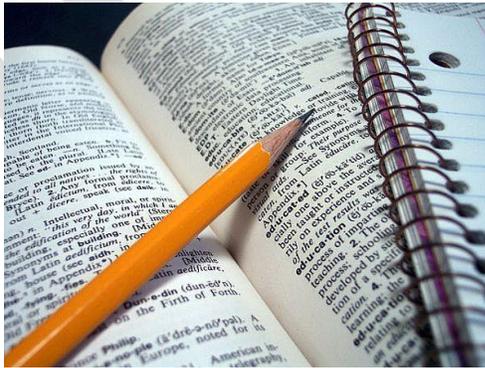


# Wisconsin Peer Specialist Certification Exam Study Guide



2018

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## Introduction

This study guide is a tool to assist you in preparing to take the Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist Exam, which has an integrated training curriculum that incorporates both mental health and substance use disorders.

Within this guide, we have included an opportunity for you to explore your learning style(s). The online self-assessment, found here [Learning Style Assessment](#), will help you identify your learning style(s) and understand how you learn best. A list of three common identified learning styles is also included. We have also included some specific study tips that others have found helpful. In utilizing these tools, you will be better prepared to succeed on the state certification exam and become a Certified Peer Specialist.

Your trainings materials will be an important part of your preparation for the exam. You will also find three documents in this guide, Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist Core Competencies, Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist Scope of Practice and Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist Code of Ethics. Please study these documents carefully.

The example study questions *are not* duplicates of actual questions on the exam.

**It is important to remember that you will be answering the questions from the perspective of a Peer Specialist.**

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Some questions were adapted from the 2014 Wisconsin Association of Peer Specialists (WAOPS) study guide

## Your Preferred Learning Style

A learning style is a way of learning. YOUR preferred learning style is the way in which YOU learn best. Three learning styles that are often identified in students are the Auditory Learning Style, the Visual Learning Style, and the Tactile/Kinesthetic Learning Style. Read about each of these learning styles to identify YOUR preferred learning style.

Are you an Auditory Learner?



Auditory Learners learn best when information is presented in an auditory language format. Do you seem to learn best in classes that emphasize teacher lectures and class discussions? Does listening to audio tapes help you learn better? Do you find yourself reading aloud or talking things out to gain better understanding? If YES, you are probably an Auditory Learner.

Are you a Visual Learner?



Visual Learners learn best when information is presented in a written language format or in another visual format such as pictures or diagrams. Do you do best in classes in which teachers do a lot of writing at the chalkboard, provide clear handouts, and make extensive use of an overhead projector? Do you try to remember information by creating pictures in your mind? Do you take detailed written notes from your textbooks and in class? If YES, you are probably a Visual Learner.

Are you a Tactile/Kinesthetic Learner?



Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners learn best in hands-on learning settings in which they can physically manipulate something in order to learn about it. Do you learn best when you can move about and handle things? Do you do well in classes in which there is a lab component? Do you learn better when you have an actual object in your hands rather than a picture of the object or a verbal or written description of it? If YES, you are probably a Tactile/Kinesthetic Learner.

A self-assessment found here. <https://www.how-to-study.com/learning-style-assessment/> Mangrum-Strichart Learning Resources [www.how-to-study.com](http://www.how-to-study.com) Used with permission.

## How to Study-Some tips you might want to consider

There are a number of things that you can do to prepare for taking the Wisconsin Peer Specialist Certification Exam

### Preparing for the Exam: Self –Assessment

Review the table of contents in your training manual. Look carefully at each module and its topic. Ask yourself, “Am I well prepared, somewhat prepared or not prepared?” in each one. The areas that you assess yourself as being only somewhat prepared or not prepared in are the areas to really focus on when reviewing the contents of your manual.

### Preparing for the Exam: Content Review

The entire manual should be reviewed. Many test takers have found that forming study groups helps in preparing to take the exam. You can work with each other on questions, offer support to each other and share tips on how remember things. There may be others in your training who could be resources. Friends and family can also help you to prepare.

### Preparing for the Exam: Anxiety Management

It is natural to have some anxiety as the exam date draws near. Most test takers experience anxiety prior to and during an exam. Know where your exam will be proctored and try to arrive early. The proctor will explain the process of the exam and housekeeping items such as where the restrooms are. You can familiarize yourself with the room before you actually start the exam.

