



TO: Leaders of MHAS Primary Stakeholder Organizations
FROM: Lori Criss, Director *Lori Criss*
DATE: April 6, 2023
RE: Peer Certification Transition

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) has begun exploring the transition of Ohio's peer certification management process from OhioMHAS to an appropriate professional licensing board as part of our strategic work to elevate the role of this vital profession in the behavioral health workforce. The Ohio Chemical Dependency Professionals Board has agreed to be a partner in this exploration process because of their established infrastructure and experience managing and administering multiple licenses and endorsements.

Why we are exploring this change:

The licensing of workforce professionals does not fall within the role of OhioMHAS' statutory responsibilities. Although peer certification has fallen under OhioMHAS' purview since 2016, the credentialing process would be more appropriately managed by a professional licensing board that is equipped to provide the necessary professional applications, renewals, protections, benefits, and continued ethical oversight.

What this exploration process will look like:

- During this exploratory phase, OhioMHAS will engage a consultant to help us identify the opportunities, challenges, and needed requirements to facilitate such a change. We will be issuing an RFP in the next week to identify this outside counsel.
- We anticipate that this planning process will take place over the next 12-18 months, and it will include regular engagement and feedback sessions with you and other stakeholders, the Governor's office, the Ohio Department of Medicaid, and other state agencies as needed, current certified peers, and the General Assembly.
- It will include a review of any needed legislative and rule changes, as well as fiscal impacts.
- No changes will be made to the management of the peer certification process until Fiscal Year 2026 (July 2025).

We are committed to a thoughtful, deliberative, and transparent approach so that any transition decisions protect the integrity of the peer profession and serve to strengthen the vital role peer supporters play in Ohio's behavioral health workforce. We know there will be many questions,

concerns, and ideas shared, and OhioMHAS is committed to providing regular updates to the peer supporter community and our stakeholders about this effort and the project timeline.

I am proud of Ohio's efforts to expand the use of peer supporters under the DeWine Administration, and we will continue to grow this important work. Supporting and expanding the role of certified peer supporters was a key recommendation in the RecoveryOhio Advisory Council's Initial Report published in March 2019, and OhioMHAS has committed significant resources to help recruit and train peer support staff to work alongside behavioral healthcare professionals to help increase the successful recovery of Ohioans seeking help for mental illness or addiction. To date, nearly 6,000 Ohioans have successfully completed peer supporter training.

We welcome your engagement in this process. Once a consultant is on board, we will reach out to begin scheduling informational and discussion sessions. If you have questions in the meantime, please contact our team at PeerTransition@mha.ohio.gov.

cc: Jill Smock, Executive Director, Ohio Chemical Dependency Professionals Board
Aimee Shadwick, Director, RecoveryOhio
Maureen Corcoran, Director, Ohio Department of Medicaid