

Certified Peer Counselor

Are you a person with lived experience in behavioral health recovery? Are you willing to share your journey? Have you thought about working in human services and helping others?

Certified Peer Counselors (CPCs) are people with lived-experience in recovery from behavioral health challenges who draw upon their experiences to help their peers find hope and make progress toward recovery. CPCs are trained and certified by the state of Washington to provide behavioral health peer services.

About DSHS

The Department of Social and Health Services' Behavioral Health Administration (transforms lives by supporting sustainable recovery, independence and wellness. Within BHA, the Office of Forensic Mental Health Services), provides information about careers in forensic behavioral health which play an important role in improving the lives of individuals with behavioral health conditions involved in the criminal court system. For more information about positions open within DSHS, please visit www.careers.wa.gov.

Forensic Behavioral Health

Forensic behavioral health is the intersection of behavioral health and the law. The system itself involves various entities that have a touchpoint to people who are involved with the criminal court system and may have a behavioral health condition.

Choosing a career as a practitioner in this human services field offers many diverse work environments. Examples include, working with law enforcement in co-responder roles or in a corrections setting; in inpatient settings such as state psychiatric facilities and residential treatment facilities; and in community settings such as outpatient competency restoration programs, or community behavioral health agencies. Service providers in this field often interact with legal partners such as lawyers and judges, corrections officers, and first responders.

For more information

Behavioral Health Administration, OFMHS

www.dshs.wa.gov/bha/
office-forensic-mental-health-services

Workforce Development

Katie Cutshaw
katie.cutshaw@dshs.wa.gov 360-522-6061
www.dshs.wa.gov/bha/workforce-development

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Forensic Behavioral Health Career Path

Office of Forensic Mental Health Services

Pathway to Forensic Behavioral Health Certified Peer Counselor

Examples of Work Environments

Peer Counselors work in a variety of inpatient and community settings. They are often employed by community behavioral health organizations and can work in areas such as crisis response, jails, and hospitals. In the forensic field you can find peers working on Forensic PATH and HARPS teams and on OCRP teams.

This document is for illustrative purposes only for detailed information see: The HCA Peer Counselor webpage, RCW 18.19.095

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Have lived experience with mental health and/or substance use challenges and are living in recovery, modeling competency in coping and recovery skills

Complete the prerequisite course provided by the Health Care Authority & Peer Workforce Alliance

Apply to become a Peer Counselor through the Health Care Authority

Complete HCA approved 40 hour in-person training and 16 hour enhanced Peer training

Pass the written and oral state exams

Certified Peer Counselor working in a forensic setting

New Opportunities

Peer Counselor

OCRP

Peers on Outpatient Competency Restoration Program teams support people in a community-based setting, to achieve the ability to participate in one's own defense.

F-PATH

The Forensic Projects for Assistance in Transitioning from Homelessness (F-PATH) program provides enhanced engagement to people who are at higher risk of involvement with the criminal court system. Peer Counselors help connect people with supports, including housing, transportation, and health care services.

F-HARPS

Forensic Housing and Recovery through Peer Services, connects people with housing and residential supports. Services include peer support, subsidies, and short-term rent vouchers to help in finding more permanent housing support.

Qualifications

Becoming a CPC in Washington State requires lived experience with behavioral health challenges and to be living in recovery. See the Washington State Health Care Authority's Peer Support webpage for more information.

Source- HCA/ Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery, Peer Support

