed.

RESPONSIBLITY

CPSS:

- CPSS is responsible for renewing their certification.
- CPSS SHOULD process recertification before continuing in the role of a CPSS.

NCCPSS Program:

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

PENDING APPLICATIONS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is explain the process for pending applications for certification and recertifications.

POLICY

The NCCPSS Program processes completed applications within 5-7 business days of receipt of the application. Program staff will reach out to applicants with incomplete applications for certification and recertification within 3 business days of receipt of the application. The applicant MUST respond within 6 months to continue the process for certification or recertification. The Program WILL consider all applications that are incomplete after **6 months** of receiving the application inactive. Once inactive, the applicant will have to re-submit an updated application if they would like to complete the process.

RESPONSIBLITY

Applicant:

• It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide requirements for certification, and checking the status of their application.

- The NCCPSS Program staff will reach out to pending applicants within time frame and note in their file.
- The NCCPSS Program staff will contact applicant and make application inactive if no response in 6 months.

MISINFORMATION

PURPOSE

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

POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires all applicants to provide accurate information to the best of their ability. Any false information or omissions may be grounds for rejection of application or corrective action.

An applicant CAN NOT submit new information for a falsified or fraudulent document/information.

Any misinformation (fraudulent or falsified) provided by an applicant may result in the applicants inability to process certification for two (2) years.

RESPONSIBLITY

Applicant/CPSS

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

- The Program staff will investigate any misinformation.
- The Program staff will communicate any misinformation and consequences to the applicant through email and mail.

LAPSED CERTIFICATION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clarify when a CPSS has lapsed in certification and the steps to reinstate their certificate.

POLICY

A CPSS certification is considered lapsed if CPSS do not renew in the month of expiration or within 30 days after the last day of the month their certificate expired. After this date, the certification has lapsed and will require the applicant to apply as a new certification.

Requirements for lapsed certification will be the same requirements for an applicant certifying for the first time.

RESPONSIBLITY

CPSS

- CPSS is responsible for reinstating their certification if lapsed.
- CPSS may NOT use the title of a Certified Peer Support Specialist if certification has lapsed.

NCCPSS Program

 The NCCPSS Program will manage lapses and process application for reinstatement as a new certification.

CERTIFICATION DESIGNATIONS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the requirements for designations or specializations.

POLICY

The NCCPSS Program currently has the following designations:

- Military Designation (MD)
- Certified Older Adults Peer Specialist (COAPS)

The Program requires applicants requesting designation to:

- Meet the requirements for PSS certification outlined on the PSS Website
- Complete the required training or documentation for the designation outlined on the PSS website

To maintain the designation, the applicant must complete the requirement for maintaining the designation or specialization.

RESPONSIBLITY

Applicant/CPSS

 CPSS/applicant is responsible for providing the required documents or training to obtain designation.

NCCPSS Program

 The NCCPSS Program will process and review documents to award designation or specialization.

CREDENTIAL VERIFICATION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that potential employers and other stakeholders can verify the status of an applicant's certification.

POLICY

The NCCPSS Program will have all names of CPSS posted on the NCCPSS Program website. 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 need further verification.

RESPONSIBLITY

Stakeholders

- CPSS is responsible for monitoring their CPSS status
- It is the responsibility of the employing agency to check the status and request a copy of CPSS certificate before employment.
- It is the responsibility of other stakeholders to check the status of a CPSS for their needs.

NCCPSS Program

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

RECIPROCITY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain reciprocity of certification between NC and other states.

POLICY

As of now, the state of NC does not recognize the certification of other states. Individuals certified in other states must complete certification in NC to be recognized as a CPSS in NC.

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

RESPONSIBLITY

CPSS

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

NCCPSS Program

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

APPROVED COURSES

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain the protocols for NCCPSS Approved Courses.

POLICY

The NCCPSS Program approves courses for the required training. An approved course consists of a minimum of a 50 hour (40 hours face-to-face instruction and 10 hours prework or homework) curriculum that is submitted, reviewed, and authorized by the Program.

Approved Course training and trainer management are the responsibility of course owners. Course Owners must use the Course Transfer, Course Modification, or Course Termination protocols for any changes.

All approved courses MUST train at least 3 times a year. Of the 3 times, at least 1 training must be open to the recovery community. Course Owners may also offer training to organizations and groups.

The Program will make accommodations for specific courses based on their specific needs and audience served.

The Program provides technical assistance to course owners during course reviews and training observations. All training may be observed by members of the Technical Assistance Team (DMH/DD/SUS and BHS staff (CPSS).

All NCCPSS Program Course Owner(s)/Certified Trainer(s) must adhere to the NCCPSS Training and Trainer Policies.

RESPONSIBLITY

Course Owner

- It is the responsibility of an individual or organization to get their course approved by the Program.
- The Course owner must adhere to the training requirement in a year to keep their state approval.

- The NCCPSS Program staff
 coordinates reviews and approves
 courses for the required training.
- The NCCPSS Program will determine any violation(s) and communicate in writing to the Approved Course owner, the violation(s) and sanctions that will be applied.

TRAINER CERTIFICATION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain the process for certifying trainers to teach approved courses.

POLICY

The NCCPSS Program requires all trainers of approved courses to be certified and recertify every two years. Trainer certification must be processed by the owner of an approved course.

All Certified Trainers MUST be CPSS and meet all other eligibility requirements outlined in the NCCPSS Trainer Policies.

Course Owners must follow the guidelines in the NCCPSS Trainer Policies to certify and recertify trainers (https://pss.unc.edu/courses).

RESPONSIBLITY

Course Owner

 Approved Course owners are responsible for certifying a trainer for their course.

NCCPSS Program

 The NCCPSS Program staff will process Trainer Certification.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the processes and content of communication with our stakeholders including CPSS, State organizations, community organizations, etc.

POLICY

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

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

Request for information dissemination is assessed and decided on in consultation with the DMH/DD/SUS and UNC-CH BHS.

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

RESPONSIBLITY

Stakeholders

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

NCCPSS Program

 The NCCPSS Program staff will explain the policy to stakeholders.

DATA/INFORMATION SHARING

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain the process of obtaining and using data or information for decision making.

POLICY

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

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

The NCCPSS Program information is posted on the NCCPSS website or sent to CPSS through the listserv.

The NCCPSS Program data is kept in a secured location at UNC-CH.

RESPONSIBLITY

Stakeholders

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

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

QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Program staff follow the policies and procedures outlined for programing, and identify any additional need for new policies or procedures.

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 appropriate drive, files have required documentation, and protocols are being followed. The outcome of these checks will be discussed in team meetings for improvement plans.

RESPONSIBLITY

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

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 NCCPSS Program encourages persons with complaints about the Program, training, trainers, etc. to submit a written complaint to the BHS Program staff. Complaints may be submitted online (https://pss.unc.edu/contact-us) or by completing the Complaint Form, or through phone calls. The NCCPSS Program may require additional information, ask 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 NCCPSS 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 contacted at pssregistry@unc.edu or 919-843-3018.

RESPONSIBLITY

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

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MODIFICATION OF NCCPSS PROGRAM POLICIES

The NCCPSS Program staff reserves the right to amend and modify the Program Policies. When the NCCPSS Program makes any changes, the Program staff will post all changes on the PSS website. The Program staff will notify all Course Owners and CPSS by email of the changes made and when changes become effective.

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

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