

## NORTHEAST BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP PEER SPECIALIST CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

**Mission Statement:** The NBHP Code of Ethics, associated Values, and Professional Standards will guide trained Peer Specialists throughout the NBHP service area in their various roles, relationships, and levels of responsibility in which they function professionally.

**Code of Ethics:** A code of ethics is a set of guidelines which are designed to set out acceptable behaviors for members of a particular group, association, or profession.

A code of ethics can:

1. Set a professional standard;
2. Increase confidence in a profession by showing others that members of the profession are committed to following basic ethical guidelines in the course of doing their work;
3. Define acceptable behaviors;
4. Identify core values which underlie the work performed;
5. Set a higher level/standard of practice that sets a company apart from those which may not use a code of ethics;
6. Create accountability among employees through self-evaluation;
7. Establish occupational identity and maturity; and
8. Legitimize the profession of Peer Specialists.

**Ethical Responsibilities:** Ethical behaviors can affect a variety of individuals and organizations. It is important to practice ethical standards to prevent negative impacts and increase successful outcomes. Stakeholders who can be affected positively by high ethical standards include:

- **Consumer:** the individual receiving services from a Peer Specialist to promote their recovery and successful journey to resiliency;
- **Self:** the Peer Specialist engaged in providing services;
- **Colleagues:** agency co-workers and team members and staff from other organizations;
- **Agency:** the organization that the Peer Specialist represents in their work and delivery of services;
- **Community:** other organizations, the general public and larger community in which the Peer Specialist works.

CODE OF ETHICS	VALUES
<p>Peer Specialists will, when appropriate, openly share their stories of hope and recovery and will likewise be able to identify and describe the supports that promote their recovery and resilience.</p> <p>Peer Specialists will practice safe and healthy disclosure about their own experience through general sharing focused on providing hope and direction toward recovery.</p>	<p><b>Authenticity of Voice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Accurately represent your recovery experience and the role from which you are speaking</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Use of Self</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Know yourself and be an example and mentor of recovery; tell your story and know when to use your story appropriately.</i></li> <li>• <i>Promote and instill hope in individuals and families</i></li> </ul>
<p>Peer Specialists will maintain high standards of personal conduct and will also conduct themselves in a manner that fosters their own recovery.</p>	<p><b>Credibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Don't just talk the talk, walk the walk of recovery</i></li> </ul>
<p>Peer Specialists will fairly and accurately represent themselves and their capabilities to individuals they serve and to the community.</p>	<p><b>Credibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Work within the limitations of your experience and role</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Honesty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tell the truth and keep opinion separate from fact; admit when you are wrong</i></li> </ul>
<p>Peer Specialists will keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to recovery and openly share their knowledge.</p>	<p><b>Self-Improvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Keep updated and seek out opportunities to improve skills</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Capability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Improve yourself and give your best</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Proficiency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Be good at your job; provide the best information possible</i></li> </ul>
<p>Peer Specialists engage in self-care activities to maintain and promote their emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being to best meet their professional responsibilities.</p>	<p><b>Recovery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Take care of yourself in order to take care of others</i></li> <li>• <i>Be an example and mentor of recovery</i></li> </ul>

CODE OF ETHICS	VALUES
Peer Specialists will not abuse substances under any circumstances.	<b>Recovery</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Be an example and mentor of recovery</i></li> </ul>
Peer Specialists will provide services to meet the identified needs of the individuals they serve as indicated within their service plan. Peer Specialists will avoid providing services that are unnecessary or not capable of producing the desired effect.	<b>Integrity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Be consistent; use time and resources effectively and efficiently</i></li> </ul>
Peer Specialists shall only provide service and support within work hours and locations approved by agency.	<b>Integrity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Be consistent; use time and resources effectively and efficiently</i></li> </ul> <b>Protection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Establish healthy boundaries; reduce risk of dual relationships</i></li> </ul>
Peer Specialists will be guided by the principle of self-determination for all. The primary responsibility of Peer Specialists is to help individuals they serve achieve <b>their</b> goals, based upon <b>their</b> needs and wants.	<b>Dignity and Worth of Person</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Everyone has value; choice is essential to recovery</i></li> </ul> <b>Recovery</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>All services hinge on personal recovery</i></li> </ul>
Peer Specialists will advocate for individuals they serve to make their own decisions when working with all organizations and professionals.	<b>Advocacy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Enhance informed choice and shared decision making</i></li> <li>• <i>Be a voice for the voiceless and empower others to speak</i></li> </ul> <b>Hope</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Focus on strengths, assets, and possibilities</i></li> </ul> <b>Autonomy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Recovery is voluntary and is a choice</i></li> </ul>
Peer Specialists will advocate for the full involvement of individuals they serve into the communities of their choice and will promote the value of these individuals to those communities. Peer Specialists will be directed by the knowledge that all individuals have the right to live in a safe and least restrictive environment.	<b>Advocacy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Enhance choice and shared decision making</i></li> <li>• <i>Be a voice for the voiceless and empower others to speak</i></li> </ul>

