

Short Guide to Becoming a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist

What is a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist

Certified Peer Recovery Specialists help others on the path to recovery from mental illness or substance abuse.

CPRSs are peers. They have firsthand experience with mental illness and/or substance abuse and can offer support and understanding.

CPRSs use their personal recovery to help others. CPRSs promote self-determination, personal responsibility, and empowerment.

Are you ready to be a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist?

Do you have at least 2 years of recovery time from a drug and alcohol addiction or mental illness?

Do you have a high school diploma, GED or equivalent?

Are you comfortable sharing your recovery story with others?

What we are not.

We are not psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists, or sponsors.

Why become certified?

It is definitely not required to be certified in order to do Peer Recovery Specialist work. In fact, many of us that are CPRS's worked with peers for years before becoming certified. Having professional training and going through the process of becoming certified gives us additional skills in assisting our peers. Becoming certified also opens up doors allowing us to go places and allows us to dedicate more time to working with our peers. For those of us interested in having a career in working with our peers being certified is essential. Not everyone who becomes certified is interested in earning a living in this field but would still agree that the training and the certification helps them to be more effective in helping their fellow peers.

Virginia Certification Board Requirements

500 hours documented experience work (paid or volunteer) as a peer recovery specialist.

High School Diploma/GED

Successfully pass Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Training

Successfully pass Virginia Certification Board's Certified Peer Recovery Specialist examination.

Documentation needed by Virginia Certification Board

Documentation of high school diploma/GED **or** official transcript required sent directly from college/university to the VCB Office. It is recommended you request transcripts approximately three weeks prior to sending in your application.

Certificates of attendance for trainings.

Current job description signed and dated by applicant and supervisor.

Previous relevant employment or volunteer documentation (if needed). Acceptable documentation includes a letter (on company letterhead) from previous organization(s) verifying your duties and dates employed/volunteered.

Signed, dated and notarized Acknowledgements page.

If you have ever received any disciplinary action from another certification or licensing authority, please include a letter of explanation with your application.

If you have ever been convicted of a felony, please include a letter of explanation with your application.

Fee of \$175. May be paid by check/money order (payable to VCB) or Visa, MasterCard or Discover. One-half of fee is refundable if application is denied or cancelled prior to the exam – no refund if application is denied or cancelled after exam. If an employer or organization is covering the cost of your application fee, they must include the applicants name with the payment. Failure to include the applicants name will result in delay in approval of the application.

If there are any problems with the application, you will be notified by email. Applications are open for a period of one year after the date of review. If an applicant fails to fulfill all certification requirements within that year, the application will be closed and no refund will be issued.

How to find volunteer and paid positions
Additional Requirements for some positions

The Ethics of Certified Peer Recovery Specialists

CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR CPRS

Principle: Recovery First

My primary obligation and responsibility is my recovery. I will immediately seek outside counsel and if applicable, notify my supervisor if alcohol, drug use, mental illness or anything else gets in the way of my recovery.

Principle: Sharing Personal Recovery Story

I will share my lived experiences to help others identify resources and supports that promote recovery and resilience.

Principle: Service Approach

I affirm the rights and dignity of each person that I serve.

The services I provide will be guided by the principle of self-determination to assist others in achieving their needs and goals. This includes advocating for the decisions of the peers regarding professional and other services.

I will advocate for the right of peers to self-select their own recovery pathways and recovery communities and will promote the individual's inherent value to those communities and pathways.

Principle: Confidentiality

I respect the privacy of those I serve and I will abide by confidentiality guidelines as required by the law.

Principle: Non-Discrimination

I provide recovery support services regardless of someone's age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, marital status, political belief, language, socioeconomic status or mental or physical condition. If differences that impact the motivation for recovery occur, I seek consultation and, if necessary, make referral to another Certified Peer Recovery Specialist.

Principle: Conduct

I act in accordance with the law.

I never use physical force, verbal or emotional abuse; intimidate, threaten, harass, or make unwarranted promises of benefits.

I will fairly and accurately represent myself and my capabilities to the peer and the community.

I will not accept money or items of significant value from people that I serve.

I will not lend or borrow from the peers that I serve.

I will not engage in sexual activities or intimate relations with peers that I serve.

I will not engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with former clients within a minimum of two years after terminating services.

I will not provide services to individuals with whom I have had a prior sexual or intimate relationship.

Principle: Integrity

I will not discontinue services to a peer without his or her knowledge and will make a referral for continued services when appropriate.

I will report violations of the Code of Ethics by other Certified Peer Recovery Specialists to the appropriate certifying entity.

Principle: Conflict of Interest

I will not use my role as a CPRS to promote any treatment, procedure, product or service, which would result in my personal gain.

Principle: Scope of Practice

I will not perform services outside of my area of training, expertise, competence, or scope of practice.

Principle: Personal Development

I will improve my recovery service knowledge and skills through ongoing education, training and supervision.

PEER RECOVERY SPECIALIST RESOURCES

Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS)

<http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/>

Mental Health America Virginia

<http://mhav.org/>

Trillium Drop-In Center

<http://trilliumdropincenter.org/>

Virginia Certification Board

<https://www.vacertboard.org/certifications>

VOCAL

<http://vocalvirginia.org/>

VPRSN (Virginia Peer Recovery Specialist Network)

<http://virginiapeerspecialistnetwork.org/>