



## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What does CYAPSS stand for? What about TDMHSAS?

**CYAPSS** = Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist

**TDMHSAS** = Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

### Some other acronyms in this handbook and the appendices include:

**YALC** = Young Adult Leadership Council

**CPRS** = Certified Peer Recovery Specialist

**CFSS or FSS** = Certified Family Support Specialist or Family Support Specialist

**ACES** = Adverse Childhood Experiences

**OCYAF** = Office of Children, Young Adults, and Families

**OCA** = Office of Consumer Affairs and Peer Recovery Services

**CMT** = Core Management Team

**YYAC** = Youth and Young Adult Coordinator

**WRAP** = Wellness Recovery Action Plan

**COE** = Code of Ethics

**BRIDGES** = Building Recovery of Individual Dreams and Goals Through Education and Support

**CE or CEUs** = Continuing Education or Continuing Education Units

**CPR** = Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation

**SOCAT** = System of Care Across Tennessee

**SOC** = System of Care

**TTAC** = Training and Technical Assistance Center

**WHAM** = Wellness Health Action Management

**TIP** = Transition to Independence Model

**HIPAA** = Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

**MCOs** = Managed Care Organizations

**GED** = General Educational Development

**HiSET** = High School Equivalency Test

**TASC** = Test Assessing Secondary Completion

**LADAC** = Licensed Alcohol and Drug Addiction Counselor

**LCSW** = Licensed Clinical Social Worker

**2. What is the purpose of Tennessee’s Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist program?**

State certification as a Young Adult Peer Support Specialist is intended to ensure that individuals who provide direct peer-to-peer services meet a set of state-approved minimum standards. The program was created because the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) sees the value in peer support, specifically for the population of young adults, and wished to create a Certification process for it. Please refer to the Introduction for a comprehensive history of peer support programs in Tennessee.

**3. Who oversees Tennessee’s Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist program?**

The Office of Children, Young Adults, and Families (OCYAF) in the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services oversees the policies and procedures around the training and certification process for the Tennessee Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist program. They have established the acceptable professional minimum standards for Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialists.

**4. Where are some places that a CYAPSS could potentially work or volunteer?**

A CYAPSS might choose to work or volunteer in places and programs that include, but are not limited to: Peer Support Centers, Crisis Stabilization Units, licensed alcohol and drug abuse treatment centers, alcohol and drug abuse recovery support services centers, detoxification centers, psychosocial rehabilitation programs, inpatient hospital settings, community mental health agencies, recovery courts, veteran’s hospitals, juvenile justice centers, child welfare agencies, and educational facilities, among others. This list continues to grow.

**5. Does the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services provide employment or job placement?**

No. Tennessee’s Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist Program is not an offer of employment or job placement by the TDMHSAS. However, certification as a Young Adult Peer Support Specialist, Peer Recovery Specialist, or Family Support Specialist is a qualification for many jobs in the peer support field. CYAPSS’s can check the Recovery within Reach website for employment opportunities.

**6. Do provider agencies hold Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist employees to the same standards as other employees?**

Yes. Provider agencies should maintain the same expectations for Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist employees as for all other employees.

**7. When and where is the Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist Training offered? Is there a fee?**

Typically, the training is a 40 hour training offered over the course of five days (Monday-Friday). There is no fee for the training itself; however, each training participant is responsible for their own transportation, lodging, meals, snacks, beverages, and other expenses incurred. For an application and dates of upcoming trainings, contact the Office of Children, Young Adults, and Families at 615-532-3754 or [CYAPSS.TDMHSAS@tn.gov](mailto:CYAPSS.TDMHSAS@tn.gov). If you are interested in hosting a training on your school's campus or in your community, we are open to collaborating.

**8. What if I want to attend the Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist training but I can't take off 5 days from work?**

We absolutely understand that a lot of the young people who would be ideal for the Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist program are currently in school or working jobs that would prevent them from attending a Monday through Friday training.

We want to do our best to reduce the barriers preventing young adults from entering the peer support workforce. Depending on the level of interest, we may be able to split up the training into two portions that would then be offered on weekdays or weekends. Please contact the Office of Children, Young Adults, and Families to discuss this further.

**9. Do I have to take the Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist training if I am already a Tennessee Certified Peer Recovery Specialist?**

While the Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist training and program were inspired by the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist program, only about 30% of the training material is the same. In addition, the CYAPSS material provides a unique perspective designed to help you understand and support other young people. Therefore, it is necessary that you complete the Certified Young Adult Peer Support Training if you want to be a CYAPSS. The good news is that both trainings are provided for free through TDMHSAS. We hope that many young adults will choose to become dually certified as both a CPRS and CYAPSS.

**10. Do I have to take the CYAPSS training if I am already certified as a Youth or Young Adult Peer Support Specialist in another state and I am moving to Tennessee?**

Please contact the Office of Children, Young Adults, and Families to discuss this further.

**11. What happens when I turn 31? Can I still be a CYAPSS?**

Per the Eligibility Criteria, you must be between the ages of eighteen and thirty to be a Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist. If you turn 31 while you are still certified as a CYAPSS, you will maintain your certification for the remainder of that certification period. The period for certification is one year from the date you were certified or recertified. Once that date passes, your certification will become expired.

