# Role of the Peer Recovery Specialist

The role of the Peer Recovery Specialist (PRS) is to reduce overdose deaths through a continuum of personalized ROSC-based services. Utilizing motivational interviewing, PRS engage individuals that are experiencing active addiction to use harm reduction techniques and/or begin treatment. Once engaged in treatment, PRS work diligently to coordinate their care and be there to support clients as a service navigator that has walked in their shoes. PRS will engage clients throughout the treatment process, including changing treatment providers, relapse, and efforts to sustain long-term recovery. As appropriate the PRS will connect clients to community resources to increase their overall self sufficiency and overcome economic and personal challenges to remaining in treatment and/or sustaining sobriety.

Client choice is at the heart of the Pathways to Recovery program design. Peer Recovery Specialist will present a range of treatment options to potential program participants and work collaboratively with the client and the coalition to share knowledge and information on the availability of resources, resulting in an agreement on a preferred treatment approach. Furthermore, just like any other chronic health condition, relapse is a part of recovery and treatment plans may need to be modified on the way to meet client needs.   
The PRS will assist the client in designing a new roadmap to recovery, emphasizing that just because we lapse does not mean we have to relapse.

The PRS will help individuals gain access to needed resources, services, or supports that will help them achieve recovery from their opioid use disorder (OUD). PRS can help individuals address multiple domains in their life that have been impacted by their OUD, but are difficult to address within the structure of most addiction treatment programs, such as returning to employment or finding stable, sober housing. PRS can help individuals transition through the continuum of care from detoxification to aftercare. Finally, PRS can help- individuals sustain their recovery after the formal addiction treatment component has been completed through consultation, skills training and coaching.

Because most treatment providers are unable to provide a comprehensive array of services on

site, an alternative solution is to help individuals acquire these services in the community. The

recovery coach program can be used to help individuals successfully link to and effectively use

resources in the community while they receive treatment for their addiction.

## Core Values of PRS

Peer support is voluntary  
o Peer supporters do not force others to participate in peer support services

o Peer supporters respect the rights of those they serve

Peer supporters are hopeful

o Peer supporters tell strategic stories of their personal recovery that relate to the issues the people they serve are experiencing

o Peer supporters model recovery

o Peer supporters help reframe challenges as opportunities for growth

Peer supports are open minded

o Peer supporters embrace differences as potential learning opportunities

o Peer supporters respect the individual’s right to choose their personal path to recovery

o Peer supporters connect with others where and as they are

o Peer supporters do not evaluate or assess others

Peer supporters are empathetic

o Peer supporters practice effective listening skills and are non-judgmental

o Peer supporters understand that while people may share similar life experiences their range of response may differ greatly

Peer supports are respectful

o Peer supporters embrace diversity as a means for growth for those they serve

o Peer supporters encourage others to explore how differences can contribute to their lives and the lives of those around them

o Peer supporters practice patience, kindness, warmth, and dignity with those they serve

o Peer supporters see the people they serve as worthy of all basic human rights

o Peer supporters embrace the full range of cultural experience, strengths and approaches to recovery

Peer supporters facilitate change

o Peer supporters find appropriate ways to call attention to injustice

o Peer supporters strive to understand how injustices may affect people

o Peer supporters encourage, coach and inspire people to challenge and overcome injustice

o Peer supporters use language that is supportive, encouraging, inspiring, motivating, and respectful

o Peer supporters help people explore areas in need of change

o Peer supporters recognize injustice and act as advocates and facilitate change where appropriate

Peer supporters are honest and direct

o Peer supporters respect privacy and confidentiality

o Peer supporters engage when desired by those they serve in candid, honest discussions about stigma, abuse, oppression, crisis, or safety

o Peer supporters exercise compassion and caring in peer support relationships

o Peer supporters do not make false promises, misrepresent themselves, others, or circumstances

o Peer supporters strive to build relationships based on integrity, honesty, respect, and trust

Peer support is mutual and reciprocal

o Peer supporters learn from those they support and those supported learn from peer supporters

