



Peer and Family Advocate – Certified and Uncertified Policy

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Policy

It is the policy of the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) that Peer and Family Advocates (PFAs) rendering services to assist in the prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery process for individuals living with mental health conditions and/or substance use disorders be Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist certified, if rendering specific services as described herein. PFAs who do not complete certification will be able to render applicable services as Uncertified PFAs. This policy outlines which services and service codes a Certified and Uncertified PFA are to use.

Purpose

To outline requirements for certified and uncertified Peer Support Specialists, including Certification Program specifications for peers obtaining certification. Peers seeking to become certified are to see **Peer and Family Advocate Certification Procedure (CLP0845-1)**.

Definition(s)

Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist- DBH title for Peer who is certified through the state [California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA)] to provide and bill certain Medi-Cal services.

Peer- An individual who self-identifies as having lived experience with the process of recovery from behavioral health challenges, substance use disorder, or both, either as a consumer of these services or as the parent or family member.

Peer and Family Advocate (PFA)- DBH job title that when certified is equivalent to Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist. Also, DBH job title for PFAs not certified by CalMHSA.

Certified Peer and Family Advocate Qualifications

The following lists the qualifications for *Certified* Peer and Family Advocates:

- Be at least 18 years of age;
- Possess a high school diploma or equivalent degree;
- Be self-identified as having experience with the process of recovery from mental health challenges or substance use disorder, either as a consumer of these services or as the parent, caregiver, or family member of a consumer;
- Be willing to share their experience;
- Have a strong dedication to recovery;

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Certified Peer and Family Advocate Qualifications,
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- Agree to adhere to a code of ethics;
- Successfully complete the curriculum and training requirements for a Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist, and
- Pass a certification examination approved by DHCS for a Peer Support Specialist.

Certified Peer and Family Advocate Supervisor Qualifications

Supervisors of Certified Peer and Family Advocates must meet one of the following minimum requirements:

If Supervisor is...	Then
Peer Behavioral Health Professional	The individual must obtain Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification, have completed two years of experience working in the behavioral health system, and have completed a DHCS approved peer support supervisory training curriculum;
Non-peer behavioral health professional	The individual must have worked in the behavioral health system for a minimum of two years, and have completed a DHCS approved peer support supervisory training;
Any other position acting in a supervisory role	The individual must have a high school diploma or GED, four years of behavioral health direct service experience that may include peer support services, and have completed an approved peer support supervisory training curriculum.

Specializations

Certified PFAs can obtain additional training in specialized areas through CalMHSA to meet DBH business needs. Specialized trainings are as follows:

- Parent, Caregiver, and Family Member Peers
- Crisis Services
- Forensic (Justice Involved)
- Homelessness

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Certified Peer and Family Advocate Support Services

Certified PFAs, under the direction of a Behavioral Health Professional, can provide the following services:

Billable Procedure Code	Definition
H0025 – Group Services (MH/SUD)	Educational Skill Building Groups: Assist beneficiaries/clients and their families in learning coping mechanisms and problem-solving skills. Case Management and Rehab/ADL services provided in a group setting.
H0038 – Individual Services (MH/SUD)	Engagement: Activities and coaching to encourage and support clients to participate in behavioral health treatment. Therapeutic Activity: A structured non-clinical activity to promote recovery, wellness, self-advocacy, relationship enhancement, development of natural supports, self-awareness and values, and the maintenance of community living skills to support the client’s treatment to attain and maintain recovery within their communities. Case Management, Rehab/ADL and Plan Development services provided to individuals.

Uncertified PFA Billing

Uncertified PFAs, under the direction of a Behavioral Health Professional, can bill for the following services:

Billable Procedure Code	Non-billable Procedure Code	Definition
T1017 (MH)	560	Case Management: Services that assist a client to access needed medical, educational, social, prevocational, vocational, rehabilitative, or other community services.
H2017 (MH)	550	Rehab/ADL: A service activity which includes, but is not limited to assistance in improving, maintaining, or restoring a client’s or group of clients’ functional skills, daily living skills, social and leisure skills, grooming and personal hygiene skills, meal preparation skills, and support resources; and/or medication education.

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**Uncertified
PFA Billing,
continued**

Billable Procedure Code	Non-billable Procedure Code	Definition
H0032 (MH)	520	Plan Development: A service activity that consists of development of client plans, approval of client plans, and/or monitoring of a client’s progress in achieving client plan goals.

Certification

CalMHSA is the Certifying Entity that will oversee the application and exam process and issue certification.

- Initial certification and renewals will occur through the CalMHSA Peer Support Specialist Certification website.
- PFAs can earn certification even if they do not provide Medi-Cal billable services.
- Only PFAs in identified outpatient Medi-Cal eligible programs will bill Medi-Cal.

Certification Information Email: DBH-PeerCertification@dbh.sbcounty.gov

Related Policy or Procedure

DBH Standard Practice Manual and Departmental Forms:

- Peer and Family Advocate (PFA) Certification Procedure (CLP0845-1)

Reference(s)

- Senate Bill No 803 Chapter 150
- CalMHSA Peer Certification website
- Welfare and Institution Code (WIC) § 14045.14
- WIC Division 9, Part 3, Chapter 7 Article 1.4
- Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) Behavioral Health Information Notice (BHIN-21-041)