When actually taking the exam give yourself breaks. Go to the restroom or get a drink of water. Take a deep cleansing breath or stretch. Looking away from the computer screen for a few moments can help ease eye fatigue.

### Exam Questions and Avoiding Mistakes in Answering Them

Watch for qualifiers in questions (best, least, worst, next, most, etc.) Pay careful attention to these. These words often link to selecting the correct answer. Read the question. Focus on the question and its key words. Do not skip to the answers and get clear on the question. Form an impression the reconfirm your impression by reviewing the question again. Then review the answers. Try not to go back and forth. This is a proven technique for success.

Use all of the information you have. Look for and rule out the least likely answer. Determine the best answer. Avoid making assumptions.

Don't be too hard on yourself. Trust yourself and the knowledge you have gained through your training.

Strichart Learning Resources [www.how-to-study.com](http://www.how-to-study.com) Used with permission

# Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist Core Competencies

## Domain 1: Values

- 1.1 Believes that recovery is an individual journey with many paths and is possible for all
- 1.2 Believes in and respects people's rights to make informed decisions about their lives
- 1.3 Believes that personal growth and change are possible
- 1.4 Believes in the importance of empathy and listening to others
- 1.5 Believes in and respects all forms of diversity (As included in Wisconsin State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Cultural Diversity Committee's definition of Cultural Competency: <http://scaoda.state.wi.us/docs/main/CulturalCompetencyDefinition.pdf>)
- 1.6 Believes in the importance of self-awareness and self-care
- 1.7 Believes in lifelong learning and personal development
- 1.8 Believes that recovery is a foundation of well-being
- 1.9 Believes that recovery is a process
- 1.10 Believes in the healing power of healthy relationships
- 1.11 Believes and understands there are a range of views regarding mental health and substance use disorders and their treatment, services, supports, and recovery

## Domain 2: In-depth knowledge of recovery

- 2.1 Knowledge of SAMHSA's definition of recovery: "A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential." <http://blog.samhsa.gov/2012/03/23/defintion-of-recovery-updated/>)
- 2.2 Knowledge of mental health and substance use disorders and their impact on recovery
- 2.3 Knowledge of the basic neuroscience of mental health and addiction
- 2.4 Knowledge of stages of change and recovery
- 2.5 Knowledge that recovery and wellness involves the integration of the whole person including spirituality; physical, vocational, and emotional health; sexuality; gender identity; and community
- 2.6 Knowledge of trauma and its impact on the recovery process
- 2.7 Knowledge of person-centered care principles
- 2.8 Knowledge of strengths-based planning for recovery
- 2.9 Knowledge of the impact of discrimination, marginalization, and oppression
- 2.10 Knowledge of the impact of internalized stigma and shame

## Domain 3: Roles and Responsibilities of a Certified Peer Specialist

- 3.1 Knowledge of the rights of peers seeking support, such as state and federal law regarding client rights, civil rights, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- 3.2 Knowledge of ethics and boundaries
- 3.3 Knowledge of the scope of practice of a Certified Peer Specialist

- 3.4 Knowledge of confidentiality standards
- 3.5 Knowledge of ways to encourage safe, trauma-sensitive environments, relationships, and interactions
- 3.6 Knowledge of appropriate use of self-disclosure
- 3.7 Knowledge of cultural competency (As defined by Wisconsin State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Cultural Diversity Committee:  
<http://scaoda.state.wi.us/docs/main/CulturalCompetencyDefinition.pdf>)

