



<b>ISSUE DATE</b>  <p align="center"><b>December 12, 2016</b></p>	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b>  <p align="center"><b>Immediately</b></p>	<b>NUMBER:</b>  <p align="center"><b>OMHSAS-16-12</b></p>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>  <p align="center"><b>Peer Support Services – Revised</b></p>		<b>BY:</b>   <p align="center">Dennis Marion Deputy Secretary Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services</p>

**SCOPE:**

Peer Support Service Providers  
Behavioral Health Managed Care Organizations (BH-MCOs)

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this bulletin is to:

1. Announce that peer support services may now be provided for youth who are 14 years of age and older with serious emotional disturbance; and
2. Issue revised provider handbook pages that contain service guidelines, prior approval procedures, and billing instructions as well as other information necessary for the provision of and payment for PSS.

**BACKGROUND:**

In 2006, Peer Support Services (PSS) were added to the Medical Assistance (MA) Fee Schedule for adults 18 years of age and older who met the criteria in Mental Health Bulletin # OMH-94-04 Serious Mental Illness: Adult Priority Group. Adults who were not a member of the priority group were required to obtain a program exception in order to receive PSS. OMH-94-04 refers to clinical diagnostic criteria and the definition of “serious mental illness.” Serious mental illness has been redefined for determining eligibility for PSS and qualifications for certified peer specialists (CPS). See Provider Handbook Section VII-II (A) for revised SMI and SED definitions.

In addition, the Pennsylvania MA State Plan was recently amended to include PSS for youth and young adults. Youth and young adults who have a serious emotional disturbance or a serious mental illness have a more difficult time than their peers transitioning into adulthood and typically do not engage in services designed for adults because adult services do not address their unique needs. As part of the Department’s commitment to increase access to treatment and support services for this population at this critical stage of their development,

**COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS BULLETIN SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:**  
Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Bureau of Policy, Planning & Program Development, P.O. Box 2675, Harrisburg, PA 17105. General Office Number 717-772-7900.

peer support services are a reimbursable service for youth and young adults who are at least 14 years of age, effective upon issue of this bulletin.

While other behavioral health services for those under 18 years of age exist, many focus on changing behaviors rather than promoting empowerment, self-determination, understanding, coping skills, and resilience, all of which are critical to the successful transition of youth and young adults across various systems. Due to the unique needs of adolescents transitioning to adulthood, a tailored approach specific to this population is required.

To develop the program standards for peer support, the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) sought input from and consulted with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including young adults, family members, advocates, county personnel, BH-MCO staff, providers and provider organizations.

### **DISCUSSION:**

Based upon the fundamental principles of recovery, PSS are specialized supportive interventions conducted by Certified Peer Specialists (CPS). A CPS is a self-identified individual who currently or previously received behavioral health services who is trained and certified to offer support and assistance in helping others in their recovery and community-integration process. PSS is intended to inspire hope in individuals that recovery is not only possible, but probable. The service is designed to promote empowerment, self-determination, understanding, coping skills, and resiliency through mentoring and service coordination supports that allow individuals with serious mental illness or serious emotional disturbance and co-occurring disorders to achieve personal wellness and cope with the stressors and barriers encountered when recovering from their disabilities.

PSS is designed on the principles of individual choice and the active involvement of individuals in their own recovery process. Peer support practice is guided by the belief that people with mental illness need opportunities to identify and choose for themselves their desired roles with regard to living, learning, working and social interaction in the community.

Individuals receiving PSS participate in and make decisions about therapeutic activities and goals on an ongoing basis. Services are self-directed and person centered with a resiliency and recovery focus. PSS facilitate the development of resiliency and recovery skills. Services are multi-faceted and include, but are not limited to, individual advocacy, psychoeducation, development of natural supports, support of work or other meaningful activity of the individual's choosing, crisis management support, skills training, effective utilization of the service delivery system, and coordination of and linkage to other service providers.

### **OBSOLETE BULLETINS:**

Mental Health Bulletin OMHSAS-09-07: Peer Support Services, Revised.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1 - Provider Handbook for Psychiatric and Partial Hospitalization Services; Section VII – Other Services; Updated Handbook pages, Peer Support Services.