

Clinical Policy: Peer Support Services

Reference Number: LA.CP.BHMP.505c

Last Review Date: 064/243

[Revision Log](#)

See [Important Reminder](#) at the end of this policy for important regulatory and legal information.

Description

Peer support services (PSS) are an evidence-based behavioral health service that consists of a qualified peer support provider, who assists members/enrollees with their recovery from mental illness and/or substance use. The PSS are provided by Office of Behavioral Health Recognized Peer Support Specialists (RPSS), who are individuals with personal lived experience with recovery from behavioral health conditions and successfully navigating the behavioral health services system. PSS are behavioral health rehabilitative services to reduce the disabling effects of an illness or disability and restore the member/enrollee to the best possible functional level in the community. PSS are person-centered and recovery focused. PSS are face-to-face interventions with the member/enrollee present. Most contacts occur in community locations where the member/enrollee lives, works, attends school and/or socializes.

Peer Support Services, or Consumer Operated Services, are recognized by SAMHSA as an Evidence-Based Practice. PSS is designed on the principles of individual choice and the active involvement of members/enrollees in their own recovery process. Peer support practice is guided by the belief that people with mental illness and substance use disorder need opportunities to identify and choose for themselves their desired roles with regard to living, learning, working and social interaction in the community.

Louisiana Healthcare Connections will determine if services are medically necessary based upon the preliminary assessment of risk, mental status and medical stability and the need for further evaluation or other mental health services as well as supplemental information provided by the treating practitioner.

Policy/Criteria

- I. It is the policy of Louisiana Healthcare Connections that peer support services (PSS) are **medically necessary** when the following is met:
 - A. Admission Criteria: All must be met to satisfy admission criteria
 - i. Member/enrollee must be 21 years of age or older
 - ii. Must have a mental illness and/or substance use disorder diagnosis
 - iii. Member/enrollee must be actively receiving a behavioral health treatment service and, in the pre-contemplative, or contemplative stage of change
 - iv. Member/enrollee must be willing to participate in services
 - v. Must provide documentation showing one or more tasks to assist the member/enrollee during the recovery process
 - B. Continued Stay Criteria: All must be met to satisfy continued stay criteria
 - i. Member/enrollee continues to meet admission criteria
 - ii. Progress notes document progress relative to goals identified in the Individual Care Plan, but treatment/recovery goals have yet been achieved

- C. Discharge Criteria: Criteria i and either ii, iii or iv must be met to satisfy discharge criteria
 - i. An adequate continuing care plan has been established
 - ii. Goals to the Individual Care Plan have been substantially met
 - iii. Member/enrollee/family requests discharge
 - iv. Transfer to another service/level is more clinically appropriate
- II. It is the policy of Louisiana Healthcare Connections that peer support services (PSS) is **not medically necessary** when:
 - A. Services that are purely recreational, social or leisure in nature or have no therapeutic or programmatic content;
 - B. Peer support services that are provided to members/enrollees as an integral part of another covered service;
 - C. Transportation;
 - D. General office/clerical tasks; and
 - E. Attendance in meetings or sessions without a documented purpose/benefit from the peer's presence in that meeting or session

Background

Peer support services are an evidence-based health service that consists of a qualified peer support provider, who assists members/enrollees with their recovery from mental illness and/or substance use. PSS are behavioral health rehabilitative services to reduce the disabling effects of an illness or disability and restore the member/enrollee to the best possible functional level in the community. PSS are person-centered and recovery focused. PSS are face-to-face interventions with the member/enrollee present. Most contacts occur in community locations where the member/enrollee lives, works, attends school and/or socializes. Members/enrollees cannot receive services from a peer support specialist in lieu of services to be provided by a clinician (i.e. seeing walk-in when a licensed clinician is not available) or services provided by a personal care attendant.

Recognized Peer Support Specialists (RPSS) must receive regularly scheduled clinical supervision from a Licensed Mental Health Professional (LMHP). LMHP supervisors must have the practice-specific education, experience, training, credentials, and licensure to coordinate an array of behavioral health services. Supervision refers to clinical support, guidance and consultation afforded to unlicensed staff rendering rehabilitation services and should not be confused with clinical supervision of bachelor's or master's level individuals pursuing licensure. Discussions during treatment planning and treatment team meetings between the LMHP supervisor and PSS do not count as supervision.

PSS must be provided under the administrative oversight of licensed and accredited local governing entities (LGEs) or OAAS certified PSH providers (as determined by LDH OAAS). LGEs and OAAS certified PSH provider agencies must meet state and federal requirements for providing PSS. [CG1][LT2] LGEs must meet state and federal requirements for providing PSS.

