

# Mental Health Peer Specialist Certification Stakeholder Meetings

Friday, September 9, 2022  
Meeting One of Six  
Wilda L. White Consulting, Facilitator

# Zoom Protocol



Questions	Raise hand, actual or virtual; write question in Chat; or shout it out
Comments	Zoom Chat
Slides	Link to PowerPoint slides is in Zoom Chat
Recording	All meetings are being recorded



# What are these meetings all about?

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) is partnering with the Peer Workforce Development Initiative (PWDI) to identify a model and develop an implementation plan for peer specialist credentialing in Vermont.

PWDI is facilitating a series of stakeholder meetings to review expert consultant Wilda White's analysis of US and Canadian efforts to promote and expand mental health peer specialist workforce capacity through a certification program. Wilda White will be overseeing these stakeholder meetings. DMH will participate in these meetings along with representatives from other Vermont stakeholders including service users and their families; peer support specialists; staff from community mental health programs, hospitals, and peer-run service organizations; family networks and organizations; the recovery community and mental health advocates; private insurers; and staff from other State agencies.

Recommendations from these meetings will be compiled by Wilda White for use in developing a peer credentialing process in Vermont.

# What is the Peer Workforce Development Initiative?

- Department of Mental Health (DMH) developed the Peer Workforce Development Initiative (PWDI) grant to help the state build and maintain an infrastructure for a statewide mental health peer workforce.
- Initiative goals include creating a steering committee, evaluating statewide peer workforce needs, and ensuring the availability of peer support worker training.
- DMH awarded PWDI grant to Pathways Vermont

# Peer Workforce Development Initiative Steering Committee

- Hilary Melton, Pathways Vermont
- Karim Chapman, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors
- Dan Towle, Peer Advocate
- Katie Wilson, Copeland Center
- Leslie Nelson, Howard Center
- Malaika Puffer, HCRS
- Gloria van den Berg, Alyssum
- Rene Rose, Northeast Kingdom Health Services
- Ken Russell, Another Way Community Center

# About Wilda White



**Wilda L. White**

**Education:**

JD, MBA

**Occupation:**

Management Consultant

**Passion:**

Justice for all

## Experience

- Principal, Wilda L. White Consulting
- Founder, MadFreedom, Inc.
- Executive Director, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors
- Executive Director, Center for Social Justice, UC Berkeley School of Law
- Partner, Walker, Hamilton & White
- General Management Consultant, McKinsey & Company
- Assistant City Editor, *The Miami Herald*

## Relevant Publication

“Peer Specialist Certification: An Analysis Of U.S. and Canadian Efforts to Promote and Expand Mental Health Peer Specialist Workforce Capacity,”  
February 2021

# Description of six stakeholder meetings

1

## Overview of mental health peer specialist certification

- The purpose of the meeting is to educate stakeholders about peer certification programs in other states, the terminology used, and how programs in other states are structured

2

## Peer support, peer support services, and assessment-based versus professional certification program

- The purpose of the meeting is to solicit input on the definition of peer support and peer support services and whether Vermont should adopt an assessment-based certification program or a professional certification program

3

## Screening

- The purpose of the meeting is to solicit input on the minimum standards that an applicant must meet before applying for certification and creating a process to determine whether those minimum standards have been met.

4

## Training

- The purpose of the meeting is to solicit input on required competencies, training length, approved training vendors, fees, and types of certifications to be offered (e.g., veterans, gender identity, sexual orientation, forensic, whole health, peer support supervision, family peer specialist, substance use recovery, etc.)

5

## Certification

- The purpose of the meeting is to solicit input on the process for certifying whether the applicant has met the requirements for certification. Sub-topics include the type of certifying body; re-certification; continuing education; reciprocity; grandfathering of current peer support specialists; fees; and investigation and revocation.

6

## Integration

- The purpose of the meeting is to solicit input on what steps will be necessary to incorporate peer support specialists into the continuum of care, including outreach, training, supervision, and costs.

