

MHA Affiliates and the National Certified Peer Specialist (NCPS) Certification

MHA, in partnership with the Florida Certification Board, developed the National Certified Peer Specialist (NCPS) certification, the first national advanced peer specialist certification. The NCPS recognizes peers with the lived experience, training, and job experience to work in both public and private whole health practices.

As an advanced certification, it is designed to build upon and enhance traditional peer specialist training and core competencies upheld by current programs and to add the additional competencies necessary to enable peers to work alongside health care teams. Additionally, by creating a national standard, the NCPS addresses concerns from national payers, like Medicare and commercial insurance, about having a uniform standard across the country.

Affiliate Partnership Opportunities:

1. Become an NCPS examination testing site
2. Become an approved training for the NCPS
3. Offer NCPS Master Classes training to peers in your community
4. Partner with us on peer pilot programs
5. Partner with us on peer support policy advocacy

1. Become an NCPS examination testing site

The NCPS is an examination-based training. Applicants have the option to take the examination online using our virtual proctoring software or in-person at [approved affiliate locations](#).

Serving as a testing site for the NCPS exam is a great way to get more engaged with the local peer community, promote career advancement and growth for peer support specialists, and earn a little money. All you need is a testing proctor, a desk, and a computer with internet access. The proctor training takes about 45 minutes and is available online at no cost to affiliates. For each person testing, we offer \$25 and affiliates may also charge a \$10-20 testing site fee.

2. Offer NCPS Master Classes training to peers in your community

Training requirements for the NCPS include previous state certification **OR** the completion of an [MHA-approved training](#). By becoming an approved training for the NCPS examination, organizations can set themselves apart as having an exceptional training that meets the standards set forth by the first national advanced peer specialist certification.

A comprehensive guide to the core competencies that must be covered by trainings can be found [here](#). MHA will review existing trainings and work with affiliates to determine what modifications they might make to qualify as an approved training.

3. Offer NCPS Master Classes training to peers in your community

To help prepare peers for the NCPS exam, we offer MHA affiliates a free NCPS Master Classes Train-the-Trainer course.

Affiliate-employed peers who qualify for the NCPS certification attend virtual trainings on topics in peer support such as:

- Mentoring, Shared Learning, Relationship Building, and Story Telling
- Peer Support and the Impact of Trauma
- Foundations of Health Care Systems
- Enhanced Goal-Setting
- Activation and Self-Management
- Whole Health Peer Support

Affiliates can then offer the training (\$200-\$250 value) to peers in their community who are interested in the NCPS certification. In exchange for the trainings, affiliates will have an agreed upon number of peers certified over the following year.

4. Partner with us on peer pilot programs

A driving factor behind the development of the NCPS was the expansion of peers into commercial insurance and private health systems. To support this goal, MHA partners with local affiliates to pilot peer programs with local settings or payers.

Typically, MHA contracts with the organizations and subcontracts with the affiliate. MHA prepares the organization and employees for the introduction of peers and provides ongoing technical assistance and support. Affiliates directly employ and supervise the peers involved in the pilot. At the end of the pilot, the contract is then turned over to the affiliate.

So far, we have run pilots with Hospital Corporations of America and Mental Health Association of Palm Beach County, and Kaiser Permanente and Mental Health America of Northern California. Both pilots far met and exceeded our anticipated goals. In fact, with just two peers, our pilot in Northern California resulting in over one million dollars in savings. The program has since gone from two to eight peers.

We are currently in discussion with both health systems and payers, and all of our pilots have stemmed from having champions in the existing organizations. If your affiliate has a connection with a local health system or payer who is interested in peer support, this style of pilot program is a great option to create opportunities with your existing or potential peer employees.

5. Partner with us on peer support policy advocacy

Key to the success of the certification is acknowledgement of and investment in the peer workforce and the NCPS by states, the federal government, and payers. We have developed a number of policy recommendations, appropriations recommendations, and state legislative language to be used by MHA national staff, affiliates, and partners.

Through MHA's Regional Policy Council and state advocacy, we are working with affiliates to coordinate the promotion of peers and the certification at all levels.