PSS include a range of tasks to assist the member/enrollee during the recovery process. Recovery planning assists members/enrollee to set and accomplish goals related to home, work, community and health. PSS may include, but are not limited to:

- Utilizing ‘lived experience’ to translate and explain the recovery process step by step and expectations of services;
 - Assisting in the clinical process through:
 - Providing feedback to the treatment team regarding identified needs of the member/enrollee and the level of engagement of the member/enrollee;
 - Development of goals;
 - Acting as an advocate, with the permission of the member/enrollee, in the therapeutic alliance between the provider and the member/enrollee;
 - Encouraging a member/enrollee with a low level of engagement to become actively involved in treatment; and
 - Ensuring that the member/enrollee is receiving the appropriate services of their choice and in a manner consistent with confidentiality regulations and professional standards of care;
- Rebuilding, practicing, and reinforcing skills necessary to assist in the restoration of the member’s/enrollees health and functioning throughout the treatment process;
- Providing support to the member/enrollee to assist them with participation and engagement in meetings and appointments
- Assist members/enrollees in effectively contributing to planning and accessing services to aid in the member’s/enrollees recovery process
- Aiding the member/enrollee in identifying and overcoming barriers to treatment and support member/enrollee in communicating these barriers to treatment and service providers;
- Assisting the member/enrollee with supporting strategies for symptom/behavior management;
- Supporting the member/enrollee to better understand their diagnoses and related symptoms;
- Assisting the member/enrollee with finding and using effective psychoeducational materials;
- Assisting the member/enrollee to identify and practice self-care behaviors, including but not limited to developing a wellness recovery plan and relapse prevention planning;
- Explaining service and treatment options;
- Assisting the member/enrollee to develop support systems with family and community members/enrollees;
- Serving as an advocate, mentor, or facilitator for resolution of personal issues and reinforcement of skills necessary to enhance and improve the member’s/enrollees health;
- Fostering the member/enrollee in setting goals, promoting effective skills building for overall health, safety and wellbeing that support whole health improvements and achievements of identified goals and healthy choices;
- Functioning as part of the member’s/enrollees clinical team to support the principles of self-direction to:
 - Assist and support the member/enrollee to set goals and plan for the future;
 - Propose strategies to help the member/enrollee accomplish tasks or goals; and
 - Support the member/enrollee to use decision-making strategies when choosing services and supports; and

- Providing support necessary to ensure the member's/enrollees engagement and active participation in the treatment planning process.
- Support the member/enrollee to arrange services that will assist them to meet their treatment plan goals, inclusive of identifying providers such as:
 - Primary care services;
 - Behavioral health management and treatment services;
 - Local housing support programs;
 - Supportive employment;
 - Education, other supportive services;
 - Referral to other benefit programs; and
 - Arranging non-emergency medical transportation.
- Provides support with transitioning members/enrollees from a nursing facility and adjustment to community living.

Reviews, Revisions, and Approvals	Revision Date	Approval Date
Original approval date	01/2021	
No content changes. Moved to clinical policy template. Changed Certified Peer Support Specialists to Recognized Peer Support Specialists.	04/2023	<u>7/10/23</u>
<u>Annual Review. Background updated to include OAAS certified PSH providers. References reviewed and updated.</u>	<u>06/24</u>	

References

1. Louisiana Department of Health Behavioral Health Services Provider Manual

Important Reminder

This clinical policy has been developed by appropriately experienced and licensed health care professionals based on a review and consideration of currently available generally accepted standards of medical practice; peer-reviewed medical literature; government agency/program approval status; evidence-based guidelines and positions of leading national health professional organizations; views of physicians practicing in relevant clinical areas affected by this clinical policy; and other available clinical information. LHCC makes no representations and accepts no liability with respect to the content of any external information used or relied upon in developing this clinical policy. This clinical policy is consistent with standards of medical practice current at the time that this clinical policy was approved.

The purpose of this clinical policy is to provide a guide to medical necessity, which is a component of the guidelines used to assist in making coverage decisions and administering benefits. It does not constitute a contract or guarantee regarding payment or results. Coverage decisions and the administration of benefits are subject to all terms, conditions, exclusions and limitations of the coverage documents (e.g., evidence of coverage, certificate of coverage, policy, contract of insurance, etc.), as well as to state and federal requirements and applicable LHCC administrative policies and procedures.

This clinical policy is effective as of the date determined by LHCC. The date of posting may not be the effective date of this clinical policy. This clinical policy may be subject to applicable legal and regulatory requirements relating to provider notification. If there is a discrepancy between the effective date of this clinical policy and any applicable legal or regulatory requirement, the requirements of law and regulation shall govern. LHCC retains the right to change, amend or withdraw this clinical policy, and additional clinical policies may be developed and adopted as needed, at any time.

This clinical policy does not constitute medical advice, medical treatment or medical care. It is not intended to dictate to providers how to practice medicine. Providers are expected to exercise professional medical judgment in providing the most appropriate care, and are solely responsible for the medical advice and treatment of members/enrollees. This clinical policy is not intended to recommend treatment for members. Members/enrollees should consult with their treating physician in connection with diagnosis and treatment decisions.

Providers referred to in this clinical policy are independent contractors who exercise independent judgment and over whom LHCC has no control or right of control. Providers are not agents or employees of LHCC.

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