



**PROA**

Pennsylvania Recovery  
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## **Strategies for Recruiting and Hiring of *SUD* Certified Recovery Support workers**

Plan first and take the time to define the role of the peer provider within the work environment and how the position relates to clinic services. This must be a thoughtful process with a well-developed plan of action and clearly defined roles and functions so that the position, expectations and duties are clear for the CRS, members of the care team and supervisor.

### **What to look for in a potential hire for a Certified Recovery Support worker:**

- 1. Commitment to learning and growth** - Turnover can be expensive given the investment in training new employees, and centers do not want to hire someone who does not have potential as a long-term worker. Recruiters should look for traits of commitment, including work that they have done to become certified or to develop themselves to prepare for the position. When interviewing candidates, prompt them to speak in detail about what they have to prepare for potential employment and ask them what their long-term goals are. Consider that a person who has a goal to grow and advance in the service field may be a better candidate for hire.
- 2. Enthusiasm and passion for the work** - Look for candidates who are enthusiastic and passionate about recovery and helping people get into recovery. The hiring manager should consider asking questions in order to develop a sense of what motivates the candidate and what their experience is in supporting people in the recovery process. The hiring manager should look for candidates who are upbeat and understand that at times there may be set backs with the persons that they come in contact with and to keep a long term focus.
- 3. Ability to complete tasks and problem solve** - Some centers may request potential new hires to complete a task or work on a test project to better illustrate their skill set. An employer wants to find a candidate who is self-motivated, excited to be an active participant in agency efforts, and willing to put in the extra effort to achieve recovery for those we serve. Candidates who keep their composure while simultaneously showcasing their problem-solving skills may be better prepared to work well under pressure and responsibility that might come along with the position.
- 4. Fit with agency** - When interviewing the CRS, it is important to measure their “fit” in two distinct ways. First, consider their fit for the position itself based on their knowledge, skill capacity and overall abilities to successfully perform the required functions. Second, measure their fit for the organization as a whole by envisioning how they would personally “fit” into the company culture. Employees who feel successful at their position and have a sense of belonging at the agency will often stay longer.
- 5. Ability to work collaboratively with others** - In many situations, CRS workers providing Substance Use Peer Recovery Support Services (SUPRSS) will have to function collaboratively with other agency staff and community entities. Having workers who are skilled at working collaboratively in order to support persons in care is critically important. Some employers may even bring applicants in for a group interview to see how well they interact with a number of people already on staff.
- 6. Ability to be empathetic and engaging** – The role of a CRS is deeply focused on engaging people where they are and instilling a sense of hope and positive regard to support the recovery process. Looking for candidates who have insightful perspectives on recovery and generally upbeat are worth considering.
- 7. Deep appreciation for ethical conduct and transparency** – Some of the issues that CRS will need to navigate in the community and in respect to the coordination of care require that the candidate have insight into

ethical dilemmas and the importance of seeking supervision when issues come up. Hiring managers may consider asking questions about ethical situations or presenting candidates with some examples to address as part of the interview process.

8. **Integrity** – Integrity can be a hallmark of recovery as well as a good employee. Hiring managers should look for honesty and integrity during the interview. Hiring managers should look for self-assured, confident employees who take credit for their work, while also recognizing the efforts from the whole team involved.
9. **Responsiveness** - Being intently responsive shows respect and courtesy towards the hiring managers; a candidate who thoughtfully responds when being addressed, politely greets others, says “thank you” and “you’re welcome,” will set the applicant apart from others who lack proper social interaction skills. It is also a key indicator of how they will interact with those they come in contact with in their position.
10. **Understanding of the local care system and available recovery supports** – Assisting people in connecting to local and regional services as well as formal and informal community recovery supports is fundamental to the work of a CRS conducting substance use recovery support services. Hiring managers should look for candidates who possess an understanding of the care system and how to assist the persons that they are serving navigate it.

