

# Peer Crisis Response Training

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Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5092; Section 215(54); Chapter 334; Laws of 2021

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## Executive summary

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Senate Bill (SB) 5092 passed in April 2021 and signed into law by Governor Jay Inslee on May 18, 2021. The intent of SB 5092 is to provide funding for determined strategies that overcome identified gaps and barriers for people we need recovery supports. In this report, HCA provides information on the state's efforts in developing and operationalizing a 40-hour crisis response training curriculum titled "Crisis Awareness and Communication in Peer Support." This training will be beneficial for all Certified Peer Counselors who work in crisis settings.

Section 215(54) \$250,000 of the general fund—federal appropriation is provided solely for the authority to provide crisis response training to behavioral health peer specialists. The authority must use these amounts to contract for the development of a specialized 40-hour crisis response training curriculum for behavioral health peer specialists and to conduct a minimum of one statewide training session during fiscal year 2022 and one statewide training session during fiscal year 2023. The training shall focus on preparing behavioral health peer specialists to work with individuals in crisis, including providing peer services in emergency departments, as co-responders with law enforcement, and as part of mobile crisis teams. The training sessions must be offered free of charge to the participants and may be offered either virtually or in person as determined by the authority.

The authority must submit a report to the office of financial management and the appropriate committees of the legislature on the status of these efforts by December 1, 2022.

## Background

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Washington State began offering certified peer counselor (CPC) training in 2005 and prides itself as one of the first 11 states in the country to deliver peer services with Medicaid funding. Since 2005, the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) has trained over 6,000 CPCs.

Initially, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) authorized peer support services for mental health treatment system of care only. In 2019, CMS permitted Washington State to add substance use disorder (SUD) peer support services to the Medicaid state plan. This expansion of SUD peer support services provides an opportunity for people with lived experience of SUD to become CPCs through training and certification.

Peer counseling is a Medicaid service modality, and organizations and state agencies use peer support in a wide range of behavioral health programs, such as:

- Mental health
- Substance use
- Youth, and family
- Supported housing
- Supportive employment
- Emergency rooms

- Bridging programs

Peer supports are powerful services proven to be successful in promoting wellness and recovery. CPCs work with people within their communities (adults and youth) and the parents of children receiving behavioral health services. CPCs draw upon their lived experiences to help people find hope and support their recovery journey. The CPCs' own lived experience uniquely equips them to provide support, encouragement, and resources to those with behavioral health challenges.

## **“The Power of Peer Support in Crisis Settings” continuing education training**

In 2021, the Health Care Authority (HCA) was awarded a Transformation Transfer Initiative (TTI) Grant from National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD). HCA used this opportunity to create a continuing education training called “The Power of Peer Support in Crisis Settings.” This training supports Washington’s current efforts to expand opportunities for CPCs to provide services within crisis settings. This project was intended to divert individuals from entering jail.

“The Power of Peer Support in Crisis Settings” created career pathways while providing information and education for CPCs to be successful in these expanded environments. HCA contracted with Washington State University Peer Workforce Alliance (WSU PWA) to develop the curriculum. A curriculum workgroup comprised of CPCs, representatives from behavioral health – administrative service organizations (BH-ASOs), service providers, designated crisis responders, law enforcement, people with lived experience, and curriculum writers helped develop the curriculum. Dr. Peggy Swarbrick was one of the main curriculum writers and HCA incorporated her “8 Dimensions of Wellness” into the training.

The training is available to all CPCs through a Learning Management System (LMS) to enhance the unique qualifications they bring to the behavioral health system. This training has seven different LMS modules and is now being used as the prerequisite training for the 40-hour crisis training developed from this proviso.

## **“Crisis Awareness and Communication in Peer Support” 40-hour training**

There is a significant need for a robust 40-hour crisis response training to increase the number of behavioral health CPCs who can responsibly serve individuals experiencing behavioral health crisis. This training allows for people to receive more culturally competent/appropriate peer services from CPCs who understand and can empathize with individuals in crisis situations. The first pilot of this newly developed training was held in June of 2022.

## **Operationalizing the efforts**

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In a collaborative effort, the “Crisis Awareness and Communication in Peer Support” (CACPS) curriculum was developed through a contract with Peer Washington Workforce Development. Peer Washington Workforce Development was selected to do this work as a continuation of the work done by the WSU PWA on the TTI grant funded training. WSU PWA transitioned to Peer Washington Workforce Development in the fall of 2021.

As part of this work, Peer Washington Workforce Development helped establish an external statewide curriculum development workgroup, comprised of CPCs, representatives from BH-ASOs, designated crisis

responders, law enforcement, people with lived experience, and curriculum writers. The external workgroup met monthly to provide insight, review, and provide feedback on the curriculum.

A “CACPS Train the Trainer” training launched in May of 2022, which effectively trained 19 HCA-approved CPC trainers. Over 25 percent of the approved trainers who participated in the Train the Trainer identified as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). The Train the Trainer offered HCA and Peer Washington Workforce Development the unique ability to make changes to the curriculum before the first statewide training, which was held June of 2022 in Spokane, Washington.

HCA in partnership with Peer Washington reached out to a diverse group of individuals working as CPCs from multiple regions across the state who have personal or professional experiences with crisis episodes to attend the pilot CACPS training. Adult, youth, and family CPCs were represented at the CACPS training. There were 20 participants who attended and over 50 percent identified as BIPOC. The Crisis Awareness and Communication in Peer Support training is forty hours (40) in length and completed through a five day in-person training event.

## Gathering feedback

During the initial statewide Crisis Awareness and Communication in Peer Support pilot training, participants had an opportunity to share their input and suggested changes to the curriculum. Some of the suggestions for improvement included ensuring guest speakers presented in person and not through a hybrid platform, such as zoom, and using recovery and strength-based language. Participants expressed interest in a follow-up training to include a deeper dive into Crisis Awareness and Communication in Peer Support, as well as adding an additional family and youth focus.

There was a high percentage of positive feedback from attendees each day, including gratitude for always having peer support persons available during the training for anyone who may be feeling the need to speak with someone. Multiple evaluations came back with positive feelings around the ice breaker activities, the “energizer activities,” as well as the trainers themselves and their ability to connect with attendees through shared experiences, cultural awareness, and humility.

HCA is currently working with Peer Washington Workforce Development and the curriculum workgroup to incorporate the suggestions received by participants and trainers and finalize the curriculum. There will be a second Crisis Awareness and Communication in Peer Support Train the Trainer event in January 2023, followed by the second statewide Crisis Awareness and Communication in Peer Support training in February 2023.

## Funding

The Washington State Legislature allocated funding to HCA through SB 5092. In addition, House Bill (HB) increases the capacity of mobile crisis teams in preparation for 988, Washington’s crisis line. In the state’s model, peers are members of these teams. There are many CPCs who could benefit from peer-specific behavioral health crisis training. The proviso (SB 5092) provided enough funding for the development of the curriculum, two Train the Trainer events, and two statewide CPC trainings.

## Next steps

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The 40-hour Crisis Awareness and Communication in Peer Support training is needed as an ongoing continuing education training for CPCs in Washington State. The CPC workforce needs to be appropriately trained to meet the needs of an expanding crisis system that includes peer support.

In addition, the HCA Peer Support Program has received many requests from CPCs who want the opportunity to take this continuing education training. HCA will hold one more training in 2023 and looks forward to potentially supporting this training in an ongoing capacity.