#### **Domain 4: Skills**

- 4.1 Ability to bring an outlook on peer support that inspires hope and recovery
- 4.2 Ability to be self-aware and embrace and support own recovery
- 4.3 Ability to problem-solve
- 4.4 Ability to assist people in exploring life choices, and the outcomes of those choices
- 4.5 Ability to identify and support a person in crisis and know when to facilitate referrals
- 4.6 Ability to listen and understand with accuracy the person's perspective and experience
- 4.7 Effective written and verbal communication skills
- 4.8 Ability to draw out a person's perspective, experiences, goals, dreams, and challenges
- 4.9 Ability to recognize and affirm a person's strengths
- 4.10 Ability to foster engagement in recovery
- 4.11 Ability to locate appropriate recovery resources, including basic needs, medical, mental health and substance use disorder care; supports, including social support and mutual aid groups; and to facilitate referrals
- 4.12 Ability to facilitate and support a person to find and utilize resources
- 4.13 Ability to work collaboratively and participate on a team
- 4.14 Ability to know when to ask for assistance and/or seek supervision
- 4.15 Ability to set, communicate, and respect personal boundaries of self and others
- 4.16 Ability to utilize own recovery experience and skillfully share to benefit others
- 4.17 Ability to balance own recovery while supporting someone else's
- 4.18 Ability to foster the person's self-advocacy and provide advocacy when requested by the person
- 4.19 Ability to advocate for self in the role of a Certified Peer Specialist

# Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist Scope of Practice

**Summary:** The primary function of the Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) is to provide peer support. The CPS engages and encourages peers in recovery from mental health and/or substance use disorders. The CPS provides peers with a sense of community and belonging, supportive relationships, and valued roles. The goal is to promote wellness, self-direction, and recovery, enhancing the skill and ability of peers to engage in their chosen roles. The CPS works with peers as equals.

## ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:

### Providing Support

#### Certified Peer Specialist will:

1. Identify as a person in mental health and/or substance use recovery.
2. Be mindful of the ethics, boundaries, power, and control issues unique to the CPS role.
3. Establish supportive relationships with peers which promote recovery.
4. Assist peers to understand the purpose of peer support and the recovery process.
5. Provide peers with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA's) definition of recovery and its components.  
(<http://blog.samhsa.gov/2012/03/23/definition-of-recovery-updated/>)
6. Intentionally share his or her own recovery story as appropriate to assist peers, providing hope and help in changing patterns and behaviors.
7. Create an environment of respect for peers which honors individuals for taking charge of their own lives.
8. Mutually establish acceptable boundaries with the peers and agree to discuss on an ongoing basis as needed.
9. Demonstrate understanding of how trauma affects mental health and substance use disorder recovery, develop trauma-informed relationships, and support peers in obtaining appropriate resources for help.
10. Demonstrate an understanding of how substance use disorder affects mental health recovery.
11. Encourage and assist peers to construct their own recovery/wellness plans, which may also include proactive crisis and/or relapse prevention plans.
12. Support peers in crisis to explore options that may be beneficial to returning to emotional and physical wellness.
13. Provide culturally-sensitive and age-appropriate services.
14. Provide a welcoming environment of recovery, wellness, and hope.
15. Encourage peers to focus on their strengths, exercise use of natural supports, develop their own recovery goals, and strengthen their valued roles within the community
16. Use active listening skills.
17. Together with peers, research and connect with resources that are beneficial to peers' needs and desires (e.g. employment, housing, health, and peer-delivered services).
18. Understand and be able to explain the rights of the peers.

## **Communicating with Supervisors and Interacting with Staff**

### **Certified Peer Specialists will:**

1. Understand and utilize the established supervisory structure to communicate needs, ask questions (especially about ethics, boundaries, and confidentiality), mention concerns, etc.
2. If employed in a Medicaid-funded and/or clinical program, understand the requirement of clinical supervision by a qualified mental health or substance use disorder profession.
3. Understand his or her role and fully participate as an integral part of the professional recovery team.
4. Demonstrate and model to staff that recovery is achievable, and that peer support is an Evidence Based Practice.
5. Complete all required documentation timely, accurately, and respectfully.
6. Develop healing and trauma-sensitive relationships with peers and staff.
7. Report all intended, serious harm to self or others immediately to the appropriate person.

## **Demonstrating Confidentiality**

### **Certified Peer Specialists will:**

1. Know state and federal confidentiality standards, including directives from his or her own agency.
2. Maintain the utmost confidence concerning all verbal and written information, whether obtained from peers or otherwise.
3. Know information that is not to be kept in confidence: intended, serious harm self or others, and know how to handle these situations.



