



# Peer and Family Advocate Certification Procedure

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**Purpose**

To provide guidance to Peer and Family Advocates (PFAs) for obtaining certification through the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist (PSS) Certification Program.

**How to Apply-  
Initial  
Certification**

Below are the instructions to apply for initial certification:

| Step | Action  |
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| 1    | Supervisor emails the Peer Certification email box (DBH-PeerCertification@dbh.sbcounty.gov) indicating the name of the applicant seeking certification. Applicant will receive a response that will include fee voucher information.  |
| 2    | Once fee voucher information is received, applicant will go to the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) Peer Certification website (link in reference section).  |
| 3    | Applicant will register and create sign in for account (first time only).   |
| 4    | Applicant will view the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Orientation and Self-Assessment Video (30 minutes).  |
| 5    | Applicant will complete and submit application on the CalMHSA Certification website. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant must submit the following along with application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Registration form;</li> <li>○ Proof of age;</li> <li>○ Proof of high school or general equivalency degree (GED);</li> <li>○ Completed application for examination;</li> <li>○ Acknowledgement of Code of Ethics (located in Appendix A of the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Guidelines Standards and Procedures);</li> <li>○ Application fees as identified in fee voucher; and</li> <li>○ Proof of having met the 80-hour Peer Support Specialist training requirement available on the CalMHSA Peer Certification website.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| 6    | Take and successfully pass the exam.  |
| 7    | Notify Peer Certification email box (DBH-PeerCertification@dbh.sbcounty.gov) of test results.   |

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## Peer and Family Advocate Certification Procedure, Continued

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- Code of Ethics** Certified PFAs will be held to a Code of Ethics developed by CalMHSA and DHCS.
- PFAs seeking certification must agree to uphold the Peer Support Specialist Code of Ethics contained in Appendix A of the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Guidelines Standards and Procedures.
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**Biennial Certification Renewal Process**

After initial certification, each certified PFA must renew certification every two (2) years. Applicants must have a current and valid Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification in good standing. Each certification renewal application must include the following:

- The current certification issued by CalMHSA;
- The renewal application form submitted through the CalMHSA certification website;
- Attestation that the certification is in good standing;
- A current, signed copy of the Code of Ethics for Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialists in California, and
- Attest to meeting the twenty (20) hours of continued education requirement, inclusive of the six (6) hours of continued education in law and ethics.
  - Attestations are subject to random audit by CalMHSA

Applications for renewal must be submitted to CalMHSA no less than 60 days prior to date of certification expiration.

- Certified PFA will email the Peer Certification email box (DBH-PeerCertification@dbh.sbcounty.gov) indicating the name of the employee seeking renewal no less than 90 days prior to date of expiration.
  - Certified PFA will receive a response that will include fee voucher information to be used for renewal fees.
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**Staff Master Process**

Certified PFAs must submit a Staff Master Worksheet or Staff Master Update Worksheet upon initial certification and when certification is renewed.

- Staff Master will include:
    - The taxonomy for a Certified PFA (175T00000X);
    - Indicate the Certified Peer and Family Advocate/Certified Peer Support Specialist Discipline/Credential, and
    - Certification effective/expiration date.
  - The Office of Compliance (Compliance) will review the Staff Master submission and verify certification through the CalMHSA Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Registry.
  - Once information on the Staff Master is approved by Compliance, billable claims can be submitted to Medi-Cal via myAvatar.
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## Peer and Family Advocate Certification Procedure, Continued

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### Lapsed Certification

Certified PFAs must maintain an active certification in order to bill Medi-Cal for services. The guidance below is to be followed in order to renew a lapsed certification:

- For certification issued by CalMHSA where the certification has lapsed for less than four (4) years from the date of renewal, applicant shall:
    - Complete a 40-hour refresher training course covering areas of core competencies available on the CalMHSA Peer Support Specialist Certification website;
    - Agree, in writing, to the Code of Ethics for Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialists in California, and
    - Successfully pass the state-approved certification exam.
  - Certificants with a lapsed certification greater than four (4) years from the date the renewal was due, do not qualify for recertification under this section and will need to complete all steps for initial certification.
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### Investigation of Complaints and Corrective Action

All Complaints and Corrective Actions related to certified PFAs will be processed by CalMHSA.

- All Complaints will be completed within 90-calendar days of receipt;
  - The completion date of the investigation or review may be extended if additional time is necessary to complete the process;
  - The Certifying Entity may extend the investigation or review up to 30-calendar days;
  - The person or agency making the complaint or requesting an appeal will be notified in writing through email at least five (5) calendar days from the 90-day investigation timeframe;
  - Should a change in the individuals certification occur as a result of the investigation, the Certificant Registry will be updated within 72 hours of the change in certification status; and
  - PFA may return to good standing following a suspension, revocation or lapsed by following the steps listed in the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Guidelines Standards and Procedures.
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### Related Policy or Procedure

[DBH Standard Practice Manual and Departmental Forms](#)

- Peer and Family Advocate (PFA) Certified and Uncertified Policy (CLP0845)
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### Reference(s)

- Senate Bill No 803 Chapter 150
- Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification Guidelines Standards and Procedures
- CalMHSA Peer Support Specialist Certification website
- Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) § 14045.14
- Behavioral Health Information Notice (BHIN-21-041)