You may want to consider applying for the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist program before you age of the CYAPSS program. Please refer to the CPRS Handbook for questions about their certification process.

**12. If I have involvement in systems such as foster care or juvenile justice, but I don't identify as having mental illness or substance use issues, can I still apply to be a CYAPSS?**

At this time, only young adults who have lived experience with mental illness and/or substance abuse are eligible for the CYAPSS program. However, we are looking into potential avenues for including these populations in future iterations of the certification.

Some folks may read this and automatically assume that they do not fit the eligibility criteria, but we would urge people to take a moment to consider this: many of us have struggled with mental health issues without ever getting diagnosed, receiving help, or fully processing the significance of our experience. In addition, living through trauma can sometimes lead to mental health issues, but people may not use that label for what they're experiencing. However, many young adults with trauma histories can uniquely empathize with the peers that CYAPSS serve because they share that lived experience.

It never hurts to fill out an application or reach out to the Youth and Young Adult Coordinator with further questions. Even if the CYAPSS program is ultimately not the right fit, you may find that joining the Statewide Young Adult Leadership Council fulfills your desire for leadership opportunities.

### **13. Will the information I reveal in my CYAPSS application and communications remain confidential?**

Pursuant to T.C.A. §10-7-503, all state records are considered open for public inspection, unless otherwise protected under the law. The State cannot guarantee the confidentiality of your application, any communications, or other related documents received by the State or in possession of the State.

With this in mind, please be thoughtful and deliberate about the information you share in your application and other written communications with the State. As a Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist, you will be asked to share your personal story of recovery and wellness. Think about the details that you would be willing to share in that narrative and use that as a guide for what information you choose to disclose in your application, communications, and any other related documents to/with the State.

If you have questions or concerns about this, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Children, Young Adults, and Families using the contact information in Section I.

### **14. How do I bill TennCare (Medicaid) for Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist services?**

**NOTE: The information in this answer will become applicable pending conversations with TennCare. Please see Section XI for more information.**

Only agencies that have included peer recovery services in their contracts with the health plans, also called Managed Care Organizations (MCOS), will be able to bill for a Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist's services to TennCare members and only when deemed medically necessary. Individual Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialists cannot bill TennCare (Medicaid).

### **15. Once certified, can I provide billable peer recovery or peer support services from my own home or office?**

*Per the CYAPSS Code of Ethics #3G: A CYAPSS shall only provide services and support within the hours, days, and locations that are appropriate and relevant places to provide peer support services, or as authorized by the agency where the CYAPSS volunteers or works.* In addition, in order for peer recovery or peer support services to be billed to the state, they must be provided at a place acknowledged by Tennessee State government as a relevant and appropriate.

## **16. Why is there a requirement in Continuing Education about cultural and linguistic responsiveness?**

Cultural and linguistic responsiveness is the ability to interact successfully with people of different identities, backgrounds, cultures, and languages. This includes meeting their social, cultural, and linguistic needs. TDMHSAS understand that everyone did not grow up with the same level of education about other cultures, but in order to provide impactful peer support, the Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialists should constantly strive to learn more about other backgrounds and how to navigate situations where they do not necessarily know everything about the peer's culture. The skills

needed for engaging in cultural responsiveness are the same for providing effective peer support – keeping an open mind, maintaining a strengths-based attitude, and practicing active listening. In order to reflect this dedication to building cultural responsiveness, applicants for the CYAPSS Training must answer a question about cultural responsiveness and for those seeking recertification, it is required that a minimum of one hour of continuing education be in cultural responsiveness and/or working with diverse populations. In addition, young adults are a unique population because of their in-between status for so many aspects of society, so this recertification requirement also encourages Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialists to take advantage of trainings and webinars around how to best work with youth and young adults specifically.

## **17. What makes peer support different than counseling or therapy? Why is it ideal for young adults?**

Peer support is the act of one peer supporting another. What makes someone a peer is their shared experiences – they attend the same school, are the same age, come from the same racial or social background, have both been through the foster care system, have both sought out behavioral health services, etc. The peers may have never met before, but they are bonded together by knowing that each other understands what they've been through. Receiving support from a peer instead of a health professional often feels more comfortable and safe, even if the location is a hospital or courthouse.

While the CYAPSS holds a certification, they do not have any licensure that allows them to provide clinical services, such as counseling and therapy, and it is against the CYAPSS Code of Ethics to provide such services. Additionally, this would violate both state and federal law, and the CYAPSS could be subject to potential criminal and civil liability. Counseling and

therapy usually involve a trained medical professional using evidence-based strategies to help a person change their behavior. Certified Young Adult Peer Support services involve a young adult using their lived experience to support others on their path of wellness and journey of healing. The CYAPSS program is built off of the ideology that anyone with lived experience can provide peer support, and they can become certified after showing they are ready to take the step from peer to peer specialist.

Because of the many challenges that can arise for transition-age youth, there is a need for developmentally appropriate programs that seek to improve their emotional competency, knowledge of wellness and recovery, and propensity to seek help as needed. The Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist program aims to offer those exact components by training and certifying young adults to provide direct peer-to-peer services.