



Hiring Peers: Preparing the Team

Please note that a “peer” is an individual who has lived experience of mental health issues.

Before hiring a Peer Support Specialist (PSS), it’s a good idea to prepare the team for their arrival.

Meet with the team.

Dedicate time during team meetings to explaining the Peer Support Specialist’s role and why the decision was made to hire them.

1. Highlight the value the new member of the team will bring. Examples for this can include:
 1. Given their lived experience, the PSS can offer a unique perspective.
 2. The PSS can offer hope to service recipients by sharing their recovery story.
 3. By having peers on the team, a clear message is sent that the agency believes in recovery.
2. Explain the specific job duties of the PSS and the ethical standards for this position.
3. List specific tasks that the PSS should not or cannot do. Some examples of this include:
 1. Doing the work of an administrative assistant on behalf of other team members.
 2. Convincing service recipients to take medication or be “treatment compliant”. This goes against the person-directed approach of Peer Support.
4. Invite the team to ask questions and express concerns.

Inform other key employees.

Other employees who may come in contact with the PSS should be given information about their unique role and value to the agency as well. These employees may include:

1. Human Resources Department staff
2. Reception staff
3. Agency leadership

Create a supportive space.

1. Create or change policies that may make it easier for peer employees to be successful.
2. Train the PSS’ current supervisors in Peer Support, with a plan to eventually hire peer-identified supervisors.
3. Enlist key staff to help with the welcoming of the new PSS.

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