

## PARENT PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST FOR CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The purpose of this position paper is to highlight the role of a Parent Peer Support Specialist in the Children's System of Care and how the role is different from the role of Peer Support Specialist in service to adult consumers. The position paper was developed by a statewide workgroup of Parent Peer Support Specialists in various agencies and organizations in the Children's System of Care.

The following is a working definition for "Parent Peer Support Specialist":

The Parent Peer Support Specialist is either currently raising a child with behavioral health care needs or has in the past raised a child with behavioral health care needs. The Parent Peer Support Specialist has current knowledge of children's behavioral health care resources, as well as child welfare, juvenile justice and educational resources in the community. The Parent Peer Support Specialist engages parents more fully in case planning and the service delivery process through the following:

1. providing information to parents and primary caregivers about the behavioral health care system, how the behavioral health system interfaces with other child/youth serving systems, and the parents' rights and responsibilities within these systems;
2. providing meaningful engagement with families and primary caregivers through support and advocacy;
3. recognizing that there are racial disparities in the various child serving agencies, and the goal of a Parent Peer Support Specialist is to drive a diverse, culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate workforce;
4. recognizing the inherent power differential between parents, primary caregivers and professionals, and how to mitigate this power differential;
5. connecting families to other parents and primary caregivers who have experienced the behavioral health care system so they can:
  - a. mentor,
  - b. encourage and instill hope for the journey ahead;
6. provide evidence-based practices information to families so they can make informed decisions on asking for treatment options.

### **Core Competency Training for Parent Peer Support Specialist:**

In a training that is at least 40 hours in length, but potentially could be up to 72 hours in length to cover all of the core competencies. Recertification continuing education at the 20-hour level every 2 years is acceptable. Here is an abbreviated list of the recommended training. Please see position paper for the full list

- Communication Skills
- Crisis and Safety Management
- Culture

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- Behavioral Health
- Navigating Systems
- Facilitation Skills
- Resources
- Trauma Informed Care for parents, young children and youth
- Ethics/Boundaries
- Self-Care
- Role of Advocacy

### Specialty Competencies for Parent Peer Support Specialist:

Legally established language sets the course of implementation. Concepts such as recovery and psychiatric rehabilitation do not have a place when working with families of children who receive behavioral health care services. Since children are continuing with both brain development and the development of milestones in childhood, the recovery concept does not fit here. Children and their families strive towards the development of resiliency, health and wellness. Additionally, the concept of preparation for employment is not a core competency for families of children, since children do not work. Some of these core competencies can be addressed in a different way. See the additional specialized competencies for working with a child and their family or primary caregiver below that could be considered for the 20 hours of continued education:

- Impact of racialized trauma on children, youth and primary caregivers
- Parent Coaching
- Trainings in IEP's and the Special Education process
- Early childhood care and education
- Primary healthcare
- Telling your story as a perspective for committees and advisory groups
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)
- Brain & Child Development
- Applying for social security
- Stigma
- Motivational Interviewing
- Triple P Parenting
- Secondary Trauma and Compassion Fatigue
- Self-Care
- Behavioral health interventions to help parents make informed decisions
- Difference between an adult diagnosis and a diagnosis for a child
- Impact of medication on a developing brain
- Impact of cultural and racial disparities in behavioral health care
- Impact of cultural and racial disparities in child welfare and juvenile justice
- Impact of cultural and racial disparities in education



- Mental Health First Aid (Adult and Youth classes)

### **Requirements for Parent Peer Support Specialist:**

Parent Peer Support Specialists should be Parents/Primary Caregivers of minor children and youth with behavioral health challenges. They must have experience in parenting these children and youth as well as navigating the children's systems of care and have experienced some success in advocating on behalf of their children.

### **Scope of Work for a Parent Peer Support Specialist:**

Parent Peer Support Specialists work directly with parents in helping them support their children regarding behavioral health challenges. The goal for children and youth is health and wellness, not recovery. Parent Peer Support Specialists work with parents and primary caregivers to advocate for their children and youth for better outcomes in school, home and in their community.

### **Supervision for Parent Peer Support Specialist:**

- Supervision should come from a qualified parent who has had the experience of a child who received behavioral health services in the "Medi-Cal" or public children's system of care.
- Parent Peer Support Specialists Supervisors should have 5+ years as a Parent Peer Support Specialist as well as experience in managing others
  - Training in Reflective Practice specific to Peer Supervisors is recommended
- Parent Peer Support Specialist Supervisors should address detail on transference and countertransference issues as it pertains to the relationship that is developed based on peer to peer experiences
- Parent Peer Support Specialist supervisors focus on communication needs as well as supporting Parent Peer Support Specialist in self-care techniques

### **Conclusion:**

Please refer to the [United Parents Parent Peer Support Specialist for Children's Behavioral Health](#) position paper or more information regarding studies conducted to support the effectiveness of peer-to-peer work and models of other states and agencies who have a Parent Peer Support Specialist certification program.

Also, see the [position paper](#) endorsed by the California Alliance for Children and Family Services; National Alliance on Mental Illness and California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies.