

# New York State Certified Peer Worker in HIV, Hepatitis C or Harm Reduction

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who is eligible for certification?

In order to be eligible for certification as a New York State Certified Peer Worker in HIV, Hepatitis C (Hep-C) or Harm Reduction, a person must have relevant lived experience. For the HIV track, a person must have the experience of living with HIV. For the Hep C track, a person must have the experience of living with Hep-C. People who are not currently living with Hep-C because they were cured by treatment are also eligible for certification. For the Harm Reduction track, an individual must have lived experience of substance use, and either: 1) experience accessing harm reduction services from a syringe services program or opioid overdose prevention program, or 2) complete a practicum working in a syringe services program or opioid overdose prevention program. Individuals who are “affected” are not eligible for certification. It is expected that individuals seeking certification would be comfortable strategically sharing their health status.

### What is required of me to become certified?

- Completion of Foundational Training (optional, but recommended)
- 90 hours total of training, **in any order**, including the 3-day Pre-Certification Course
- Select at least one of the specialization tracks: HIV, Hep C or Harm Reduction
- Completion of a 500-hour work practicum carrying out the specific competencies related to your certification track (HIV, Hep-C or Harm Reduction)
- Pass the on-line Knowledge Assessment with a score of 75% or better
- Prepare a professional resume
- Complete the online application, including developing a statement of experience
- Sign and uphold the Code of Ethics – Note: Peer Workers seeking certification are expected to follow the code of ethics, including maintaining appropriate conduct during trainings and completing the on-line application in an honest manner
- Receive final approval from the NYS Peer Certification Review Board
- Complete a minimum of 10 training hours per year to maintain certification

### How can I access trainings and other Peer Certification related resources?

You may sign up for Peer Worker Trainings by visiting <http://hivtrainingny.org> and creating an account if you do not already have one. You will find a copy of the NYS Certified Peer Worker Course Catalogue, Supervisor Evaluation and other helpful resources that list required and specialized courses and information about how to access the trainings that are not available through this website. We encourage you to begin taking courses as soon as possible.

Anyone can register for any of the trainings listed on [www.hivtrainingny.org](http://www.hivtrainingny.org), however, only peer workers actively engaged in certification may take the 3-day Pre-Certification Course. To sign up for the 3-day Pre-Certification Course (which is a required course) you must call Stephen Sebor at 631.444.3209

#### **Does this certification mean I will get a job?**

Becoming certified does not guarantee a job. The AIDS Institute has created the Peer Worker Employment Opportunities listserv. This listserv sends out peer worker job opportunity announcements. If you sign up to be on the listserv you will receive these announcements in your e-mail. Sign up for the listserv by typing your e-mail in the sign-up box at the bottom of any page at <http://hivtrainingny.org>.

#### **I need a certain course to complete my certification, but I can't find it offered. Help!**

Please call 631-444.3209 and we will do our best to help find the course you need.

#### **I've already taken some of the required courses for certification. Do I have to take them again?**

If you attended any of the required courses listed on <http://hivtrainingny.org> after January 1, 2014, your courses will be stored in your account and you will not need to retake them. If you have already taken any of the required courses that are not available through our website (LTI Peer Mentor Training, SafeTALK, or Positive Self-Management Training or equivalent trainings through NYC Department of Health T-TAP), you will need to upload a certificate of documentation to your online peer certification application.

#### **I'm on the waitlist for a course I need for peer certification. Help!**

Please call 631-444-3209 and we will do our best to try to get you into that course.

#### **What should I know about the 500-hour practicum?**

The practicum is an opportunity to practice serving as a peer worker. The practicum must involve your carrying out the competencies of the track you select for certification, i.e. HIV, Hep C or Harm Reduction. You must have a supervisor who is overseeing this work. The supervisor should give you regular feedback and should complete the Supervisor Evaluation at some point in the middle of your practicum (this should not be submitted) and at the end of the practicum. The final evaluation should be uploaded into your application after you and the supervisor sign it. In order to become certified, you must earn a supervisor rating of "meets" or "making progress" for all 12 general competencies and "meets" for at least 25 specialized competencies in your certification track.

**What if I've already been working or volunteering as a peer worker? Does that count?**

Experience as a peer worker after January 1, 2014 may be able to count toward your required 500-hour practicum. If you have questions about your prior experience, please call Stephen Sebor at 631.444.3209.

**What should I expect from the knowledge exam?**

The 30-question, straight-forward, case-based exam is taken online. You must receive a score of 75% or better to pass. You will have 60 minutes per attempt to complete the exam. If you do not pass, you may re-take the exam up to three times per day until you do pass it. A comprehensive study guide has been developed for all 3 tracks and is available on <http://hivtrainingny.org>. The study guide covers everything expected of a peer worker to know to pass the exam, but not everything in the study guide will be asked about on the exam.

**When can I start an application?**

You may start your application at any time during your certification process at <http://hivtrainingny.org> on the Peer Certification tab. You can build as you go and submit the application once you have completed all requirements.

**I have questions about the Supervisor Evaluation or the on-line application. Help!**

For questions about the Supervisor Evaluation or on-line application process, call Stephen Sebor at 631.444.3209 or e-mail [stephen.sebor@stonybrook.edu](mailto:stephen.sebor@stonybrook.edu).

**I have lived experience in more than one track (HIV/HCV/Harm Reduction). Can I choose to specialize in more than one track?**

Yes, you can. You will need 22 specialized track-specific credit hours and must complete a 2<sup>nd</sup> (or 3<sup>rd</sup>) exam specific to your track. Some trainings count for multiple specializations, so it may take less than another 22 hours of coursework to complete a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> track.

**I'm an LTI Mentor. Does this experience count towards my practicum?**

No, LTI Peer Mentorship does not count as employment or towards your practicum. You must be employed as a peer worker at an outside agency and that agency will act as your "sponsor." The LTI Peer Mentor Training, however, will count towards your course hour requirements for certification.

**Is there funding to support travel, hotels, meals, etc. for peer workers seeking certification?**

Individuals seeking certification are encouraged to have an agency "sponsor". In some cases, the agency will help support the peer worker's travel. In cases where the sponsoring agency has limited funds, there are very limited resources available from the AIDS Institute to support travel

to trainings but this is only available to individuals who are just a few courses away from completing the certification process. Please write to [stephen.sebor@stonybrook.edu](mailto:stephen.sebor@stonybrook.edu) to inquire.

**Is there training to help agencies implement or strengthen their peer program?**

Yes, the AIDS Institute recognizes the need to support agencies and program leaders in the process of implementing peer-delivered services. A capacity building series is available on <http://hivtrainingny.org>. There are webinars for agency upper-level leaders and program supervisors, as well as a 2-day in person training for supervisors of peer workers.

**Additional Questions or Need Assistance? Want to register for the Peer Worker Pre-Certification Course?** Call Stephen Sebor at 631-444-3209 or e-mail [stephen.sebor@stonybrook.edu](mailto:stephen.sebor@stonybrook.edu).