# Meeting Process





# Overview of mental health peer specialist certification

Mental Health Peer Specialist Certification Stakeholder Meetings

# What is peer support?

- A “system of giving and receiving help” based on key principles that include “shared responsibility, and mutual agreement of what is helpful.”
- Peer specialists use their own personal lived experience recovering from mental illness to support others in their recovery
- Lived experience distinguishes peer specialists from traditional mental health service providers

# What do peer specialists do?

- Advocate
- Connect individuals to resources
- Build community and relationships
- Facilitate groups
- Mentor
- Build skills
- Listen non-judgmentally

- Plan and develop groups, services, activities
- Supervise other peer specialists
- Provide training
- Administer programs and agencies
- Educate public and policymakers

# Where do peer specialists work?

- Peer-run respites
- Schools
- Prisons and jails
- Hospital emergency departments
- Outpatient day programs
- Inpatient psychiatric hospitals
- Community centers

- Mobile Crisis Response Teams
- Street Outreach
- Individual homes
- Support teams in housing agencies
- Community mental health agencies
- Peer run organizations

# History of Peer Support



# Evidence-based benefits of peer support

- Reduced hospitalization rates
- Reduced inpatient days
- Lowered overall cost of services
- Increased use of outpatient services

- Increased quality of life outcomes
- Increased engagement rates
- Increased whole health

# Why certify peer support workers?

- Creates employment opportunity for peers, who as a group have highest rates of unemployment in the United States due to discrimination
- Allows for development of a peer workforce
- Ensures employed peers meet certain standards of experience and training
- Ensures competency standards for peer profession
- Ensures ethical standards
- Allows peers to achieve and maintain a professional credential
- Creates a career ladder and professional development opportunities for peer support workers
- Allows billable services to Medicaid

# Medicaid Requirements

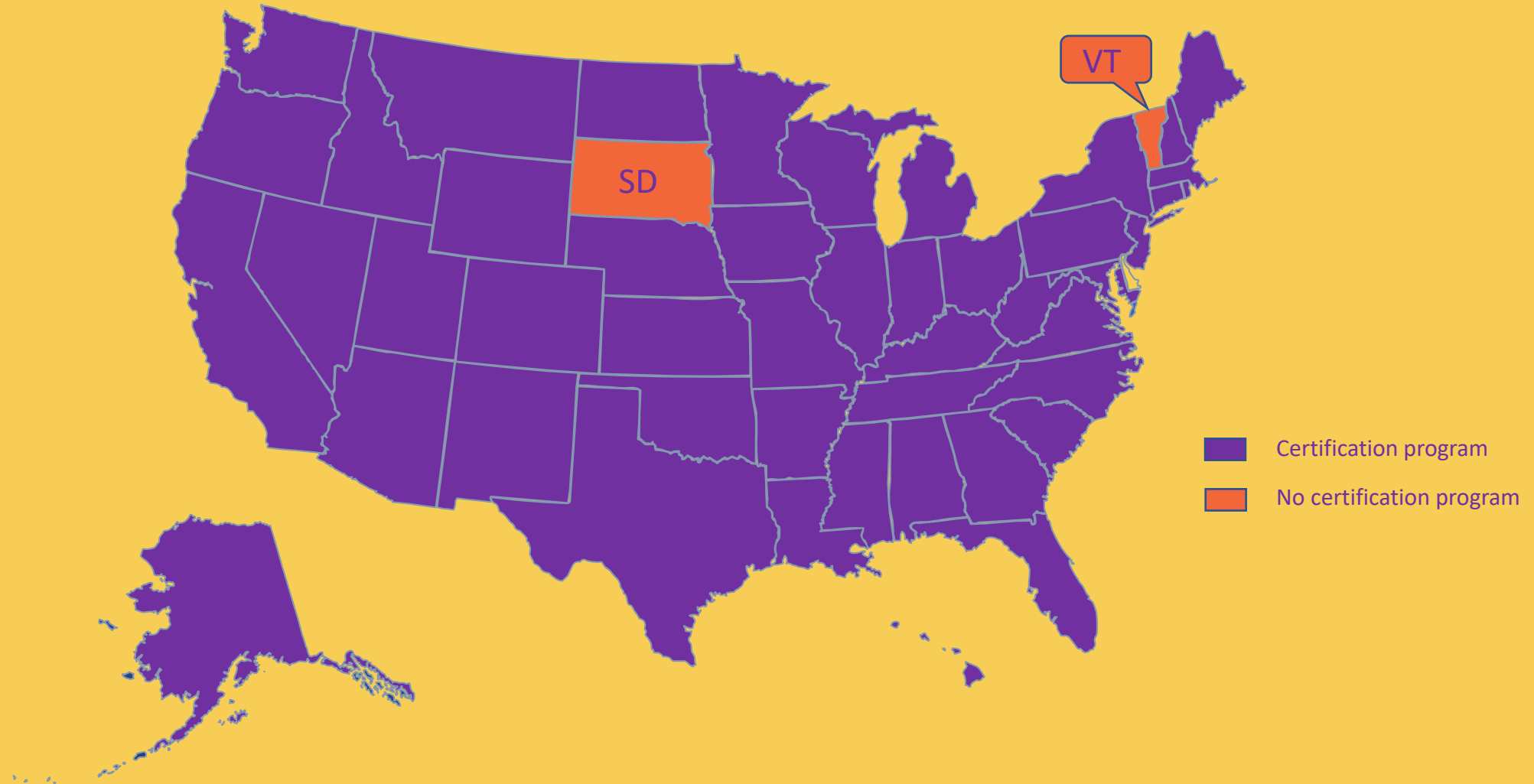
- Peer specialists must be supervised by a mental health specialist, as defined by the State;
- Peer support services must be coordinated within a comprehensive, individualized plan of care, with specific individualized goals; and
- Peer specialists must be trained and credentialed with mandatory continuing education requirements that ensure peer specialists have a basic set of competencies necessary to support the recovery of others



