

Neutral Testimony

HB 2314 - Directing the secretary for aging and disability services to expand and establish peer support specialist certifications and the secretary for health and environment to pursue a Medicaid code for telehealth services provided by peer support specialists

House Social Services Budget Committee

Thursday, February 13, 2025

Chairman Buehler and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2314. The bill enshrines in statute a process for peer support certification and the requirements that KDADS must make in response to the legislation. A list of requirements include:

- Requires a background check for certification
- Establish standards for peer support specialist certification and placing a limit on the billable hours each level can provide per week
- Directs the secretary for Health and Environment to pursue a Medicaid code for telehealth services provided by a peer support specialist
- Provides limits on number of peer support hours an individual can receive per year
- Peer support specialist supervision may be performed by non-licensed professional

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), “peer support services can effectively extend the reach of treatment beyond the clinical setting into the everyday environment of those seeking a successful, sustained recovery process. Additionally, these individuals are an instrumental part of a multidisciplinary team for organizations serving Kansans who are experiencing substance use or mental health disorders. By providing these services they support individuals in a way that may prevent a higher level of care.”

In response to the overwhelming need for peer support services in the mental and behavioral health continuum, KDADS has created a process for peer support certification. In Kansas, peer support services can be provided through organizations and providers with physician oversight, are eligible to be enrolled as a Kansas Medicaid Provider, and contracted with a Managed Care Organization. In order for an individual to receive peer support services, a licensed professional must deem it medically necessary to be part of their treatment plan. Currently, peer support services have no cap or limit to billable hours for peer support services due to the response from stakeholders on the need for these services. Telehealth is also an allowable service method for instances of connectivity and accessibility issues.

Peer support services are available to individuals across the lifespan with the three different disciplines. Since Kansas has adopted a peer certification, standards have been put in place for how an individual becomes certified as a peer specialist (mental health), peer mentor (substance use disorder), and a peer support specialist (parent peer). Currently, there are two levels of certification for each of these disciplines: level I and level II. The process is the same for becoming a peer mentor and a peer support

specialist, except that a peer specialist must complete an online Individualized Education Plan (IEP) training through Families Together, following their level I training.

For level I peer certification, the training is online and self-paced, and once they have completed their training, they are able to apply to become a Kansas Certified Peer Specialist in Training, a Kansas Certified Peer Mentor in Training, or a Kansas Certified Parent Peer Support Specialist in Training depending on service specialty. Under their certification, the individual can provide up to 20 hours of billable services per week under the supervision requirements. This certification is valid for one year from the date it is issued.

Within a year of being certified as a level I peer support but not before completing 90 days of supervision, the individual must complete the level II training and make an application for certification. Level II training is a two and a half day long training that is offered up to four times per year in various locations across the state and is also held virtually as well. Upon certification, this individual may provide up to 30 billable hours of peer support services per week under the required supervision. Level I training is a requirement for all individuals before they are able to sit for level II training.

Supervision of these certifications is done by a licensed mental health professional. Supervisors are required to take a two-part supervision training. Part 1 is for all disciplines, while part 2 is separated into different categories depending upon the certification held by the peer they are supervising. Peer supervisors are not able to bill for peer support services until they have completed the KDADS application and required documents along with receiving an approval letter from KDADS in addition to completing all the Kansas Certified Peer Specialist trainings that are specific to their disciplines.

Regarding background checks for certification, SAMHSA provides recommendations for states to follow. One of the recommendations is to have background checks be the responsibility of the hiring organization rather than it be part of the certification process at the state level. Mostly, this is to avoid taking away control of employers being able to make decisions at the local level with their business and organization. Additionally, if KDADS were to be instructed to start instituting background checks in compliance with this piece of legislation, it is estimated to require the agency 5-7 new full-time employees to respond to the need and would create a fiscal impact per background check.

Thank you for giving KDADS the opportunity to provide testimony on this piece of legislation, and I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Respectfully,

Drew Adkins
Commissioner, Behavioral Health Services
Kansas Department for Aging & Disability Services