

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JANUARY 5, 2026
AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY FEBRUARY 11, 2025
CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2025–26 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 96

Introduced by Assembly Member Jackson

January 7, 2025

An act to amend ~~Sections 18998 and 18998.1~~ *Section 14045.15* of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to ~~public health~~. *Medi-Cal*.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 96, as amended, Jackson. ~~Community health workers. Mental health services: peer support specialist certification.~~

Existing law establishes the Medi-Cal program, which is administered by the State Department of Health Care Services and under which qualified low-income persons receive health care benefits. The Medi-Cal program is, in part, governed and funded by federal Medicaid program provisions. Existing law establishes a schedule of benefits under the Medi-Cal program and provides for various services, including behavioral and mental health services that are rendered by Medi-Cal enrolled providers.

Existing law authorizes a county, or an agency representing the county, to develop a peer support specialist certification program, subject to department approval. Existing law imposes specified requirements on applicants for certification as a peer support specialist, including that the applicant be at least 18 years of age and possess a high school diploma or equivalent degree.

This bill would remove the requirement of possessing a high school diploma or equivalent degree from the requirements necessary for an applicant to receive certification.

~~Existing law required the Department of Health Care Access and Information, on or before July 1, 2023, to develop and approve statewide requirements for community health worker certificate programs. Existing law requires the department, as part of developing those requirements, to, among other things, determine the necessary curriculum to meet certificate program objectives. Existing law defines “community health worker” for these purposes to mean a liaison, link, or intermediary between health and social services and the community to facilitate access to services and to improve the access and cultural competence of service delivery. Existing law specifies that “community health worker” include Promotores, Promotores de Salud, Community Health Representatives, navigators, and other nonlicensed health workers with the qualifications developed by the department.~~

~~This bill would also specify for these purposes that a “community health worker” includes a peer support specialist and would deem a certified peer support specialist to have satisfied all education and training requirements developed by the department for certification as a community health worker.~~

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. Section 14045.15 of the Welfare and Institutions
- 2 Code is amended to read:
- 3 14045.15. (a) To receive a certification under this article, an
- 4 applicant shall meet all of the following requirements:
- 5 (1) Be at least 18 years of age.
- 6 ~~(2) Possess a high school diploma or equivalent degree.~~
- 7 ~~(3)~~
- 8 (2) Be self-identified as having experience with the process of
- 9 recovery from mental illness or substance use disorder either as a
- 10 consumer of these services or as the parent or family member of
- 11 the consumer.
- 12 ~~(4)~~
- 13 (3) Be willing to share their experience.
- 14 ~~(5)~~

- 1 (4) Have a strong dedication to recovery.
- 2 ~~(6)~~
- 3 (5) Agree, in writing, to adhere to a code of ethics.
- 4 ~~(7)~~
- 5 (6) Successfully complete the curriculum and training
- 6 requirements for a peer support specialist.
- 7 ~~(8)~~
- 8 (7) Pass a certification examination approved by the department
- 9 for a peer support specialist.

10 (b) To maintain certification under this article, a certified peer
 11 support specialist shall meet both of the following requirements:

- 12 (1) Adhere to the code of ethics and biennially sign an
- 13 affirmation.
- 14 (2) Complete any required continuing education, training, and
- 15 recertification requirements.

16 ~~SECTION 1. Section 18998 of the Welfare and Institutions~~
 17 ~~Code is amended to read:~~

18 ~~18998. For purposes of this chapter, the following terms have~~
 19 ~~the following meanings:~~

20 (a) ~~“Community-defined” means a set of practices that~~
 21 ~~communities have used and found to yield positive results, as~~
 22 ~~determined by community consensus over time. These practices~~
 23 ~~may or may not have been measured empirically, but have reached~~
 24 ~~a level of acceptance by the community.~~

25 (b) ~~“Community health worker” means a liaison, link, or~~
 26 ~~intermediary between health and social services and the community~~
 27 ~~to facilitate access to services and to improve the access and~~
 28 ~~cultural competence of service delivery. A community health~~
 29 ~~worker is a frontline health worker either trusted by, or who has~~
 30 ~~a close understanding of, the community served. Community health~~
 31 ~~workers include Promotores, Promotores de Salud, Community~~
 32 ~~Health Representatives, navigators, peer support specialists, as~~
 33 ~~defined in Section 14045.12, and other nonlicensed health workers~~
 34 ~~with the qualifications developed pursuant to this chapter, including~~
 35 ~~violence prevention professionals. A community health worker’s~~
 36 ~~lived experience shall align with and provide a connection to the~~
 37 ~~community being served.~~

