

Key 2: Job Titles and Descriptions

When implementing peer services, it is important to consider the job title and job description of the peer specialist. Agencies should use job titles that reflect the specific functions of the peer specialist. They should also include a detailed job description that clearly defines the role, skills and competencies of the position. The title and job description provides clarity to the agency's staff on the peer specialist's role and reduces the likelihood of role drift, marginalization, and tokenism.

Many agencies have moved away from using the catch all title, 'Peer Specialist'. There are several reasons for this change. Research indicates that the use of the word 'peer' within the job title, can create conflict with non-peer staff and negatively impact the integration of peers within the agency¹. The use of the word 'peer' can automatically disclose lived experience to anyone aware of the job title. This disclosure may cause challenges in the individual's personal and work life; as it remains on their employment history for the duration of their career.

Alternative titles for peer specialists include: Recovery Support Navigator, Crisis Recovery Support Specialist, and Wellness Coach.

The lack of clarity around job expectations can cause a negative impact on the peer specialist, their supervisor, and the agency's ability to create an inclusive and equitable environment for the peer workforce². Clear and concise job descriptions support the HR staff in hiring the right person, the peer specialist in adhering to their role, and also gives the supervisor a mechanism to gauge performance. *Practices in Peer Specialist Supervision and Employment* suggests that the following key items be included in the peer specialist's job description³:

- **Function:** Summarize the main purpose of the position within the department/organization in one sentence.
- **Reporting Relationships:** Describe the "chain of command" and the types of supervision the employee will give and receive. Clearly indicate the specific job titles of supervisors and the positions they supervise.
- **Responsibilities:** List 4 to 6 core responsibilities of the position and identify several specific duties within each of the core responsibility areas.
- **Qualifications/Competencies:** List required and preferred qualifications, credentials, and competencies in order of importance. These might include educational requirements (e.g., a high school diploma), training or certification as a peer specialist, or specify that the employee must be a person in recovery (e.g. "Be a self-identified current or former user of mental health or co-occurring services" or "Must be a self-disclosed individual with a mental illness"). Competencies for peer support can be found at <http://www.samhsa.gov/brss-tacs/core-competencies-peer-workers>

- **Employment Conditions:** Describe relevant circumstances, such as: physical requirements (e.g., standing, lifting), environmental conditions, unusual work schedule (e.g., rotating shift, on-call hours), and any other applicable requirements (e.g., driver's license, background check, random drug screen).

The following job description provides an example of these elements.

Awesome Florida Agency, Inc.

Job Title: Recovery Support Navigator	Pay: \$15.42 per hour
Reports to: Director of Wellness Services	Hours: 40 hours

Function: The recovery support navigator provides non-clinical, evidence-based peer support services by performing tasks designed to assist members in navigating multiple systems and regaining control over their lives through individual recovery planning and wellness self-management. The Recovery Support Navigator will serve as a supporter, role model, mentor, and advocate to individuals with mental health and co-occurring disorders. The Recovery Support Navigator must demonstrate an ability to share personal recovery experiences and to develop authentic peer-to-peer mutual relationships.

Responsibilities:

Assist in recovery planning and goal setting

- Create Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAP®) to assist peers identify wellness self-management and relapse prevention strategies.
- Provide recovery and whole health education to help peers identify their whole health goals and objectives (1:1 and groups) to address chronic diseases/co-morbid conditions.
- Help peers identify their interests, goals, strengths, and options and participate in all decisions related to establishing and achieving their recovery goals.
- Help peers develop problem-solving skills so that they can respond to challenges that may arise in their recovery process.
- Helps peers to function as a fully participating member of their treatment/recovery support team and include family members input when peer desires.
- Assist peers in organizing their time to keep appointments as well as other scheduled contacts with specific providers.

Mentor & role model recovery and wellness

- Convey hope to peers about their own recovery and model that recovery is possible.
- Demonstrate healthy behaviors that are expected of a person in recovery.
- Promote social learning, understanding, and acceptance through shared experiences.
- Encourage peers to develop independent behavior that is based on choice rather than compliance.
- Recognize when to share experiences and when to listen.
- Describe personal recovery practices and help peers to discover which recovery practices work for them.

Support successful community inclusion and participation

- Assist peers with transitions from different treatment settings and navigating multiple systems.
- Teach life skills, including personal care and social responsibility habits.
- Assist peers to establish/reestablish and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships with people such as: family members (of choice), significant others, and friends.

- Encourage the exploration and pursuit of community roles (hobbies, work, school, etc.)
- Actively identify, address barriers, and support linkages to traditional and non traditional health services and supports, and community and social support networks.
- Help peers develop self-advocacy skills and support them in having their voices and needs heard, especially related to goals and objectives for treatment/recovery planning.

Maintain professional responsibility

- Document all interactions according to agency standards.
- Use weekly supervision effectively by monitoring self and relationships.
- Prepare for meetings and engage in problem-solving strategies with their supervisor.
- Work together with other colleagues to enhance the provision of services and supports.
- Participate in staff meetings and agency trainings.
- Abide by the Florida Certification Board (FCB) Code of Ethics.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries.
- Respond appropriately to personal stressors, triggers, and indicators that impact their ability to perform job duties.
- Recognize crisis situations, risks to the peer's recovery and/or personal safety and respond appropriately.
- Maintain Florida Certification Board's continuing education requirements and seek additional training, and technical assistance as necessary.

Qualifications

- Education: Bachelor's Degree preferred; High School Diploma/GED minimum
- Lived Experience: Be a self-identified current or former user of mental health or co-occurring services who can relate to others who are now using those services
- Work/Volunteer Experience in the role of a Peer Specialist: 1-3 years preferred; 6 months minimum.
- Certification: Certification as a Recovery Peer Specialist or Recovery Support Specialist through the Florida Certification Board.
- Licensure: Must have a current and valid Drivers License.
- Training: WRAP® & WHAM/Peer Support Whole Health & Resiliency, preferred
- Knowledge: Understanding of local behavioral health and community systems; Recovery principles, practices, and tools; Culturally competent
- Abilities: hear anecdotal information and reframe in the context of facts and data without losing empathy; communicate effectively, both written and verbal; work independently and in teams; respect individual's recovery journeys; be culturally sensitive, competent and responsive; use strengths based and person centered language.
- Qualities: Empathy; Flexibility; Positive attitude; Willingness to learn and grow as a person and professional.

Working Environment and Conditions

- Job requires sitting, standing, typing, and driving.
- May require alternative work hours.
- Candidate must pass a level two background screening.
- Must have reliable transportation.

¹ Gates, L. B., & Akabas, S. H. (2007). Developing strategies to integrate peer providers into the staff of mental health agencies. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 34(3), 293-306. doi. ² Cabral, L., Strother, H., Muhr, K., Sefton, L. and Savageau, J. (2014). Clarifying the role of the mental health peer specialist in Massachusetts, USA: insights from peer specialists, supervisors and clients. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 22: 104–112. ³ Swarbrick, P., Nemeck, P. (2010). Practices in Peer Specialist Supervision and Employment. Retrieved from <http://www.patnemeck.com/pdfs/NJPRA-HO-2010-Swarbrick-Nemeck.pdf>