New York State AIDS Institute Certified Peer Worker FAQs

Who is eligible for certification?
The New York State (NYS) Department of Health (DOH) AI defines an AI Peer Worker as someone who has the shared lived experience of living with HIV/AIDS, living with Hep C or having experience accessing Harm Reduction services. Individuals who are “affected” are not eligible for AI Peer Certification. We would expect that peer workers are open and comfortable strategically sharing their health status.

What is required of me to be certified?
- Completion of Statement of Lived Experience, and optional Foundational Training program
- 90 hours total of training, in any order, including the 3-day Pre-Certification Course
- Select at least one specialization in HIV, Hep C or Harm Reduction
- Complete a 500 hour work practicum with a successful Supervisor Evaluation
- Pass a Knowledge Assessment with a score of 75% or better
- Sign and uphold the Code of Ethics
- Complete the online application, including a resume and
- Receive final approval from a Certifying Body & Peer Review Board
- Complete a minimum of 10 training hours per year to maintain certification

Peer Workers must have a practicum, supervisor evaluation and job roles and responsibilities that align with the Core Competencies of their specific track.

How can I access trainings and other Peer Certification related resources?
You may sign up for Peer Worker Trainings by visiting our website: http://hivtrainingny.org and create an account if you do not already have one. You will find a copy of our AI Certified Peer Worker Course Catalogue, Supervisor Evaluation and other helpful resources that lists required and specialized courses and info on how to access the trainings that are not available through our website. We encourage you begin taking courses as soon as possible.

FYI- You do not have to become certified to take the trainings on hivtrainingny.org or in the AI Peer Worker Certification Course Catalogue. These trainings are offered free of charge to anyone, certified peer or not, with the only exception being the 3-day Pre-Certification Course.

Please note, however, to sign up for the 3-day Pre-Certification Course that is required of all peer workers, you must call Stephen Sebor at 631.444.3209

FYI- Peer Workers in the process of AI Certification are expected to uphold appropriate conduct during trainings, as outlined during the opening ground rules of each training.

So does this certification mean I will get a job?
Becoming certified does not guarantee a job. However, AI encourages agencies to “sponsor” a peer worker for a position, with the intention of employing him/her once they’ve successfully completed all certification requirements. Alternatively, a potential peer worker can seek out a position with an agency that will provide the peer worker with a practicum and possible job opportunity upon successful completion. AI also created the Peer Worker Employment Opportunities listserv, which sends available Peer Worker job opportunities to your e-mail, available by submitting your e-mail to the box at the bottom of http://hivtrainingny.org.

What if I’ve already been working or volunteering as a peer worker? Does that count?
Your supervisor should complete Supervisor Evaluation (available on http://hivtrainingny.org stating that you have successfully completed at least 500 practicum hours (on or after 1/1/2012), and you will have completed that requirement.
I need a certain course to complete my certification, but I can’t find it offered. Help!
Please call 631-4443209 and we will do our best to help find schedule or the course you need.

I’ve already taken some of the required courses for certification. Do I have to take them again?
If you have taken any of the required courses on our website after January 1, 2012, http://hivtrainingny.org your courses will be stored on your account and will be accessible to us to see that you have completed them, so 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, NYCDOHMH T-TAP) you will need to upload a certificate to your online 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 expect from the knowledge exam?
The 30-question, straight-forward, case-based exam will be available 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 until you do. AI has developed a comprehensive study guide for all 3 tracks, available on http://hivtrainingny.org. The study guide covers everything AI expects a peer worker to know to pass the exam, but not everything in the study guide will asked about in the exam.

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 once you have completed all requirements.

I have questions about the online application and/or the Supervisor Evaluation. Help!
Supervisors and Peer Workers should use the Evaluation as a tool throughout the practicum period—preferably at least halfway and again at the completion of practicum hours. For questions about the Supervisor Evaluation, call Stephen Sebor at 631.444.3209 or e-mail 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 2nd (or 3rd) 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 2nd or 3rd 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 for travel, hotels, meals, etc. around these trainings?
Funding may be available for some peers to travel to trainings if their agency is unable to financially support their travel, and if the peer’s upcoming certification is contingent upon completing the course. Please contact Dan Tietz at Daniel.tietz@health.ny.gov to inquire.

Is there training to help agencies implement or strengthen their peer program?
Yes, the AI recognizes the need to support agencies and program leaders in the process of implementing a peer program. We have a capacity building series 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