

New York State Certified Peer Worker Supervisor's Frequently Asked Questions

What is the NYS Certified Peer Worker Program?

The Certified Peer Worker (CPW) Program is a formal certification program for peers that meet the eligibility requirements. This program is intended to provide employers and the community with high-quality peer-delivered services and improve the health care outcomes of clients through peer-delivered services.

Why have a certification program for peers?

Peer-delivered interventions play a significant role in improving health outcomes, especially for patients living with complex chronic health or behavior health conditions. The effectiveness of Peer Workers is rooted in the fact that these workers share a common “lived experience” with clients. The Certified Peer Worker Program exists to provide training, supervised work experience, and allow for the professional growth of New York State’s peer workforce.

Who is eligible to become a NYS Certified Peer Worker?

Any person who has a qualifying lived experience with HIV; Hepatitis-C, Harm Reduction, or PrEP is eligible for certification. A “lived experience” is defined as the experience someone has obtained from life; qualifying lived experiences are divided into four “tracks”.

Will all Peers need to become a NYS Certified Peer Worker?

No – pursuing certification is voluntary.

What are the Peer Certification tracks?

The NYS Certified Peer Worker Program requires persons obtaining their certification to specialize into tracks of relevant peer experience. Specializing in a track requires the peer to take specific training courses that will qualify you and build “competencies” – there are several competencies for each track.

The **four** Peer Certification Tracks are listed below:

1. **HIV:** a person must be living with HIV.
2. **Hepatitis C (Hep-C):** a person must be living with Hep-C, currently receiving treatment for Hep-C, or have completed treatment for Hep-C.
3. **Harm Reduction:** a person 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.

4. **Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)** a person who has lived experience of taking PrEP. To ensure an applicant for this track has enough lived experience, supervisors will be required to rate specific competencies related to a shared lived experience. Please note: a person who is living with HIV who does PrEP work may be certified as an HIV Peer Worker by completing a practicum carrying out the competencies associated with PrEP.

Please note individuals who are “affected” are not eligible for certification.

The Peer Workers I supervise say they have already gone to some trainings and received certificates, does this make them a NYS Certified Peer Worker?

No – the peer can only receive certification from the Peer Certification Review Board. The review board reviews applicants that have completed all requirements to become certified, and votes on every peer’s certification. Once voted on and approved by the review board the peer will receive a letter and a phone call from the Peer Certification Academic Center. Peers who have an account on <http://www.hivtrainingny.org> and a Peer Certification Application in progress **are not** NYS Certified Peer Workers.

What must a Peer do to become a NYS Certified Peer Worker?

- Completion of Foundational Training (optional, but recommended)
- Create a free account on <http://www.hivtrainingny.org>,
- Select at least one of the specialization tracks: HIV, Hep-C, Harm Reduction, or PrEP
- Complete 90 hours total of training, including the mandatory 3-day “Pre-Certification” training
- Completion of a supervised 500-hour work practicum carrying out the specific competencies related to your certification track (HIV, Hep-C, Harm Reduction or PrEP)
- Submit a Supervisory Evaluation
- Pass the on-line exam with a score of 75% or better
- Prepare a professional resume, which includes the practicum experience
- Complete the online application, and answer the three Lived Experience questions
- Complete the Self-Care Worksheet
- Sign and uphold the Code of Ethics – Note: anyone seeking certification is expected to follow the code of ethics, including maintaining appropriate behavior during trainings and completing the on-line application honestly
- Receive final approval from the NYS Peer Certification Review Board

Can I start the application for my peers?

It is **not** recommended that a supervisor **starts** or **completes** the peer’s application. You may **assist** the peer with their application at any time. A peer may start a NYS Certified Peer Worker Application by logging into their account on <http://www.hivtrainingny.org>, clicking on the Peer Certification tab and clicking the box “Apply for Peer Certification”, on the right side of the page. A peer may access their application at any time to update information, documents, or answer the “Lived Experience” questions.

How can I access Peer Certification related resources?

To access Peer Certification information and other resources visit <http://www.hivtrainingny.org> and select the “Peer Certification” tab. There are many helpful resources like the Course Tracker Form and Supervisory Evaluation Tool.

Can I help my peer workers identify trainings to take?

Of course! It is strongly suggested you work with the peers you supervise to help identify relevant trainings. You and the Peer Worker can use the “Course Tracker Form” to identify what trainings are needed and what trainings are completed. To access the Course Tracker form, go to the <http://www.hivtrainingny.org> website, and click on the Peer Certification tab – you’ll see it listed on the page. You can also click the following link to go directly to the forms: <http://hivtrainingny.org/home/PeerCheckList>. Please note each specialized track has its own Course Tracker Form.

How does a peer take the trainings?

The peer must log into their account on <http://www.hivtraininny.org> and should have their own e-mail address. To register, follow these steps:

1. Click on the “Course List” tab (make sure it’s a course needed for certification!)
2. Click the “register” button
3. Click the “select” button (you can see details about the training)
4. Finally, click the “submit” button.

The peer will see a Completion Notification and will receive a confirmation e-mail from “HIV Training.” Please pay special attention to where the training is being held – it may not be local!

What if my peer(s) need special accommodations to attend the training?

If a peer requires special accommodations to attend the training, they can let us know by clicking the text at the bottom of the course registration page that asks, “Will you require accommodations under the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) to participate in trainings?”

A box will open asking for a description the special accommodations. Examples of special accommodations may include, but are not limited to:

- ASL – American Sign Language Interpretation
- Sitting in the front of the training room to see better
- Wheelchair accessible - entrance, training space, and restrooms

Are any of the training courses mandatory?

