



# Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification

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# Overview

## Senate Bill (SB) 803, chaptered in 2020:

- **Authorized DHCS to seek federal approvals to:**
  - Add Peer Support Specialists as a Medi-Cal provider type and
  - Add peer Support Services as a distinct service type
- **Directed DHCS to develop state standards for Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification**
  - Statewide requirements to develop certification programs
  - Define qualifications, range of responsibilities, practice guidelines and supervision standards
  - Determine certification process including curriculum and core competencies
  - Develop areas of specialization by 1-1-23
    - Crisis Services
    - Forensic (Justice Involved)
    - Homelessness
  - Determine training and continuing education requirements
  - Establish a code of ethics
  - Determine a process for investigation of complaints and corrective action

CaMHSA seeks to support the standardization of processes across counties by administering the Peer Support Specialist Certification benefit on behalf of counties. Working collectively across counties and with standardized exam and training, we can enhance the workforce.

## Key Points



51 counties – processing participation agreements interested



Infrastructure of the program currently in development



Exam development with input from subject matter experts is underway

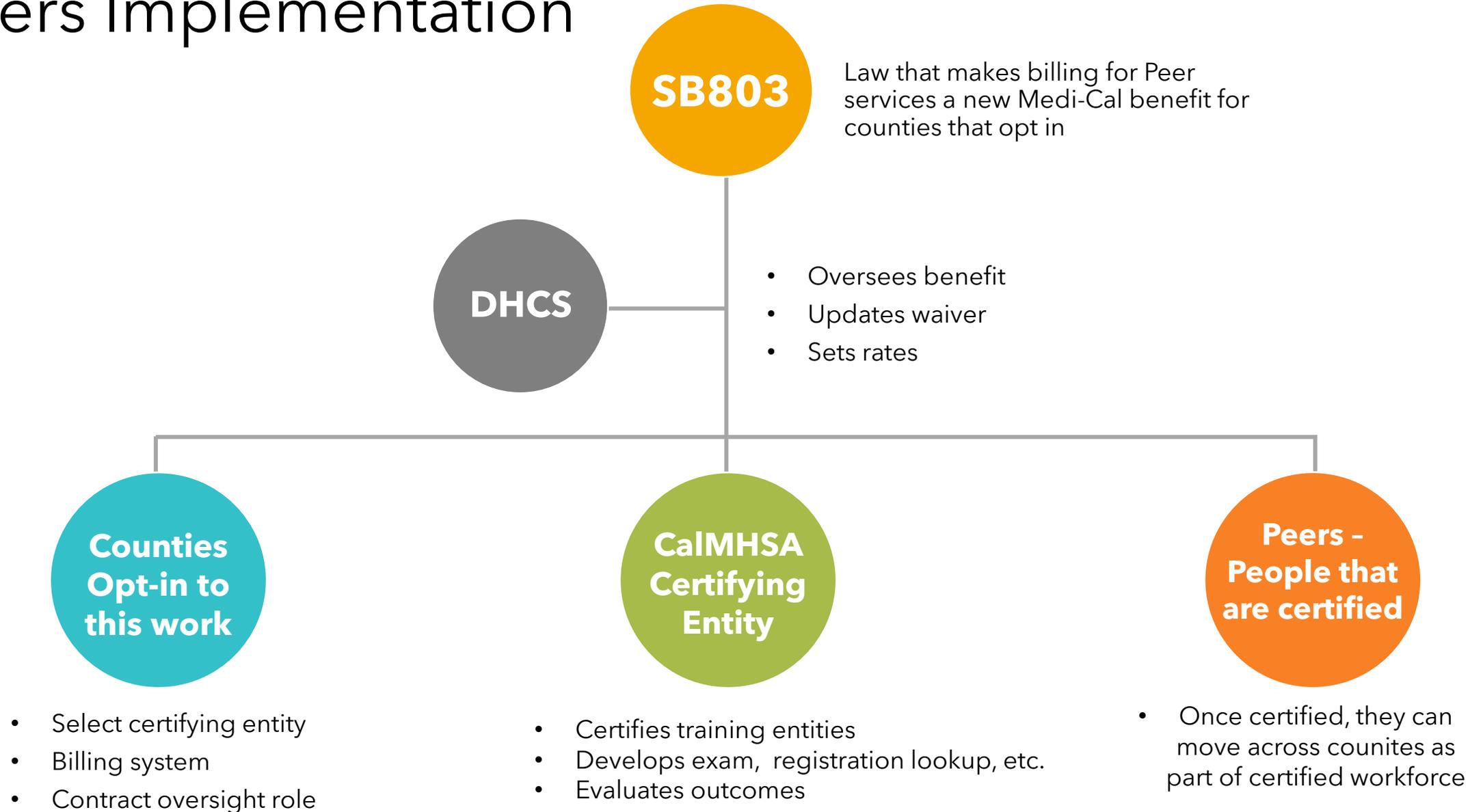


Certificant Registry with searchable functionality and one-stop-shop for certification