### **Recruiting Certified Recovery Support workers**

- Advertising may include a statement that reads: “Position requires lived recovery experience with a substance use condition and current certification as a Certified Recovery Specialist.”
- Recruiting individuals with life experience of having a substance use condition into these positions should consider wording that supports the hiring process, such as “must be willing to self-disclose as a persons with lived substance use recovery” / “must have personal experience with recovery.”
- Recruit qualified individuals by screening them to ensure that they meet the minimum requirements as identified in the job announcements.
- Recruit applicants by posting recovery support job openings with PRO-A at: <http://pro-a.org/category/jobs/> or through the Pennsylvania Certification Board located here: [https://www.pacertboard.org/employment\\_opportunities](https://www.pacertboard.org/employment_opportunities)
- We can assist providers in locating recovery community organizations who may be able to assist in identifying local candidates.

### **Hiring Certified Recovery Support workers**

- Follow universal policies on hiring employees and establish minimum requirements so that hiring a peer is not any different from hiring any other employee.
- Establish a selection committee to interview candidates, select the top candidate, and refer the top candidate’s information to Human Resources for reference checks, background checks, and fingerprinting.
- Add at least two peers who use your services to your selection committee to involve essential stakeholders in the selection process. Others to include on your selection committee are one of your champions, the peer provider supervisor, and anyone who will be coaching or mentoring the peer provider.
- Value the need to attract and hire qualified peers on the same level as other equivalent positions.
- Create a pleasant experience for the new peer provider’s first day of work. For example, assign a buddy to show the peer provider the office layout and make introductions to other staff; provide a space with a desk and office supplies.

**Supervision and Retention of CRSs:** Substance Use Recovery Support Services (SUPRSS) should be conducted under supervision consistent with the core competencies delineated by the Pennsylvania Certification Board Recovery Specialist Supervisor Core Competencies (RSS). The Pennsylvania Certification Board, in conjunction

with PRO-A, conducted a focus group meeting of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to review recovery specialist supervisor competencies. Seven core competencies were established, with each core competency further specifying knowledge, skills, and abilities.

### **Overview of Recovery Specialist Supervisor Core Competencies:**

**Domain A: Supervisor Competence** - *Being up to date on evidence based practice / role modeling good care / being open, empathetic and strengths focused.*

**Domain B: Diversity** - *Examination of roles and functions as a peer service provider in relationship to the perspectives and life experiences of persons served. Addresses Bias / Prejudice and Stereotyping within care environment and within the supervisory relationship.*

**Domain C: Supervisory Relationship** - *Regular engagement with the Supervisee / establishment and maintenance of a safe, supportive environment with supervisee / collaborative focus on care of persons served / focus on growth and development with the Supervisee / bi-directional feedback and accountability / acknowledges and addresses strains and ruptures in the relationship in an open fashion and in regard to parallel process dynamics*

**Domain D: Professionalism** - *Models accountability and open engagement across the service system with all persons served, colleagues and service partner systems.*

**Domain E: Assessment/Evaluation/Feedback** - *Formal and informal performance evaluations / facilities self-evaluation in the supervisee / models seeking and accepting constructive feedback in care environment and within the supervisory relationship.*

**Domain F: Professional Competence / Development** - *Identifies and acknowledges strengths – deficits of supervisee and supports growth and development across all CRS core competencies in a constructive manner to facilitate employment retention and professional growth*

**Domain G: Ethical, Legal, and Regulatory Considerations** - *Explores and develops supervisee in respect to ethical conduct, dual relationships and legal and regulatory environment in which the care is provided.*

### **A note on employee retention in high demand, high stress, human service organizations:**

*Systems that are overtasked and understaffed can create significant challenges in operating in ways that support shared decision making, the physical safety of the workforce and ongoing learning and flexibility across the agency. Agencies operating under such strain may tend to fall back into centralized command and control dynamics. This can create an illusion of efficiency at the “top” yet in reality create strain across the agency as workers feel little “buy in” under what are often very stressful, inflexible work conditions while decreasing the quality of care and increasing employee turnover.*

*Teams and individuals generally function best when there is a strong sense that team members have meaningful input into the care process and some flexibility in how they carry out their work on the individual level. Shared decision making, ongoing opportunities to learn and management strategies and demonstrated concern about the physical safety of workers are fundamentally important. Management should focus on supporting workers to have a say in how they go about their duties. These elements are fundamental to providing quality care, reducing burnout and retaining workers across the workforce. Systems that model what we ask of those we serve are worth the effort to develop and sustain cultures that honor these elements while at the same time improve retention.*

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