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justice through  
words and ideas

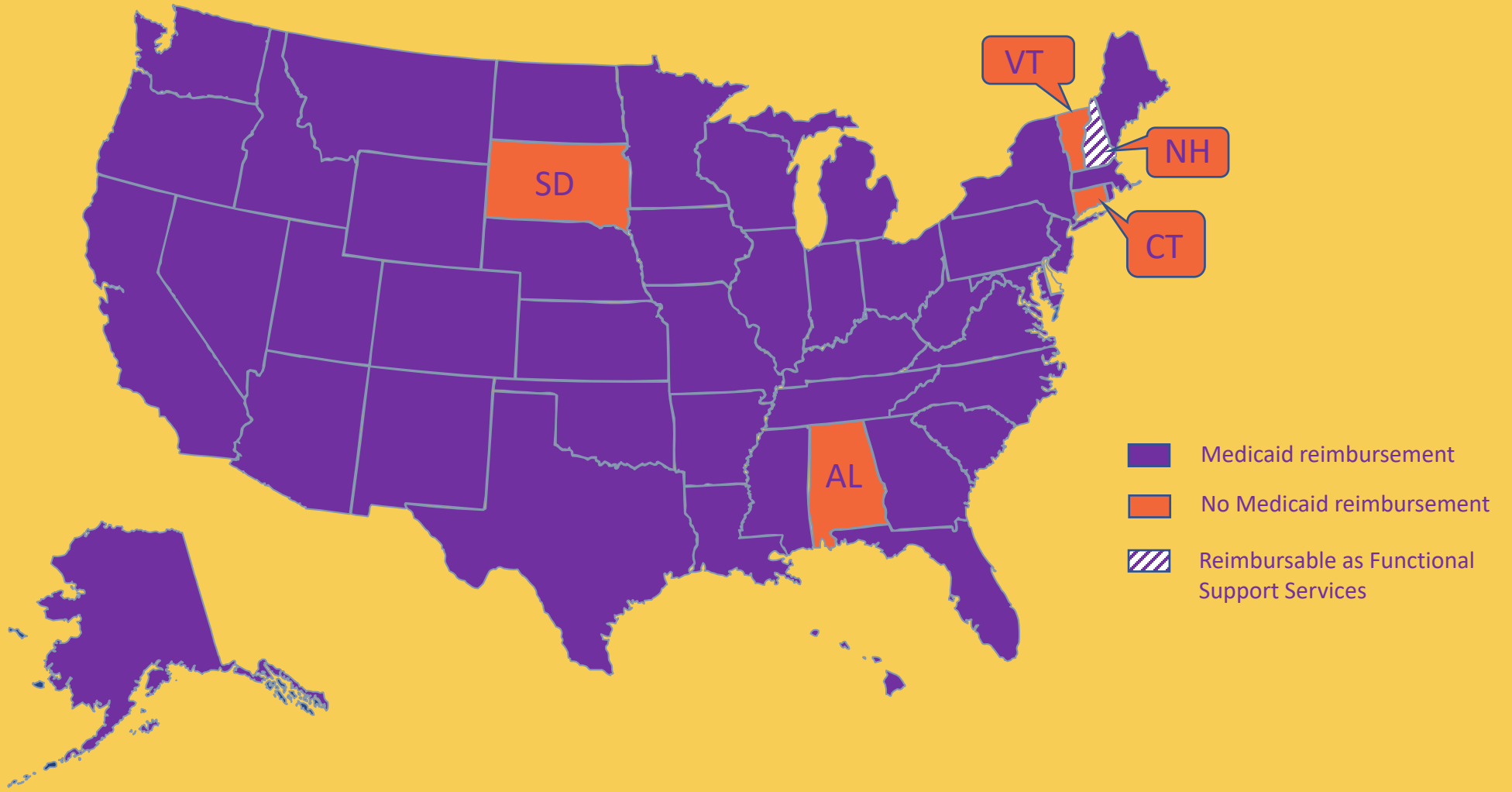
# Statewide mental health peer certification programs – U.S.