CODE OF ETHICS	VALUES
Peer Specialists will not practice, condone, facilitate or collaborate in any form of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, mental or physical disability, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition or state that is protected under Federal, State or local law.	<p>Non Discrimination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>No room for prejudices or judgments; everyone has the right to recovery; respect cultural diversity</i></li> </ul> <p>Dignity and Respect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Honor each person's potential; express compassion</i></li> </ul>
Peer Specialists will never intimidate, threaten, harass, use undue influence, physical force or verbal abuse, or make unwarranted promises of benefits to the individuals they serve.	<p>Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Do not exploit</i></li> </ul>
Peer Specialists will avoid relationships or commitments that conflict with the interests of individuals they serve, impair professional judgment, imply a conflict of interest, or create risk of harm to individuals they serve. When dual relationships are unavoidable, it is the responsibility of the Peer Specialist to conduct himself/herself in a way that does not jeopardize the integrity of the helping relationship.	<p>Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Avoid conflicts of interest; establish healthy and safe boundaries</i></li> <li>• <i>Seek supervision to problem solve</i></li> </ul>
Peer Specialists will never engage in romantic or sexual/intimate activities with the individuals they serve. Peer Specialists will not provide services to individuals with whom they have had a prior romantic or sexual relationship.	<p>Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Do not exploit; do no harm and avoid conflicts of interest</i></li> </ul>
Peer Specialists will never use derogatory language in their communications, whether written or verbal, to or about individuals they serve.	<p>Respect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Do not gossip; be considerate and thoughtful of consequences</i></li> </ul> <p>Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Protect others and yourself</i></li> </ul>
Peer Specialists will not accept gifts of significant value from individuals they serve. Peer Specialists do not loan, give, or receive money or payment for any services to, or from, individuals they serve.	<p>Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Protect others and yourself; do not exploit and avoid conflicts of interest</i></li> </ul>

CODE OF ETHICS	VALUES
Peer Specialists will, at all times, respect the rights, dignity, privacy and confidentiality of those they support. Peer Specialists will respect confidential information shared by colleagues in the course of their professional relationships and interactions.	<p>Dignity and Respect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Use discretion; respect privacy and don't gossip</i></li> </ul> <p>Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Protect others and do no harm</i></li> </ul>
Peer Specialists have a duty to inform appropriate persons when disclosure is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to an individual they are serving or other identifiable person. In all instances, Peer Specialists should disclose the least amount of confidential information necessary to achieve the desired purpose.	<p>Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Protect others and yourself; do no harm</i></li> </ul>
Peer Specialists will avoid negative criticism of colleagues in communicating with individuals they serve and other professionals.	<p>Professionalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Be supportive of colleagues; maintain a safe and healthy work environment</i></li> </ul>

**NBHP Code of Ethics and related Values** are adapted from the following resources:

- **Georgia Certified Peer Specialist Project**, “Code of Ethics”
- **Ethical Guidelines for the Delivery of Peer-based Recovery Support Services**, William L. White and PRO-ACT Ethics Workgroup.
- **Michigan Certified Peer Specialists**, “Code of Ethics”
- **Wisconsin Association of Peer Specialists, Inc.**, “WISCONSIN PEER SPECIALIST CODE OF CONDUCT”
- **Colorado Health Partnerships**, “Code of Ethics, Peer Support Specialists”
- **National Association of Social Workers**, “Code of Ethics”
- **National Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services**, “CODE OF ETHICS For Psychiatric Rehabilitation Practitioners”

# **NBHP Professional Standards for Peer Specialists**

The Peer Specialist will know and practice these Standards.

## **1. SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND THE ROLE OF THE PEER-SPECIALIST**

- Use his or her own experience to inspire the consumer while supporting his or her own recovery.
- Engage the consumer in a trauma-free way.
- Recognize the consumer's strengths and personal challenges and emphasize building on the positive.

## **2. ETHICS AND BOUNDARIES**

- Follow the NBHP Code of Ethics for Peer Specialists.
- Understand and maintain confidentiality.
- Understand and maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Be knowledgeable of and comply with employer's policies and procedures.
- Recognize when to seek guidance or consultation from a direct supervisor.

## **3. CULTURAL AWARENESS**

- Respect other cultures, races, religions, and sexual orientations.

## **4. ADVOCACY AND ABILITY TO LOCATE INFORMATION**

- Have fundamental knowledge of the mental health and substance abuse system in Colorado.
- Have fundamental knowledge of mental health conditions, treatments, services, consumer rights, and supports.
- Know how to find information about benefit programs, community resources, the mental health and substance abuse systems, mental health conditions, treatments, services, consumer rights, and supports.
- Advocate for the consumer.
- Educate and support the consumer to be a self-advocate.

## **5. TEAMWORK**

- Work collaboratively and participate on a team.
- Listen and communicate clearly.
- Observe and recognize when to report behavioral changes to appropriate people.
- Be solution focused, maintaining respect for multiple points of view, when addressing problems.

## **6. CONSUMER CHOICE AND EMPOWERMENT**

- Believe in empowerment, and that growth, change, and overcoming stigma are possible.
- Instill hope through empowerment, including, but not limited to education, encouragement, and motivation.
- Understand and practice person-centered planning that values informed consumer choice and shared decision-making.
- Teach conflict resolution and problem-solving skills as a means to empowerment.

## **7. CRISIS AND SAFETY**

- Know how to identify and work with people in crisis and make referrals.
- Know how to keep self and others safe during and after a crisis.

## **8. RECOVERY**

- Understand the process of recovery and how to pass on recovery-related information and tools to the consumer.
- Understand the positive and negative impact of life events, such as spirituality, sexuality, grief and loss, stigma, and trauma on recovery.

**NBHP Professional Standards for Peer Specialists** has been adapted from the Wisconsin Association of Peer Specialists, Inc., “Domains and Objectives.”