

# Title: Peer Provider Workforce in Behavioral Health: A Landscape Analysis

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**Issue:** While peer providers have traditionally worked as volunteers, changes in mental health (MH) and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment and recognition of the importance of long-term recovery support have led to a professionalization of this role with formalized training and certification, as well as paid employment.

**Methods:** This landscape analysis reviews issues attendant to the peer provider role and workforce in MH and SUD support and treatment services. We defined peer provider roles and searched peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed literature.

**Findings:** Peer providers work in a variety of roles and settings; federal and state funding for them has increased in recent years. Most published studies indicate positive outcomes for peer support programs; however, recent meta-analyses call into question the rigor of this research.

**Discussion:** Further research should explore the impacts of health care reform, Medicaid expansion, and managed care on: (1) the number of peer providers employed, (2) the viability and mission of peer-run organizations, and (3) the culture of treatment organizations employing peers. State government has an important role to play in developing and facilitating the adoption of recovery-oriented systems of care, including peer support.

**Key Words:** peer provider workforce

**HWRC Website Link:** <http://healthworkforce.ucsf.edu/publication/peer-provider-workforce-behavioral-health-landscape-analysis>