

Peer support services

Empire BlueCross BlueShield HealthPlus (Empire) believes those with chronic mental health and substance use disorders can benefit from those who have shared in those experiences and improve their road to successful outcomes through collaboration with peers who have worked hard to develop skills and community contacts to provide a team of support.

Referrals to helpful community resources can be complex and difficult to access. The coordination of those types of services can be facilitated by a peer support specialist.



An Anthem Company

Experience matters

Empire and its affiliates are experienced in offering peer support services in six markets. We tailor our peer support programs differently for each state and expand peer support services to foster recovery. We achieve this through a comprehensive coordination process aimed at improving health outcomes for members.

What is peer support?

- Mental Health America (MHA) defines peer support as the process of giving and receiving encouragement and assistance to achieve long-term recovery.
- Peers offer emotional support, share knowledge, teach skills, provide practical assistance, and connect people with other resources, opportunities and communities.
- Peers support others due to their shared experience of having lived with mental illness. Peers are recovery-oriented, person-centered, relationship focused and trauma-informed.
- Peer support is adaptable to many recovery modalities and service settings.

What is the role of a peer?

- Advocating for people in recovery
- Sharing resources and building skills
- Building community and relationships
- Leading recovery groups
- Mentoring and assisting members in setting their goals

Peer support — evidence of success

Multiple studies have shown evidence that peer support leads to successful recovery outcomes:

- Working with peers connected to local community resources significantly increases the likelihood of engagement with primary medical care.¹
- Peer support interventions have shown to be more effective in reducing symptoms of depression than treatment as usual.²
- Individuals who work as peer supporters report developing more skills and confidence related to their own recovery.³
- MHA's peer run Social Self-Directed Care, a social inclusion program, reduced rehospitalization rates by over 90%.⁴
- Participants assigned a peer mentor had significantly fewer rehospitalizations and fewer hospital days.⁵

If you have questions or need assistance, call Provider Services at **1-800-450-8753**; we're glad to help you get our members this important kind of care.



- 1 Griswold, K. S., Pastore, P. A., Homish, G. G. and Leonard, K. E. "A randomized trial: Are care navigators effective in connecting patients to primary care after psychiatric crisis?," *Community Mental Health Journal* 46 (2010): 398-402.
- 2 Pfeiffer, P., Heisler, M., Piette, J., Rogers, M. and Valenstein, M. "Efficacy of peer support interventions for depression: A meta-analysis," *General Hospital Psychiatry* 33, no. 1 (2010): 29-36.
- 3 Salzer, M., Darr, N., Calhoun, G., Boyer, W., Loss, R., Goessel, J. Brusilovskiy, E. "Benefits of working as a certified peer specialist: Results from a statewide survey," *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal* 36, no.3 (2013): 219-221. doi: 10.1037/prj0000016
- 4 Mental Health America, "It's My Life: Social Self-Directed Care" (2015).
- 5 Sledge, W., Lawless, M., Sells, D., Wieland, M., O'Connell, M. and Davidson, L. "Effectiveness of Peer Support in Reducing Readmissions of Persons With Multiple Psychiatric Hospitalizations," *Psychiatric Services* 62, no. 5 (2011): 541-544.

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