Peer support is equally shared power

o Peer supporters use language that reflects a mutual relationship with those they serve

o Peer supporters behave in ways that reflect respect and mutuality

o Peer supporters do not express or exercise power over those they serve

o Peer supporters do not diagnose or offer medical services, but they do offer a complementary service

Peer support is strengths-focused

o Peer supporters encourage others to identify their strengths and use them to improve their lives

o Peer supporters focus on the strengths of those they serve

o Peer supporters use their own experience to demonstrate the use of one’s strengths

o Peer supporters operate from a strength-based perspective and acknowledge the strengths, informed choices and decisions as foundations for recovery

o Peer supporters don’t fix or do for others what they can do for themselves

Peer support is transparent

o Peer supporters clearly explain what can and cannot be expected of the peer support relationship

o Peer supporters use language that is clear, understandable, and value and judgment free

o Peer supporters use language that is supportive and respectful

o Peer supporters provide support in a professional, humanistic manner

o Peer supporter roles are distinct from the roles of other behavioral health professionals

o Peer supporters only make promises they can keep and use accurate statements

o Peer supporters do not diagnose, nor do they prescribe or recommend medications or monitor their use

Peer support is person-driven

o Peer supporters encourage people to make their own decisions

o Peer supporters, where appropriate, offer options to people

o Peer supporters encourage people to try new things

o Peer supporters help people learn from their mistakes

o Peer supporters encourage resilience

o Peer supporters encourage personal growth in others

o Peer supporters encourage and coach those they support to decide what they want in life and how to achieve it

## Core Competencies of a Peer Recovery Specialist

1. Outreach workers: identifies and engages hard to reach people; offers living proof of the transformative power of recovery and makes it attractive.
2. Motivator: Exhibits faith in client’s capacity for change; encourages and celebrates recovery achievements and aids internal/external recovery.
3. Resources: Encourages the client’s self-advocacy and economic self-sufficiency.
4. Ally and confidant: Genuinely care and listens to the client and can be trusted with confidence and can identify areas for potential growth.
5. Truth teller: Provides feedback on the recovery progress. Identifies areas which may present roadblocks to continued abstinence.
6. Role model and mentor: Offers their life as living proof of the transformative power of recovery and provides recovery education.
7. Planner: Facilitates the transition from a professionally directed treatment plan to a client-developed and directed personal recovery plan. Assists in structuring daily activities around this plan.
8. Problem solver: Helps resolve personal and environmental obstacles to recovery.
9. Resource broker: Is knowledgeable of links for individuals or for their families, to sources of sober housing, recovery conducive employment, health and social services, recovery support and matches the individuals to support groups or 12-step meetings.
10. Monitor or companion: When the client will be best served with regular, around the clock attendance, or attendance for a set number of hours per day, the client may need a sober companion. A sober companion can be available for travel in and out of the country. The sober companion processes each client’s response to professional services and mutual aid exposures to enhance the engagement, reduce attrition and resolve problems in the relationship. Additionally, the sober companion provides early re-intervention and recovery re-initiation services.
11. Tour guide: Introduces newcomers into the culture of recovery; provides and orientation to recovery roles, rules, rituals, language, etiquette; and opens doors for opportunities for community participation.
12. Advocate: Provides an invaluable service for those resistant to remaining abstinent from drugs and/or alcohol but who must do so due to legal, medical, family or contractual obligations, as well as, helping the individual’s families navigate complex social, service and legal systems.
13. Educator: Provides a client with normative information about the stages of recovery. They can facilitate the process necessary to remain free from the addiction, inform client of the professional helpers within the community and about the prevalence, pathways and life-styles of long-term recovery.
14. Community organizer: Every member of the community support center helps develop and expand recovery support resources, enhances cooperative relationships between professional service organizations and local recovery support groups; cultivates opportunities for people in recovery to participate in volunteerism and performs other acts of service to the community.
15. Lifestyle consultant: Supports the client through challenges arising from everyday activities. For some, this is done through several one-on-one session each week, while some clients prefer daily telephone contact. Assists individuals and their families to develop sobriety-based rituals of daily living; and encourages religious, spiritual and secular activities that will enhance life meaning and purpose.
16. Friend: Provides sober companionship; a social bridge from the culture of addiction to the culture of recovery.