



Grassroots Empowerment Project
2011 Peer Specialist training conference June 19-25
Eau Claire Center for Independent Living of Western Wisconsin

*This training is for students who intend to make Certified Peer Specialist a career choice, and pursue employment in the following counties:
Barron, Buffalo, Chippewa, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pepin, Pierce*

What is a Peer Specialist?

Peer Specialists bring their personal experience of mental health recovery and peer support into hospitals, clinics, crisis services, case management, peer-run organizations, independent living centers, even emergency rooms and jails. A Certified Peer Support Specialist has a different role from clinicians and social workers, although these people may be peers themselves and may choose to work as a peer specialist.

Peer Specialists are becoming key supports within many county mental health systems. Your knowledge gained from experience is needed by peers who seek support and guidance in their own recovery path. Peer support is a major part of recovery.

A Peer Specialist engages others in very individual ways, to provide supportive relationships, experiences of belonging, valued roles and community. A Peer Specialist promotes independent living, enhancing the skills and abilities of each person to meet their own goals.

A Peer Specialist works with peers as equals. They look for signs of wellness, encouraging strengths and self-direction. Peer specialists serve as role models. A Peer Specialist generally has more experience in their own recovery, with specific preparation and practice for various peer support needs and situations.

Your certificate for this course will prepare and qualify you for the
Wisconsin Peer Specialist Certification examination on August 3.
(Application to take that exam will be due July 13.)

**For more information about the Wisconsin Peer Specialist Employment Initiative,
including the certification process:**

Alice Pauser, Wisconsin Peer Specialist Program Coordinator
608-242-8484 x224 alicep@accessstoind.org

Application & study guide for the state certification exam are posted on the internet:
sce-peerspecialist.uwm.edu

Since 2007, providers consumers and advocates in Wisconsin have identified core competencies that every Peer Specialist should possess.

We will develop the knowledge of the group in these areas:

Self-knowledge and the role of the peer specialist Support your own recovery as you use your experience to inspire others. Engage in a trauma-free way. Recognize strengths and challenges, build on the positive.

Recovery Understand the process of recovery and how to pass it on. Understand the effects of spirituality, sexuality, grief and loss, stigma and trauma, on recovery.

Ethics and boundaries Understand and maintain boundaries and confidentiality. Seek guidance and consultation.

Cultural awareness Understand how your own values relate to ethnicity, faith, gender, and other aspects of culture.

Choice and empowerment Growth, change, and overcoming stigma are possible. Empower each person's informed choice. Teach problem solving and conflict resolution skills.

Advocacy and locating information Basic knowledge of our mental health system, conditions, treatments, rights, services, supports and community resources. Advocate for others and teach self-advocacy.

Crisis and safety How to respond to people in crisis and make referrals. How to keep yourself and others safe.

Teamwork Communicate and cooperate, with supervision. Know when to ask for help.

Other competencies are personal abilities and values that will be shaped and brought out in the course of the training.

Course material and schedule

We use the *Peer Specialist Training Manual*, written by Steve Harrington for the National Association of Peer Specialists, with additional knowledge for Wisconsin.

We emphasize discussion and skills practice, with daily reviews, a final test, and time to meet and visit informally so that learning will be active, interesting and lasting.

Training is in a conference setting over five days, from 9:00 to 5:00 including breaks and lunch. Group time totals 35 hours and each evening allows an hour for study.

Saturday morning is final examination for the course.

(This is not the state certification exam.)

Facilitators are Wisconsin-certified Peer Specialists.

Sandra (Sam) Ahrens has worked as a peer specialist trainer since 2009. She also provides technical assistance and training to peer-run mental health recovery centers, primarily in the northern part of the state. Her training and experience includes teaching, social work, and advocacy in the areas of mental health, poverty and homelessness.

Gregory Smith coordinates the Peer Specialist program for Grassroots Empowerment Project, and is part of a vocational planning and peer support network. He has administered a peer run mental health organization in Madison, now serving on its board of directors and other Dane county groups.

Scholarships are available. Cost is \$1500 for tuition, materials, lodging & meals.