38 (c) ~~“Core competencies” means the foundational and essential~~
 39 ~~knowledge, skills, and abilities required for community health~~
 40 ~~workers, which include all of the following:~~

- 1 ~~(1) Communication skills.~~
- 2 ~~(2) Interpersonal and relationship-building skills.~~
- 3 ~~(3) Service coordination and navigation skills.~~
- 4 ~~(4) Capacity building skills.~~
- 5 ~~(5) Advocacy skills.~~
- 6 ~~(6) Education and facilitation skills.~~
- 7 ~~(7) Individual and community assessment skills.~~
- 8 ~~(8) Outreach skills.~~
- 9 ~~(9) Professional skills and conduct.~~
- 10 ~~(10) Evaluation and research skills.~~
- 11 ~~(11) Knowledge base, including knowledge of basic public~~
- 12 ~~health principles, and social determinants of health and related~~
- 13 ~~disparities, of the community to be served.~~
- 14 ~~(d) “Cultural competence” means a set of congruent behaviors,~~
- 15 ~~attitudes, and policies that come together in a system or agency~~
- 16 ~~that enables that system or agency to work effectively in~~
- 17 ~~cross-cultural situations. A culturally competent system of care~~
- 18 ~~acknowledges and incorporates, at all levels, the importance of~~
- 19 ~~language and culture, intersecting identities, assessment of~~
- 20 ~~cross-cultural relations, knowledge and acceptance of dynamics~~
- 21 ~~of cultural differences, expansion of cultural knowledge, and~~
- 22 ~~adaptation of services to meet culturally unique needs to provide~~
- 23 ~~services in a culturally competent manner.~~
- 24 ~~(e) “Department” means the Department of Health Care Access~~
- 25 ~~and Information.~~
- 26 ~~(f) “Lived experience” means personal knowledge of a specific~~
- 27 ~~health condition or circumstance, which may include, but not be~~
- 28 ~~limited to, Alzheimer’s and other related dementia, climate impact~~
- 29 ~~on health, disability, foster system placement, homelessness, justice~~
- 30 ~~involved, LGBTQ+ status, mental health conditions, substance~~
- 31 ~~use, military service, pregnancy, and birth. A community health~~
- 32 ~~worker may draw on their lived experience to assist other~~
- 33 ~~individuals with navigation to treatment and services. A community~~
- 34 ~~health worker with lived experience involving a behavioral health~~
- 35 ~~or other health condition may need additional training on how to~~
- 36 ~~appropriately use this lived experience to assist other individuals~~
- 37 ~~with their recovery from that condition.~~
- 38 ~~(g) “Specialty certificate” means the next level of training that~~
- 39 ~~concentrates on specific program focus areas, with learning~~

1 objectives and topics tailored to the skills required for distinct
2 program and population needs.

3 ~~SEC. 2. Section 18998.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code~~
4 ~~is amended to read:~~

5 ~~18998.1. (a) On or before July 1, 2023, the department shall~~
6 ~~do all of the following:~~

7 ~~(1) Develop statewide requirements for community health~~
8 ~~worker certificate programs in consultation with stakeholders;~~
9 ~~including, but not limited to, the State Department of Health Care~~
10 ~~Services, the State Department of Public Health, community health~~
11 ~~workers, Promotores and Promotores de Salud, or representative~~
12 ~~organizations. In developing the requirements, the department~~
13 ~~shall do all of the following:~~

14 ~~(A) Consult evidenced-based and community-defined materials.~~

15 ~~(B) Determine necessary curriculum to meet certificate program~~
16 ~~objectives.~~

17 ~~(C) Determine criteria for specialty certificate programs and~~
18 ~~specialized training requirements that build on the lived experience~~
19 ~~of community health workers.~~

20 ~~(D) Determine a structure of statewide oversight that reduces~~
21 ~~barriers to training.~~

22 ~~(E) Determine how past experience as a community health~~
23 ~~worker may provide a pathway to certification, and how to verify~~
24 ~~past experience.~~

25 ~~(2) Approve statewide requirements for the development of~~
26 ~~certificate programs for community health workers.~~

27 ~~(3) Approve the curriculum required for programs to certify~~
28 ~~community health workers.~~

29 ~~(4) Review, approve, or renew evidence-based curricula and~~
30 ~~community-defined curricula for core competencies, specialized~~
31 ~~programs, and training.~~

32 ~~(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), a peer support specialist~~
33 ~~certified pursuant to Article 1.4 (commencing with Section~~
34 ~~14045.10) of Chapter 7 of Part 3 shall be deemed to have satisfied~~
35 ~~all education and training requirements developed by the~~
36 ~~department for certification as a community health worker.~~