

March 15, 2017

Mental Health America National Certified Peer Specialist

To the Peer Community

After years of development Mental Health America is proud to announce the release of our **MHA National Certified Peer Specialist** (NCPS) credential. This is an advanced level certification, designed for peer supporters with the highest level of experience and knowledge. We have designed this credential to signify to funders and employers that they can be assured of the highest quality of peer support workers.

The NCPS certification is not intended to replace state certifications, rather to recognize the increasing quality of peer support and to set a national high standard that can be relied on by all providers and national health insurance companies. Peer support has made huge headway into community mental health but to date it has not been broadly accepted by the private sector. In our research with insurers, private practitioners, and healthcare companies it became very clear that acceptance would require a uniform standard that exceeds current standards. The private sector holds great promise for expanding the workforce and increasing levels of pay.

This certification requires a minimum of a year and a half's documented experience (3000 hours) and in-depth knowledge in 6 domains of practice, including some areas not covered in existing programs. In states that have a certification we anticipate that the vast majority of people applying to become a NCPS will already be certified and working. Our standards require either prior state certification requiring a minimum of 40 hours of peer support training **or** having completed a MHA approved training and employment in a peer support role.

Our credential is not training based, we do not directly offer training. Rather, our certification is examination based. To achieve becoming a NCPS you must pass a rigorous online examination, which tests knowledge and skills in all 6 domains. . We are in the process of designating approved trainings and an increasing list will be maintained at www.centerforpeersupport.org. Most applicants will need to increase their knowledge base beyond the content of current 40-hour trainings, but the bottom line is that if you have at least 3,000 hours of experience, basic training and can pass the test you can become a MHA National Certified Peer Specialist.

Full information about the certification and the application process are available at the above website. A **limited number of scholarships** for the application and the examination are available through the site.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Hendry", is positioned above the printed name.

Patrick Hendry
Vice President Peer Advocacy, Supports & Services