For participants from outside of Eau Claire, lodging will be at Ramada Inn.

Preparation and certification for peer specialist work in Wisconsin is a valuable opportunity with limited funding and resources.

We will accept students who intend to make Certified Peer Specialist a career choice, and who will pursue employment in the following counties: Barron, Buffalo, Chippewa, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pepin, Pierce

Preferred applicants will have recent experience in providing peer support (examples on previous page), and who are connected with their local community.

The 2011 **Grassroots Empowerment Project Peer Specialist** program is provided in cooperation with the **Western Region Recovery & Wellness Consortium**, funded in part by the federal **Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration** through the **National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors**.

Read this entire brochure and application.

Decide who you need to talk with from an organization

where you have worked/volunteered, who will write a letter of reference.

(They are willing to help. Ask them!)

Check your calendar and plan ahead! Before you complete the application form, discuss it with your referring or sponsoring organization.

You are invited to bring questions to a free information session

April 13 Wednesday 12:30-4:30

at Center for Independent Living of Western Wisconsin

202 Eau Claire St, downtown Eau Claire (same location as the June conference)

Copies of this brochure/application form will be available there.

Send completed application to:

GEP Peer Specialist Program PO Box 8683, Madison WI 53708

Questions: Gregory Smith newgoals@gmail.com 608-206-3346 / 800-770-0588

(Detailed message please, include email or address.)

****APPLICATION MUST BE POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN MONDAY APRIL 25 ****

No fax or email applications.

You will be notified by May 13 about acceptance to the program.

(You may request reasonable accommodations at that time.)

**Grassroots Empowerment Project Peer Specialist Program
June 2011 training application**

(A paper copy of this form can be mailed to you on request.)

Include two letters of recommendation from representatives of organizations who know you and your recent work as an employee or volunteer.

Your name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

How or where did you receive this announcement?

Education

Certifications/diplomas:

College degree:

Post graduate:

Optional information:

The county where you use services (if any):

Agencies where you use services:

Your name: _____

Answer all questions in your own words. Please write **briefly** and **clearly**.
(If you need more space, use the reverse side or attach a separate sheet of paper.)

Why do you want to become a Peer Specialist?

What is your definition of Recovery?

Describe your interests or experiences that have prepared you for this.
How you are good at working with other peers or consumers in mental health recovery?

Think of a mental health related organization or group in your county or town.
How do you, or will you, help to improve the lives of the clients or members there?

The county where you work/volunteer:

Agencies or organizations where you work/volunteer:

Current job titles or duties:

Assurances

I understand that Wisconsin Peer Specialists work from the perspective of our personal lived experience with mental health and recovery.

I agree to be open about the fact that I have personal experience with, or have been diagnosed with, a mental illness.

I understand that in doing so I help to educate others about the reality of recovery.

PLEASE SIGN YOUR INITIALS TO THE STATEMENTS BELOW THAT ARE TRUE FOR YOU:

_____ YES, I am prepared to disclose my history with mental health issues and recovery when acting as a Peer Specialist.

_____ NO, I do not want to disclose my personal history at this time.

_____ I am at least 18 years of age.

_____ I understand that this is not a job placement program.

_____ I have not been trained as a Peer Specialist by any other program.
(If you attended the 2006 Wisconsin training program, that will not disqualify you from this.)

_____ If accepted, I agree to read the assigned course material.
I agree to attend the full training program, participate by listening and speaking, complete a written course examination, and evaluation form at the end of the week.

_____ I will take the state certification examination.

Will any past criminal actions prevent you from being employed as a peer specialist?

Mental health providers will check criminal background and abuse incidents before they hire you. Past crimes or abuse will not always disqualify you from employment or volunteering, but it may be an issue for some applicants.

This training program is for candidates who are eligible for employment as peer specialists.

Reading and writing competency are necessary for this course and for peer specialist work.
State certification requires a high school diploma, GED/HSED certificate, or waiver.

Please inform us immediately if you become unable to meet any of these conditions.

If for any reason you must cancel your participation, contact us immediately and allow someone else the opportunity.

Print your name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____