Wisconsin  
Department of Health Services

Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

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# Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist Code of Ethics

**The following principles will guide Certified Peer Specialists in their professional roles and relationships:**

1. I understand that my primary responsibility is to help peers understand recovery and achieve their own recovery needs, wants, and goals. I will be guided by the principle of self-determination for each peer.
2. I will conduct myself in a manner that fosters my own recovery and I recognize the many ways in which I may influence peers, and others in the community, as I serve as a role model.
3. I will be open to share with peers and coworkers my stories of hope and recovery and will likewise be able to identify and describe the supports that promote my recovery and resilience.
4. I have a duty to inform peers when first discussing confidentiality that intended serious harm to self or others cannot be kept confidential. I have a duty to accurately inform peers regarding the degree to which information will be shared with other team members, based on my agency policy and job description. I have a duty to inform appropriate staff members immediately about any intended serious harm to self or others or abuse from caregivers.
5. I will never intimidate, threaten, harass, unduly influence, physically force or restrain, verbally abuse, or make unwarranted promises of benefits to the peers I support.
6. I will not practice, condone, facilitate or collaborate in any form of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, disability, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition or state.
7. I will advocate with peers so that individuals may make their own decisions when partnering with professionals.
8. I will never engage in any sexual/intimate activities with peers I support. While a peer is receiving services from me, I will not enter into a relationship or commitment that conflicts with the support needs of the peer.
9. I will keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to recovery and openly share this knowledge with my coworkers and peers. I will refrain from sharing advice or opinions outside my scope of practice with peers.
10. I will utilize supervision and abide by the standards for supervision established by my agency. I will seek supervision to assist me in providing recovery-oriented services to peers.
11. I will not accept gifts of money or items of significant value from those I serve. I will not loan or give money to peers.

12. I will protect the welfare of all peers by ensuring that my conduct will not constitute physical or psychological abuse, neglect, or exploitation. I will practice with trauma awareness at all times.
13. I will, at all times, respect the rights, dignity, privacy and confidentiality of those I support.
14. As a professional, if I find that my own recovery journey is compromised and interferes with my ability to provide support to my peers, I will engage in my own self-care until such time that I am once again capable of providing professional care.



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Department of Health Services

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## WISCONSIN PEER SPECIALIST EXAM DOMAINS AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS

The Wisconsin Peer Specialist Certification exam is based on four Core Competencies which are grouped into four domains. Values, In-depth Knowledge of Recovery, Roles and Responsibilities of a Certified Peer Specialist and Skills. The following four sections give example questions that will test your knowledge of each of the domains. Questions may integrate your knowledge of all core documents and in multiple ways. Please remember to refer to the Scope of Practice and Code of Ethics.

### SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR DOMAIN 1: *Values*

- 1) Which of the following is the biggest barrier to a person in recovery?
  - a) Having a limited access to medications
  - b) Ongoing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
  - c) Belief that you cannot recover
  - d) Continuing substance abuse by family members
  
- 2) Which is not considered a foundation of well-being:
  - a) Spirituality
  - b) Teamwork
  - c) Recovery
  - d) Healthy relationships
  
- 3) Which one of the following would be an example of inappropriate self-care for a Certified Peer Specialist who is experiencing symptoms:
  - a) Seeing your psychiatrist or therapist to discuss your symptoms
  - b) Attending a support group that you feel comfortable with
  - c) Speaking with your supervisor about your concerns
  - d) Discussing it with a peer you are working with and asking for feedback
  
- 4) A way for a Certified Peer Specialist to show empathy is:
  - a) Responding quickly to any question
  - b) Listening but not responding
  - c) Talking often by telephone each day
  - d) Working to understand another's feelings
  
- 5) A Certified Peer Specialist in Wisconsin is required to:
  - a) Complete an internship before working as a Certified Peer Specialist
  - b) Have over one year of sobriety before becoming employed
  - c) Complete 20 hours of continuing education every two years
  - d) Take the certification exam every two years

