
LC 498: Peer Support Professionals

The Oregon Consumer Advisory Council urges a study of the feasibility of an independent certifying and regulatory body for mental health Peer Support and Peer Wellness Specialists in Oregon.

Lived Experience is Critical for the Peer Support Workforce

Peer-delivered services (PDS) are community-based supports delivered by people with shared lived experiences. The profession is grounded in the principles of mutual support and self-determination.

In Oregon, PDS providers are certified and regulated by the Traditional Health Workers Commission. This body, overseen by OHA, includes representatives of multiple Traditional Health Worker types, including peer support and peer wellness specialists, tribal behavioral health specialists, health navigators, community health workers, and doulas.

Thus, under this model, the peer workforce is governed in part by people who may have outstanding experience in some aspects of care provision, but do not have lived experience with behavioral health needs and do not represent or understand the peer workforce. This undermines the self-determination and independence of the peer workforce, and limits the ability of the workforce to ensure that training, certification, and continuing education requirements align with the needs, goals, and values of this dynamic and diverse profession .

Consider a Peer-Run Certification and Regulatory Body

This legislative concept directs the Oregon Health Authority to collaborate with the Oregon Consumer Advisory Council (OCAC) to study and report on the feasibility of establishing an independent, peer-run certification and regulatory body for mental health peer support and peer wellness specialists. If the study finds that the establishment of such a body would be feasible, OHA and the OCAC are further required to prepare a report detailing the proposed structure and model for the body, including timelines for implementation and transfer of authority from the Traditional Health Worker Commission.

If established, this independent body would be made up of people with lived experience of behavioral health needs who are members of the peer workforce. As such, it would allow the peer support workforce to become self-governing in a manner similar to other healthcare professionals.

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