

House Bill 657

By: Representatives Hagan of the 156th, Dempsey of the 13th, Cameron of the 1st, Buckner of the 137th, Willis of the 55th, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Title 37 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to mental health, so
2 as to provide for the qualifications of recovery community organizations for substance use;
3 to provide for definitions; to provide for the certification of peer specialists; to provide for
4 the approval of certification training bodies; to designate one state-wide recovery community
5 organization; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other
6 purposes.

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

8 **SECTION 1.**

9 Title 37 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to mental health, is amended in
10 Chapter 1, relating to governing and regulation of mental health, by adding a new Code
11 section to read as follows:

12 "37-1-8.

13 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

14 (1) 'Certification training body' means an entity approved by the department to provide
15 training and testing for certified peer specialists in accordance with department policy.

16 (2) 'Certified peer specialist' means an individual who is trained and certified to provide
17 ongoing support to individuals and their families receiving mental health or substance use
18 recovery supports and services. Such individual works from the perspective of his or her
19 lived experience and helps build environments conducive to recovery, promoting hope,
20 personal responsibility, empowerment, education, and self-determination in the
21 communities served. Such term means the following certified peer specialist designations
22 recognized by the department:

23 (A) Certified Peer Specialist-Mental Health or CPS-MH, a certified peer specialist who
24 has lived experience with a mental health condition and is practicing recovery related
25 to such condition;

26 (B) Certified Peer Specialist-Addictive Disease or CPS-AD, a certified peer specialist
27 who has lived experience with an addictive disease and is practicing recovery related
28 to such disease;

29 (C) Certified Peer Specialist-Youth or CPS-Y, a certified peer specialist between the
30 ages of 18 and 30 who has lived experience with a mental health condition or substance
31 use disorder and is practicing recovery related to such condition or disorder;

32 (D) Certified Peer Specialist-Parent or CPS-P, a certified peer specialist who is a parent
33 or legal guardian who has lived experience raising a young person with either a mental
34 health condition or substance use disorder and has supported such person in recovery,
35 provided that such parent or legal guardian has a permanent relationship of at least three
36 years with such person; and

37 (E) Other ancillary peer credentials, such as Whole Health and Wellness Coach or
38 Forensic Peer Mentors, which may be added to a certified peer specialist designation
39 as determined by the department only.

40 (3) 'Peer support services' means services rendered to individuals in need of support that
41 are provided by a certified peer specialist. Such term includes, but is not limited to,
42 individual peer recovery coaching, group peer check-ins, advocacy, mutual aid support

43 groups, connection to treatment services, harm reduction services, connection to
44 medication for substance use disorder or alcohol use disorder, housing support,
45 transportation support, food insecurity support, acquiring identification, job placement,
46 or connections to other resources within the community.

47 (4) 'Recovery community organization for substance use' means an independent
48 nonprofit organization led and governed by representatives of local communities of
49 recovery from substance use disorders that helps individuals, families, and communities
50 in increasing access to peer support services, advocacy efforts for recovery, and
51 community education around addiction and recovery.

52 (5) 'State-wide recovery community organization' means the one organization designated
53 by the department to work with communities and organizations in determining
54 recognition as a local recovery community organization for substance use.

55 (b) Peer specialists working in department services are required to be certified by the
56 department.

57 (c) Only the department shall certify individuals completing training and testing provided
58 by certification training bodies.

59 (d) Recovery community organizations for substance use shall:

60 (1) Have a mission primarily focused on supporting recovery from substance use
61 disorders and related challenges but may support individuals in all forms of recovery;

62 (2) Be a nonprofit organization or established under a nonprofit organization;

63 (3) Have an operating board, a majority of whose members shall be in recovery from
64 substance use disorders, or have an advisory board, a majority of whose members shall
65 be in recovery from substance use disorders and the remainder shall be members of the
66 recovery community, including people in recovery, family members of those affected by
67 addiction, and recovery allies and advocates;

68 (4) Provide nonclinical peer support services;

69 (5) Employ certified peer specialists to provide peer support services;

70 (6) Be supportive of all pathways to recovery, including the utilization of medication for
71 substance use disorders or alcohol use disorders and harm reduction services;
72 (7) Be accountable to the recovery community through participatory processes that
73 promote involvement, engagement, and consultation of people in recovery and their
74 families, friends, and allies; and
75 (8) Communicate and cooperate with the state-wide recovery community organization
76 and the department.
77 (e) Subject to appropriations, the department shall designate a state-wide recovery
78 community organization to act as the coordinator for the state-wide recovery community
79 organization network."

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SECTION 2.

81 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.