

RCW 71.24.920 Certified peer specialists—Courses of instruction

—Duties. (1) (a) By January 1, 2025, the authority must develop a course of instruction to become a certified peer specialist under chapter 18.420 RCW. The course must be approximately 80 hours in duration and based upon the curriculum offered by the authority in its peer counselor training as of July 23, 2023, as well as additional instruction in the principles of recovery coaching and suicide prevention. The authority shall establish a peer engagement process to receive suggestions regarding subjects to be covered in the 80-hour curriculum beyond those addressed in the peer counselor training curriculum and recovery coaching and suicide prevention curricula, including the cultural appropriateness of the 80-hour training. The education course must be taught by certified peer specialists. The education course must be offered by the authority with sufficient frequency to accommodate the demand for training and the needs of the workforce. The authority must establish multiple configurations for offering the education course, including offering the course as an uninterrupted course with longer class hours held on consecutive days for students seeking accelerated completion of the course and as an extended course with reduced daily class hours, possibly with multiple days between classes, to accommodate students with other commitments. Upon completion of the education course, the student must pass an oral examination administered by the course trainer.

(b) The authority shall develop an expedited course of instruction that consists of only those portions of the curriculum required under (a) of this subsection that exceed the authority's certified peer counselor training curriculum as it exists on July 23, 2023. The expedited training shall focus on assisting persons who completed the authority's certified peer counselor training as it exists on July 23, 2023, to meet the education requirements for certification under RCW 18.420.050.

(2) By January 1, 2025, the authority must develop a training course for certified peer specialists providing supervision to certified peer specialist trainees under RCW 18.420.060.

(3) (a) By July 1, 2025, the authority shall offer a 40-hour specialized training course in peer crisis response services for individuals employed as peers who work with individuals who may be experiencing a behavioral health crisis. When offering the training course, priority for enrollment must be given to certified peer specialists employed in a crisis-related setting, including entities identified in (b) of this subsection. The training shall incorporate best practices for responding to 988 behavioral health crisis line calls, as well as processes for co-response with law enforcement when necessary.

(b) Beginning July 1, 2025, any entity that uses certified peer specialists as peer crisis responders, may only use certified peer specialists who have completed the training course established by (a) of this subsection. A behavioral health agency that uses certified peer specialists to work as peer crisis responders must maintain the records of the completion of the training course for those certified peer specialists who provide these services and make the records available to the state agency for auditing or certification purposes.

(4) By July 1, 2025, the authority shall offer a course designed to inform licensed or certified behavioral health agencies of the benefits of incorporating certified peer specialists and certified peer specialist trainees into their clinical staff and best practices

for incorporating their services. The authority shall encourage entities that hire certified peer specialists and certified peer specialist trainees, including licensed or certified behavioral health agencies, hospitals, primary care offices, and other entities, to have appropriate staff attend the training by making it available in multiple formats.

(5) The authority shall:

(a) Hire clerical, administrative, investigative, and other staff as needed to implement this section to serve as examiners for any practical oral or written examination and assure that the examiners are trained to administer examinations in a culturally appropriate manner and represent the diversity of applicants being tested. The authority shall adopt procedures to allow for appropriate accommodations for persons with a learning disability, other disabilities, and other needs and assure that staff involved in the administration of examinations are trained on those procedures;

(b) Develop oral and written examinations required under this section. The initial examinations shall be adapted from those used by the authority as of July 23, 2023, and modified pursuant to input and comments from the *Washington state peer specialist advisory committee. The authority shall assure that the examinations are culturally appropriate;

(c) Prepare, grade, and administer, or supervise the grading and administration of written examinations for obtaining a certificate;

(d) Approve entities to provide the educational courses required by this section and approve entities to prepare, grade, and administer written examinations for the educational courses required by this section. In establishing approval criteria, the authority shall consider the recommendations of the *Washington state peer specialist advisory committee;

(e) Develop examination preparation materials and make them available to students enrolled in the courses established under this section in multiple formats, including specialized examination preparation support for students with higher barriers to passing the written examination; and

(f) The authority shall administer, through contract, a program to link eligible persons in recovery from behavioral health challenges who are seeking employment as peers with employers seeking to hire peers, including certified peer specialists. The authority must contract for this program with an organization that provides peer workforce development, peer coaching, and other peer supportive services. The contract must require the organization to create and maintain a statewide database which is easily accessible to eligible persons in recovery who are seeking employment as peers and potential employers seeking to hire peers, including certified peer specialists. The program must be fully implemented by July 1, 2024.

(6) For the purposes of this section, the term "peer crisis responder" means a peer specialist certified under chapter 18.420 RCW who has completed the training under subsection (3) of this section whose job involves responding to behavioral health emergencies, including those dispatched through a 988 crisis hotline or the 911 system. [2023 c 469 s 13.]

***Reviser's note:** 2023 c 469 s 4, which established the Washington state certified peer specialist advisory committee, was vetoed by the governor.