



Date: January 9, 2017

To: Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities Administrators, Managed Care Organizations
Pennsylvania Peer Support Service Agency Directors

From: Director Sherry Peters *SP*
Bureau of Policy, Planning and Program Development, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Subject: Peer Support Services for Individuals who are deaf, American Sign Language Users and have Mental Health Challenges

Dear Colleagues in Peer Support Services:

Over the past two years the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) has been working with a statewide workgroup to address the unmet needs of individuals who are deaf, American Sign Language (ASL) users, and have mental health challenges. The workgroup identified peer support services (PSS) as a priority service to benefit the deaf ASL user community diagnosed with mental illness. The workgroup requested that OMHSAS adapt Peer Specialist training and certification for approved candidates from the deaf community. To achieve that request, one of the Department approved CPS training vendors has recently completed successful modifications to the two week 75 hour training curriculum.

The next steps to provide PSS to this population will include the recruitment and selection of up to 15 CPS candidates from the deaf community as well as identifying provider agencies to employ the newly trained peers. Tuition and follow along supports for each approved CPS candidate may be paid for by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) in partnership with OMHSAS. In order for any candidate to receive this funding, he/she must be determined eligible to receive OVR services. If there are questions about OVR services and eligibility, please contact Randy Loss at rloss@pa.gov or 717-787-5136 with any questions or concerns.

OMHSAS is requesting a commitment from your county, MCO organization or PSS agency to provide a supervised internship followed by a permanent hire of these CPS candidates. OVR will work with your agency and the CPS candidate to determine the appropriate length of time that a paid internship will be approved.

Provider Agencies interested in this opportunity will need to work with their local OVR in order to negotiate and receive reimbursement during the internship period. An OVR 235: On the Job (OJT) letter of agreement is enclosed for your review. This document would be the mechanism OVR would use to set up parameters for an internship with your agency. Information on how to contact the regional OVR office in your area can be found at: <http://www.dli.pa.gov/Individuals/Disability-Services/ovr/Pages/OVR-Office-Directory.aspx>

Please direct any questions to Ginny Mastrine at ymastrine@pa.gov or 717-772-7926.