## **SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR DOMAIN 2: *In-depth Knowledge of Recovery***

- 6) Which one of the following is an important component in person-centered planning:
- a) The person's life experience and goals
  - b) The person's history of medication compliance
  - c) The person's level of education and work goals
  - d) The person's DSM-V diagnosis
- 7) As a Certified Peer Specialist working with someone to develop a recovery plan the main focus is to develop:
- a) Only long term goals related to recovery
  - b) Short term and long term goals related to recovery
  - c) Only short term goals related to recovery
  - d) Goals that are developed by a psychiatrist related to recovery
- 8) An example of a recovery-oriented approach is:
- a) Focusing on deficits in order to eliminate them
  - b) Promoting clinicians as the main source of information
  - c) Promoting clinical stability to manage illness
  - d) Focusing on wellness, choice and abilities
- 9) Marginalization can be clearly defined as:
- a) Echoes heard from our families and society in general
  - b) Issues within our own belief system that cannot be overcome
  - c) Persons with mental health and/or substance use disorder not having a full range of human qualities
  - d) The experience of being deeply discredited due to one's disability
- 10) Joan arrives at an appointment with you and is high. You should:
- a) Remind her of agency rules about substance use and do not continue
  - b) Call the police to take her from your office to a treatment center
  - c) Have your supervisor come out and tell her to leave the premises
  - d) Act like nothing is wrong and continue your meeting with her

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR DOMAIN 3: *Roles and Responsibilities of a Certified Peer Specialist***

- 11) As a Certified Peer Specialist, you are assigned to assist Linea, a peer from a culture that differs from your own. You should:
- a) Tell your supervisor you won't work with her because of the cultural differences
  - b) Meet her but refuse to talk about cultural differences if they come up
  - c) Focus only on recovery because culture has nothing to do with mental health or substance use disorder
  - d) Acknowledge your differences and ask Layla if she would like to discuss them
- 12) Peer Support is not:
- a) Voluntary
  - b) Controlling
  - c) Hopeful
  - d) Person Centered
- 13) A benefit of sharing your recovery story is:
- a) To create expectations for the peer
  - b) To support change and show recovery is possible
  - c) To show that your way is the best way toward recovery
  - d) To use it as an example of obtaining additional disability benefits
- 14) A family member calls to ask if their relative is in the unit on which you are working and what their status is. As a Certified Peer Specialist you:
- a) Give the family member minimum information about their relative's status
  - b) Inform the family the person is in the unit but you can't give them their status
  - c) Tell the family member you cannot confirm or deny that their relative is in the unit
  - d) Provide the family member with any information they request
- 15) A peer you are working with tells you she overheard other staff talking about her in a very negative manner. As a Certified Peer Specialist you would:
- a) File a report against staff on her behalf
  - b) Tell her to just ignore it and move on
  - c) Tell the staff she is going to go to the media to complain publicly
  - d) Provide her with forms on the patient rights and agency grievance procedures

## **SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR DOMAIN 4: Skills**

- 16) Matthew is complaining to you as his Certified Peer Specialist that he feels he is being treated unfairly at his job and wants to quit right away. You would:
- a) Help him find another job right away
  - b) Share with him an incident where your supervisor treated you unfairly
  - c) Assist him in defining the problem and working through the problem solving process
  - d) Ask a business owner you know to hire him as a favor
- 17) As a Certified Peer Specialist working with Jorge who is considering obtaining employment and receives federal health benefits, you should connect him with:
- a) The Department of Revenue
  - b) The Social Security Administration
  - c) The Small Business Administration
  - d) The Department of Commerce
- 18) You are attending a staff meeting at your agency. You disagree with statements that were made regarding note taking and documentation. As a staff member and peer specialist your responsibility is to:
- a) Make sure you understand the issue and state your opinions clearly
  - b) Agree with everyone else even if you believe otherwise
  - c) Speak with others privately after the meeting to garner support
  - d) Express your thoughts and opinions until others agree with you
- 19) Advocacy is intended to:
- a) Promote the needs of the peer on their recovery path
  - b) Provide medical advice to peers about their medication
  - c) Find full or part-time employment for peers
  - d) Provide permanent housing for peers in the community
- 20) Dolores comes to your office at the drop-in center very agitated and begins yelling about feeling left out of the programs at the center. You:
- a) Leave the room and activate the security alarm
  - b) Move behind your desk while presenting a defensive posture
  - c) Provide active listening and ask her if she can talk about why she is angry
  - d) Ask her if she has taken her medication that day

## Study Guide Answer Key

1. c
2. b
3. d
4. d
5. c
6. a
7. b
8. d
9. d
10. a
11. d
12. b
13. b
14. c
15. d
16. c
17. b
18. a
19. a
20. c