Go-Live May 2022

# Peers Implementation





# Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Qualifications

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1. Be at least 18 years of age
2. Possess a high school diploma or equivalent degree
3. Be self-identified as having experience with the process of recovery from mental illness or substance use disorder, either as a consumer of these services or as the parent, caregiver or family member of a consumer.
4. Be willing to share their experience
5. Have a strong dedication to recovery
6. Agree, in writing, to adhere to a code of ethics
7. Successfully complete the curriculum and training requirements for a peer support specialist
8. Pass a certification examination approved by DHCS for a peer support specialist

## Legacy Clause and Out-of-State Reciprocity

### Criteria for individuals who are employed as a peer as of January 1, 2022 or individuals certified out of state and are seeking to be certified:

- 1 year of paid or unpaid work experience (1550 hours) as a peer specialist AND 20 hours of continuing education (CEs), including law and ethics.

**OR**

- 1550 hours in 3 years, with 500 hours completed within the last 12 months, working as a peer specialist AND 20 hours of continuing education (CEs), including law and ethics.

### AND has all of the following:

- a) Completion of a peer training(s)
- b) 3 Letters of Recommendation as outlined:
  - One from a supervisor
  - One from a colleague/professional
  - One self-recommendation describing their current role and responsibilities as a peer support specialist
- c) Pass the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program Exam

# Supervision Standards

DHCS highly encourages the employment of peers as peer supervisors. However, due to the variability of counties and availability of the peer workforce, DHCS will allow the utilization of other behavioral health professionals as follows:

Peer Support Specialist Supervisors must meet **at least one of the below qualifications:**

- Have a Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Program certification; have two years of experience working in the behavioral health system; and have completed a DHCS approved peer support supervisory training curriculum.
- OR**
- Be a non-peer behavioral health professional (including registered & certified SUD counselors) who has worked in the behavioral health system for a minimum of two years, and has completed a DHCS approved peer support supervisory training;
- OR**
- Have a high school diploma or GED, four years of behavioral health direct service experience that may include peer support services; and have completed an approved peer support supervisory training curriculum





# Peer Support Services

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Individual and group services that promote:

- Recovery
- Resiliency
- Engagement
- Socialization
- Self-sufficiency
- Self-advocacy
- Development of natural supports, and
- Identification of strengths

Services aim to prevent relapse, empower beneficiaries through strength-based coaching, support linkages to community resources, and to educate beneficiaries and their families about their conditions and the process of recovery.

## Peers today in the Specialty Mental Health System:

- Are classified as Mental Health Rehab Specialists
- Work is clinically focused for Medi-Cal billing purposes
- Documentation is complex to ensure clinical requirements are met for reimbursement

## Peers today in the Substance Use Disorder System:

- No current Drug Medi-Cal billing mechanism
- County reimbursement for case management services

**Local training requirements, only applicable to San Diego**

**Peer Specialist Certification will allow individuals to move across counties as part of the certified workforce**

# Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist (7/1/2022, forward) for both MH and SUD:

## Services consist of:

- **Educational Skill Building Groups:**

Providing a supportive environment to learn coping mechanisms and problem-solving skills

- **Engagement services:**

Activities and coaching to encourage and support participation in behavioral health treatment.

- **Therapeutic Activity**

Structured non-clinical activity such as advocacy on behalf of the beneficiary; promotion of self-advocacy; resource navigation; and collaboration with the beneficiaries and others providing care or support (defined as collaterals) to focus on the treatment needs by supporting the achievement of treatment goals.

Peer Support Specialists provide services under the direction of a Behavioral Health Professional (licensed, waived, or registered individuals).

Although Peer Support Services must be provided under the direction of a Behavioral Health Professional, Peer Support Specialists may be supervised by a Peer Support Specialist Supervisor.

This creates new career pathways for eligible individuals.



# Preparation for July 1, 2022

## **a) Awaiting details from DHCS regarding:**

- Service definitions and mapping to new peer specific service codes
- Documentation guidelines

## **b) Updating Electronic Health Records:**

- Adding Certified Peer Specialists as a specific provider type
- Adding specific Peer Support Service codes

## **c) Looking at Program Design and contract impacts**

## **d) Conducting Market Analysis for budgeting purposes**

## **e) Encouraging programs to begin reviewing grandparenting process for current staff**



# Questions?

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Behavioral Health  
Services