Yes. The “Core Courses”, including the 3-day Pre-Certification course, found on page 1 of the Course Tracker Form are mandatory. Only peer workers actively engaged in certification may take the 3-day Pre-Certification course. It is recommended that the peer has completed a few training courses before taking the Pre-Certification course. To sign up for the 3-day Pre-Certification Course a peer must call the Peer Certification Academic Center at 631-444-3209.

What should I know about the 500-hour supervised practicum?

The practicum is an opportunity for peers to practice the “core competencies”; tasks and job duties associated with the peer worker role. One way to think about it is: “practicum=work experience.” A supervisor must oversee the peer workers practicum, and the practicum must be related to the peer’s certification track (HIV, Hep- C, Harm Reduction or PrEP related work). The supervisor and peer should keep track of the 500-hours.

The supervisor should give the peer regular feedback and complete the online **Supervisor Evaluation**. This evaluation rates the peer on their work performance. We recommend you do the evaluation with your peer during the middle of the practicum and once more towards the end of the peer’s practicum. This allows you both to see what competencies, tasks and job duties may need improvement before submitting the Supervisor Evaluation. Supervisor and Peer will review the evaluation, sign, scan and upload the completed evaluation. For questions about the Supervisor Evaluation the Peer Certification Academic Center at 631-444-3209.

Peers I supervise have been working at the agency for years, does that time count?

Yes, it counts under certain circumstances. Experience as a peer worker must be **within three calendar years** of submission of the application for approval by the Review Board in order to count toward the required 500-hour practicum. For example, if a peer submits their application in September of 2020, all practicum experience must be after January 1, 2017 (the supervisor must document the 500 hours). For any questions about prior experience, please call the Peer Certification Academic Center at 631-444-3209.

What should my peers expect from the Peer Certification Online Exam?

The 30-question exam is taken online, accessible via a desktop computer or mobile browser. A peer must receive a score of 75% or better to pass. They have one hour to complete the exam. If they do not pass, they may re-take the exam up to three times per day. Comprehensive study guides have been developed for four tracks and are available on <http://hivtrainingny.org>, under the Peer Certification tab.

Is there a “re-certification” process?

Yes. All NYS Certified Peers must maintain their certification by taking Continuing Education (CE) training courses. CPW’s are required to take 10 hours of training every year. The Certified Peer is responsible for making sure they meet this requirement. CPW’s can register to take additional trainings through the <http://www.hivtrainingny.org> website. It is recommended that the CPW take trainings relevant to their peer work.

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

Yes, you can, with one exception. To certify in multiple tracks, you will need 22 specialized course hours for each track. For example, if you want to certify in both HIV and Hep-C tracks, you will need a total of 44 specialized course hours; 22-hours for HIV courses and 22-hours for Hep-C courses. Your 500-hour practicum must also include work relevant to all tracks you plan to certify in, but you do **not** need to complete additional practicum hours. You will also need to complete the online exam for all tracks you want to certify in. Some trainings count for multiple specializations, so it may take less than an additional 22 hours of coursework to complete multiple tracks.

Individuals certifying for the HIV track **cannot** certify for the PrEP track.

Does becoming a NYS Certified Peer Worker guarantee the peer employment?

No, becoming certified does not guarantee a job. To assist Certified Peer Workers and peers pursuing certification with finding employment, the AIDS Institute has created a state-wide email list called “Peer Worker Employment Opportunities Mailing List”. This “listserv” sends out job announcements listing employment opportunities. A peer or supervisor can add their e-mail to the listserv, by typing it in the box located at the bottom right of any page on the <http://hivtrainingny.org> website and clicking the button that says “Go”.

One of my peers was waitlisted for a training, what does that mean?

When a training is at capacity, anyone trying to register will be “wait-listed.” Someone who is wait-listed is **not** guaranteed a seat in the training. Please have the peer check with the training

agency for wait-list policies. If this course is the last course a peer needs for certification, please call the Peer Certification Academic Center at 631-444-3209.

What if Peers have already taken some of the required courses for certification?

Required courses must be taken **within three calendar years** of submission of the Peer Certification Application to the the Review Board. For example, if a peer is submitting their application in May 2020, all courses must be after January 1, 2017. This applies to **all classes**, including those taken on the <http://www.hivtrainingny.org> website as well as outside trainings, such as SafeTALK, the, Positive Self-Management Training or any of the equivalent trainings through the NYC Department of Health T-TAP. There may be some exceptions for online learning or archived webinars. **Remember: All certificates for outside trainings need to be uploaded to your online peer certification application.**

To check the courses, a peer must go to the <http://www.hivtrainingny.org> website, log-in and click the “My Courses” link located on the right side. If you have questions about your prior coursework, please call the Peer Certification Academic Center at 631-444-3209.

Can a peer receive college credit for receiving their NYS Peer Certification?

Yes, those who successfully become a NYS Certified Peer Worker qualify for a minimum of 26 college credits through SUNY Empire State College. For more information please see the information located at <https://www.hivtrainingny.org/FAQDocs/escfaq.pdf>.

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

Peers seeking certification are encouraged to have an agency sponsor travel to trainings. Typically, this is the agency where the peer worker is doing their practicum. Limited resources are available from the AIDS Institute to support travel to trainings, but this is only available to individuals who are 1-2 courses away from completing their certification. Please e-mail to stephen.sebor@stonybrook.edu to inquire.

Additional Questions?

Call the Peer Certification Academic Center at 631-444-3209 or e-mail Stephen Sebor at stephen.sebor@stonybrook.edu.