

**NORTH CAROLINA CERTIFIED PEER SUPPORT  
SPECIALIST PROGRAM**

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**CODE OF ETHICS AND CONDUCT**

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Behavioral Health Springboard (BHS)  
School of Social Work  
The University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill

## OVERVIEW

The NCCPSS Program adopted this Code of Ethics and Conduct to establish professional and personal behavioral conduct required from all CPSS certified in North Carolina. (All standards marked with an **\*asterisk\*** must be followed per employer policies.) A Certified Peer Support Specialist (hereafter known as CPSS) in North Carolina offers support based on their own life experiences and vows to uphold the stated values and Code of Ethics and Conduct, demonstrating ethical dedication as peers with lived experiences.

## VALUES

The NCCPSS Program values are as follows:

- Individuals with lived experience certified as peer supporters play an essential role in the public mental health/substance use disorder system.
- Roles created for peers within the service system should fully utilize the peer's lived experience, viewing it as a credential and expertise that the individual brings to their work.
- Lived experience and ongoing skill development for peer supporters are essential.
- The workplace recovery environment is crucial to the success of peer supporters and the recovery of the individuals served.
- Peer supporters are highly valued members of an agency; therefore, they are fully integrated professionals within the mental health/substance use disorder delivery system.
- Equality and respect between peer supporters and traditional professionals must be reciprocal.
- Choice and self-determination are important components in everyone's recovery, including individuals receiving and providing services.
- Self-directed recovery does happen, with or without professional help.

## CODE OF ETHICS AND CONDUCT

Below are the standardized ethical norms and expectations for North Carolina Certified Peer Support Specialists divided into six categories:

1: PERSONAL BOUNDARIES	
1.1	CPSS will conduct themselves in a manner that fosters their recovery because they may influence peers and others in the community.
1.2	CPSS will take personal responsibility for seeking support and report any changes in their recovery status to their employer(s) and the NCCPSS Program when changes in recovery occur. Attention to self-recovery is critical to performing duties as a CPSS.
1.3	If a CPSS's recovery is compromised, they will engage in their own personal self-care and community care until they can again provide support to other peers again.
2: PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS/BOUNDARIES	
2.1	CPSS will support people in making their own choices and honoring self-determination. The CPSS does not put their plan ahead of the peer's agenda.
2.2	CPSS will avoid any power struggles and favoritism.

2.3	CPSS will not engage in any form of discrimination protected under State and Federal Law based on, but not limited to the following, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, religion, national origin, socio-economic status, political belief, physical or mental health disability or impairment.
2.4	CPSS will not take peers to their homes; there is no exception.
2.5	CPSS will use a person-centered, strength-based approach (done with the peer whenever possible) defined within their agency/employer documentation. *
2.6	CPSS will provide services and support per the policies and procedures of the agency/employer with whom they work/volunteer, including the hours, days, and locations authorized by the agency/employer. *
2.7	CPSS will only provide services outside their training area, expertise, competence, or scope of practice if they have been appropriately trained, licensed, or certified to perform that service. For example, CPSS will not make medical diagnoses.
2.8	CPSS will be honest in their interactions and always strive to deliver correct information by performing due diligence and seeking out information and facts they might need to learn to serve their peers.
2.9	CPSS will have relationships with peers that are mutual learning experiences.
2.10	CPSS will be responsible for supporting people in using their voices to advocate for the principles of human dignity, self-determination, and empowerment.
2.11	CPSS will negotiate within the relationship with peers to facilitate peer choice and shared power.
2.12	CPSS will not engage in anything that violates the spirit of peer support while working with peers.
<b>3: CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATION</b>	
3.1	CPSS will honor commitments made to peers. CPSS strives to explore and ask open-ended questions rather than continually making assumptions. CPSS explores alternatives and options with peers rather than giving advice.
3.2	CPSS will only share confidential information about a peer gained through a professional engagement with another person or entity with prior written agreement from the person served if authorized or required by law.
3.3	CPSS will be transparent and accurately inform peers that CPSS may share some information peers provide with other team members for several reasons, i.e., safety, agency/ employer policies, etc.
<b>4: EXPLOITATION</b>	
4.1	CPSS will not exploit, devalue, manipulate, abuse, neglect, or ignore a peer.
4.2	CPSS will not accept or give gifts. If the agency/employer allows them, they must be related to the peer's recovery process.
4.3	CPSS will not loan or borrow anything from peers, especially money.
4.4	CPSS will not perform peer services for pay as an individual unless approved as a provider with an LME/MCO or other licensed providers.
4.5	CPSS will not hire peers to work for them if they currently receive services from their agency/employer.
4.6	CPSS will avoid dual relationships; when unavoidable, PSS must establish appropriate boundaries within the relationship with the supervisor's support.