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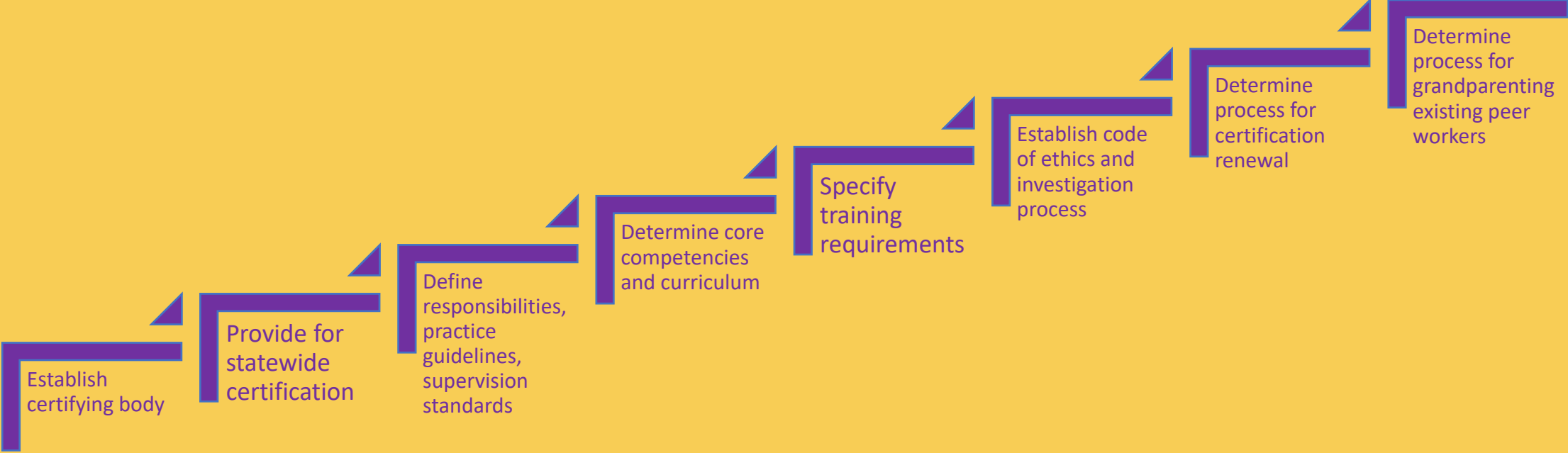
# Peer support Medicaid reimbursement – U.S.



# Medicaid billable peer support services

- Self-help/peer services
- Peer-directed and operated support services
- Skills training and development
- Community support
- Psychiatric rehabilitation
- Wellness Action Recovery Planning
- Community-Based wraparound
- Supported employment/supported education
- Psychoeducational services
- Case management

# Steps to establish Medicaid compliant certification program





# Peer specialist certification program framework

Screening	Training	Credentialing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education, residency, age</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of hours of training; in-person, virtual, web-based, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment-based vs. professional certification</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lived Experience, public disclosure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Core competencies, e.g., advocacy, ethics, mentoring, education, recovery, wellness support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statewide examination</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approved vendors vs. dedicated statewide trainers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing education requirements</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals, recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State-specific training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigation and enforcement</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Criminal history</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certifying body: peer-run, state board; third party (e.g., IC&amp;RC)</li> </ul>



# Tensions with peer support values

## Peer definition of peer support

Mental health peer support is grounded in a mutual relationship between individuals with lived experience of mental health challenges that emphasizes a non-judgmental, values-driven approach that promotes multiple perspectives, advocates for human rights and dignity, and focuses on genuine, mutual relationships that enrich the lives of those involved

## SAMHSA definition of peer support

Persons who use their lived experience of recovery from mental illness and/or addiction, plus skills learned in formal training, to deliver services in behavioral health settings to promote mind-body recovery and resiliency.