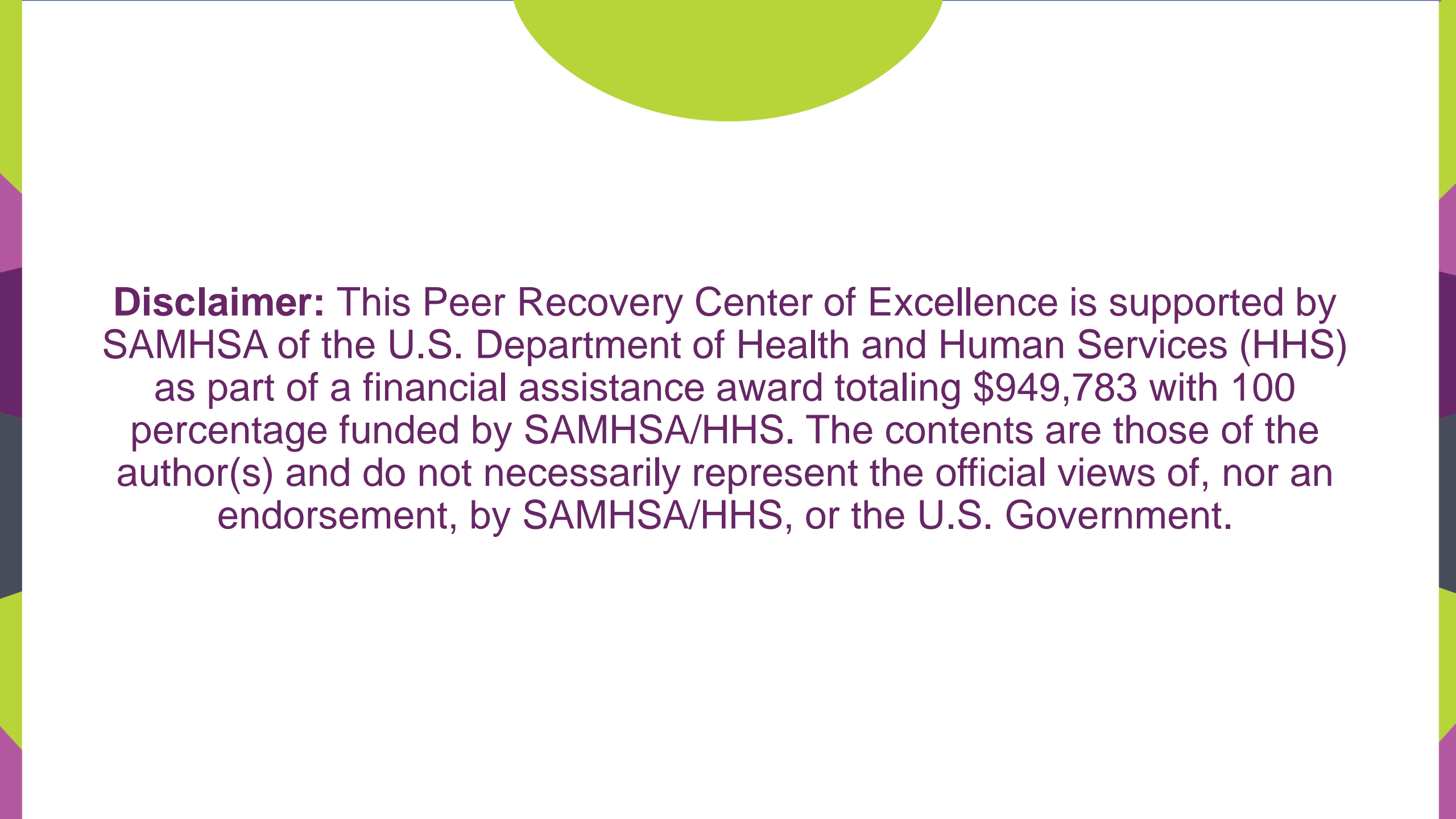




Empowered Job Seeking for Certified Peer Specialists

Tim Saubers

SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration



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A little about Tim Saubers

- WI Certified Peer Specialist since 2016
- Experience in crisis-services peer support, peer supervision, and state and national-level program management and development
- Queer, Latino, cisgender man (pronouns: he / him / his)
- Enjoys volunteering, paleontology, and learning



Why is this Important?

- CPS have a clear, defined role with guiding documents to help ensure they provide services through a specific lens
- When CPS are hired into positions that claim to provide peer support, but expect work that is outside their scope it causes confusion and dilutes their efficacy
- CPS are some of the lowest paid workers in behavioral health and are typically seen as having less leverage to advocate or negotiate their positions and wages
- There is no oversight mechanism to ensure that employers looking to hire CPS are adhering to the defined role, therefore, it is up to us as a workforce to have the tools to evaluate position descriptions and employers



Culture, Power, Privilege, and Job Seeking

- Job seeking, negotiation, and accountability look different through different lenses
 - How we're perceived by employers and existing systems of oppression plays a role in our ability to negotiate salary and position descriptions, as well as our ability to even be considered for the job
- Living under capitalism means we all need income in order to survive
 - There is no shame in accepting a position, choosing not to negotiate, etc. due to a need to pay for housing, food, and other necessities or obligations





What do you look for in a position description when job seeking?

What to Look for and Avoid in Position Descriptions

Look For:

- A focus on supporting self-defined recovery and goals
- An absence of specific modalities of understanding human experiences
- Informed consent practices, particularly around crisis response
- Pay and benefits information: **at least** a living wage and comparable benefits

Avoid:

- A focus on compliance with treatment plans, medication, specific recovery pathways
- Requirements for your recovery including abstinence, specific lengths of time without hospitalization, etc.
- Mandated reporter requirements
- Creating plans, goals, strategies for the people receiving services instead of alongside them





Activity

- In breakout rooms for 10 minutes
- Review the position descriptions provided
- Identify why these position descriptions may or may not be good fits for a CPS looking for a job
- Be prepared to share what you discuss





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Translating Prior Work Experiences into Relevant Skills

- Many CPS enter the workforce with a background in other professions that are often seen as not directly related to mental health and substance use service provision
- Many skills from other professions can translate into marketable skills and can support a well-developed resume
- These can include retail, business, finance, teaching, volunteering skills, and more



Ethical Job Seeking

- As a workforce with roots in psychiatric survivor, mad pride, disability justice and other social justice movements, we have a collective obligation to hold employers and each other accountable for the growth and development of the workforce
- When we see job postings or position descriptions that are out of line with the role of a CPS or peer values, we can take action
- If you pass on a position because you recognize the harm in the position description, another CPS will take that position and may cause additional harm
- When we are silent in the face of employers misusing CPS we are complicit in the continued cooptation and dilution of the workforce



Questions?



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with us!

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