<b>5: FRAUD RELATED MISCONDUCT</b>	
<b>5.1</b>	CPSS will not misrepresent information to obtain certification or recertification or assist another peer in preparing for or obtaining certification or recertification. The term "misrepresentation" includes, but is not limited to, the misrepresentation of professional qualifications, education, certification, accreditation, affiliations, employment experience, the plagiarism of application or recertification documents, or the alteration of references.
<b>5.2</b>	CPSS will not use a title designation, credential or license, firm name, letterhead, publication, phrase, title, or document that indicates or implies an ability, relationship, or qualification that does not exist and which they are not authorized to use.
<b>5.3</b>	CPSS will not provide service under a name other than the one listed on their certificate or outside the period listed on the certificate.
<b>6: SEXUAL MISCONDUCT</b>	
<b>6.1</b>	CPSS will not establish romantic relationships with peers and will refrain from intimate or sexual activity with peers, whether such contact is consensual or forced, while that person is receiving formal services from an agency or organization.
<b>6.2</b>	CPSS will not engage in sexual activities or contact people they formerly supported in recovery and healing when there is a risk of exploitation or injury.
<b>6.3</b>	CPSS will not provide formal peer support to individuals with whom they have previously had a sexual relationship.

## CERTIFICATION RESPONSIBILITIES

As a CPSS in NC, I will:

- Be current with my certification.
- Comply with the Code of Ethics and Conduct and recertification requirements set by the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services (hereafter known as DMH/DD/SUS) through the NCCPSS Program or any designated entity.
- Always utilize the Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) certification appropriately and will not provide peer support services when certification lapses.
- Cooperate with any ethics investigation and actions from DMH/DD/SUS through the NCCPSS Program or any designated entity. Any CPSS action or behavior determined to constitute abuse, neglect, exploitation, or any other infractions that rise to the level of disciplinary action by the investigation will result in sanctions, up to and including the withdrawal of certification. CPSS shall cooperate with investigations into allegations of unethical behavior and abide by the decision of the NCCPSS Program or designated entity and the hiring entity (employer). Failure to comply with an obligation or prohibition outlined in the Ethical Code of Conduct will result in discipline by the DMH/DD/SUS) through the NCCPSS Program or designated entity.

- Notify the NCCPSS Program or designated entity of any legal action with potential impact on the practice of peer support, including but not limited to the filing in any court of information, complaint, indictment, conviction, firing by an employer, filing of any charge or action before a state, tribal or federal regulatory agency or judicial body concerning the practice of peer support or related professions, or a matter before another certification body. Such notification shall be made within sixty (60) days of the filing of such charge or action, and they shall provide documentation of the resolution of such action within sixty (60) days of that resolution to maintain CPSS certification.

### ATTESTATION

I affirm that I have reviewed, understood, and will adhere to the Code of Ethics and Conduct. I understand that signing this form indicates that:

- I will adhere to and accept any sanctions for violating the Code of Ethics and Conduct outlined by the NCCPSS Program or designated entity defined by the DMH/DD/SUS
- I cannot renew my certification until any pending investigation for violating the Code of Ethics or Conduct is resolved.

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>