

FAQ: Ensuring Youth and Family Peer Support Compliance with Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR)

What is a Traditional Health Worker (THW)?

Traditional Health Workers (THWs) are trusted individuals from local communities who often share similar socioeconomic backgrounds and lived experiences with health plan members they assist. THWs have historically played a critical role in providing person-centered care by providing a bridge between communities and the health systems that serve them. These workers help individuals navigate the healthcare system, advocate for care, support adherence to treatment plans, and empower individuals to take active roles in improving their health and well-being.

Types of Traditional Health Workers in Oregon

There are currently five types of THWs: Community Health Workers, Personal Health Navigators, Birth Doulas, Peer Support Specialists, and Peer Wellness Specialists. A sixth type of THW, Tribal Traditional Health Workers, is soon to be created. Peer Support, Peer Wellness Specialists, and Tribal Traditional Health Workers are further categorized into subdivisions which include Adult Mental Health, Adult Addictions, Youth Support Specialist, and Family Support Specialist. For a detailed description of each type of THW, refer to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) website: [OHA Traditional Health Workers](#)

Peer Support and Peer Wellness Specialists require specialized training, in addition to their lived experience, to effectively support the needs of youth and families. This combination of expertise ensures the most effective peer support, strengthening the skills of the worker while enhancing outcomes for those they serve.

Peer Certification Requirements for Working with Youth and Families including Specialized Programs

To work with youth and families and special programs such as In-Home Behavioral Health Treatment (IIBHT), Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS), or Fidelity Wraparound Services, individuals must be certified as Family Support Specialists or Youth Support Specialists, in accordance with **ORS 950-060-0010**. Certification requires completion of an OHA-approved training and actively registered in the [THW Registry](#).

Peer Certification Process in Oregon

Peer certification is available through the THW Commission. The certification process includes:

1. Completing an OHA-approved training program
2. Completing an OHA-approved oral health training
3. Submitting an application and authorizing a background check
4. Determination on application is issued
5. Based on determination then issued a certificate with THW number, then placement on the [THW Registry](#)

To apply for certification, individuals can:

- **Online:** Submit applications via the [THW program application portal](#).
- **In Person:** Drop-in office hours are available every Tuesday from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM at 421 SW Oak St. Suite 750, Portland, OR 97204
- **Virtual Assistance:** Set up a help session by emailing thw.program@odhsoha.oregon.gov or calling 971-673-3353

Once certified, peers are added to the OHA's THW Registry, which is a trusted resource for locating certified youth or family peers in Oregon.

The **THW Registry** is a centralized, reliable source for finding certified peer along with other THW types. The registry ensures that individuals providing services meet established standards.

Application Types for becoming a Youth or Family Support Specialist

In addition to the required application noted above, applicants are required to complete one of the following **specific to youth or family peer support**:

- **Complete an Approved Training Program:** Successfully complete an OHA-approved training program for either Youth Support or Family Support; **or**
- **Document Relevant Work Experience:** Document at least 2,000 hours of work or volunteer experience as a youth or family peer support specialist within the past five years, a professional letter of recommendation **and**
- Complete the THW Oral Health for Peer Support and Peer Wellness Training Program

Competencies for Youth Support and Family Support Specialists

The required competencies for Youth Support and Family Support Specialists can be found in the following Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR):

- OAR 950-060-0010: Definitions for Traditional Health Workers
- OAR 309-019-0125: Staff qualifications and competencies

Caseload Limits for Youth or Family Support Specialist

As per OAR 309-019-0163, Youth and Family Support Specialists are permitted to provide peer-delivered services to no more than **15 youth or families** at any time when in a full-time position in Wraparound.

Supervision Requirements for Youth Support Specialists and Family Support Specialists Roles

Supervision requirements and guidelines can be found in OAR [309-019-0130](#), which outlines personnel documentation, training, and supervision standards for peer support specialists.

What is the Certification Renewal Process?

THW certification, including Youth and Family Peer Support, must be renewed every three years. Detailed information about the renewal process is available on the OHA [THW recertification process page](#).

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