



**Grassroots Empowerment Project**  
**2010 Peer Specialist program**  
**Week-long training retreat**  
**December 5-11 at Spring Green**  
(Iowa & Sauk county, near the Wisconsin River)  
**House On The Rock Resort**



## What is a Peer Specialist?

Working as a Peer Specialist brings your personal experience of mental health recovery and peer support into settings such as outpatient/inpatient, case management, crisis services, or peer-run organizations.

The knowledge you have from your experience of recovery is needed by your peers who seek support and guidance on their own path. Peers are becoming key supports within many county mental health systems. Peer support is essential to recovery.

A Peer Specialist engages and encourages members or clients in a very individual way, to provide a sense of belonging, supportive relationships, valued roles and community. A Peer Specialist promotes independent living, enhancing the skill and ability of each person to meet their own goals.

Peer Specialists work with peers as equals, except that Peer Specialists have more experience in their recovery. They look for signs of wellness, encouraging strengths and self-direction. Peer specialists serve as role models. They are examples of recovery combined with experience and training.

## Advocates, consumers and providers in Wisconsin have identified *core competencies* that each Peer Specialist should possess.

Our training program will draw on your knowledge to practice those competencies, in the following areas:

### **Self-knowledge and the role of the peer-specialist**

Use your experience to inspire others, while supporting your own recovery, in a trauma-free way. Recognize strengths and challenges, and build on the positive.

**Ethics and boundaries** Confidentiality, working relationships, supervision, and when to get help.

**Cultural awareness** Understand how values relate to ethnicity, faith, gender, and other elements of culture.

**Advocacy and locating information** Basic knowledge of the mental health system, mental health conditions, treatments, rights, services, supports and community resources. Advocate for others and help them to learn self-advocacy.

**Teamwork** Communicate, collaborate and work with supervision. Recognize when to report changes and get help.

**Choice and empowerment** *Person-centered* planning values informed choice. Growth, change, and overcoming stigma are possible. *Teach* problem-solving skills and conflict resolution.

**Crisis and safety** How to work with people in crisis and make referrals. How to keep yourself and others safe.

**Recovery** Understand the process of recovery and how to pass on recovery-related knowledge and tools. Understand the effects of spirituality, sexuality, grief and loss, stigma and trauma, *on recovery*.

**We will provide 15 scholarships for tuition, materials, lodging & meals.**  
(See application p. 1)

For those who can afford to pay, or have another funding source (county, DVR etc), the cost is \$1500.

## Curriculum and schedule

We use the *Peer Specialist Training Manual*, written by Steve Harrington for the National Peer Specialist Association. We combine this with knowledge that is current for Wisconsin and incorporate common current practices.

Training takes place in a conference retreat setting over five days, from 9:00 to 5:00 each day including breaks and lunch. Large group time totals 35 hours and each evening include one hour of study time. Saturday morning is final examination.

As we share information and knowledge, we emphasize group discussion and skills practice, with daily test questions, a final test, and time to socialize informally so that learning will be active, interesting and enduring.

Your certificate on completing this Wisconsin-approved curriculum will qualify you for the **State of Wisconsin Peer Specialist Certification examination**

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Program facilitators are Wisconsin-certified Peer Specialists.

### **Sandra “Sam” Ahrens**

Sam provides technical assistance and training to GEP-affiliated consumer-run drop-in and recovery services, in the areas of facilitating support groups, conflict resolution, and fundamentals of recovery. She helps consumers to advocate for themselves and connect with advocacy resources. She has advocated for consumers in anti-poverty programs, a halfway house and a homeless shelter. She was part of a coalition successful in getting county homeless outreach services. She has been a university teacher, social worker in correctional and other settings. Currently she serves on the board of Disability Rights Wisconsin.

**Gregory Smith** coordinates the Peer Specialist program. With GEP he has also been developing a personal career planning network. Previously he administered a peer run mental health organization in Madison, and now serves on its board of directors. He has been involved with nonprofit organizations and performing arts in various forms.

### **Contact:**

[newgoals@gmail.com](mailto:newgoals@gmail.com)

608-206-3346

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Applicants will be accepted based *in part* on current experience, and connection/support in your local community. Priority is given to those currently involved in roles similar to the work of peer specialists. Applicants are encouraged to seek employment as Peer Specialists in Wisconsin.

## **We recommend that applicants request support from their county or other sponsors.**

(Examples of organizations that may offer scholarships could be:

County mental health agencies, Dept of Vocational Rehabilitation, Social Security, local NAMI chapters, Mental Health Associations, Clubhouses, Independent Living Centers, local United Ways.)

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**For more information about the Wisconsin statewide Peer Specialist Initiative, including the certification process:**

Alice F Pauser, Peer Specialist Program Coordinator  
608-242-8484 x224 [alicep@accesstoind.org](mailto:alicep@accesstoind.org)  
Application for the state certification exam  
is posted on the internet: [sce-peerspecialist.uwm.edu](http://sce-peerspecialist.uwm.edu)



The 2010 Grassroots Empowerment Peer Specialist program is funded in part by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) - CFDA No. 93.768, Wisconsin Department of Health Services/Pathways to Independence.

## Grassroots Empowerment Project Peer Specialist Program December 2010 training application

Include two letters of recommendation.

At least one of these should be from someone who represents an organization, and knows you and your recent work as either a paid worker or as a volunteer.

**Suggestion:** Read the entire application today.

Think of who you need to talk with from an organization where you are connected, who could write a letter of reference or help you pay for this program. Ask them soon! Check your calendar to plan ahead to send us your application!

*Send completed application to*

**GEP Peer Specialist Program**

**PO Box 8683, Madison WI 53708**

**Or fax to 800-770-0588 ext. 9**

**Questions: Gregory Smith newgoals@gmail.com 608-206-3346**

**\*\*APPLICATION MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN MONDAY OCTOBER 18th \*\***

*Please do not send applications by email.*

**You will be notified by November 1st  
about acceptance to the program.**

(You may request reasonable accommodations at that time.)

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### SCHOLARSHIP REQUEST

You can make a partial or full request for tuition, lodging, food and materials.

You will need to cover your own transportation expense.

Is there an organization or individual who can offer cash assistance for you to participate?

\_\_\_\_\_

Amount of scholarship you are requesting from Grassroots Empowerment Project:

\_\_\_\_\_

How did you learn about this announcement?

\_\_\_\_\_

Your name:

Optional information that may help your application:

Address:

The county where you use services:

Phone:

Agencies where you work or use services:

Email:

The county where you work/volunteer:

**Education**

I have:

High school diploma / GED / HSED

Some college

College degree

Post graduate education

Certifications/diplomas (specify):

Agencies where you work or use services:

Current job title or description of duties:

I am now working as a Peer Specialist. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes No

My agency requires me to be certified as a Peer Specialist. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes No

I have been told by a mental health agency  
that I will be hired as a Peer Specialist once I pass this program. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes No

I plan to look for a job as a Peer Specialist. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes No

I have a written recovery plan. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes No

I have completed WRAP education. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes No

Optional and confidential for statistical purposes only:

**Ethnic or cultural identity** / I identify as:

\_\_\_\_\_

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer all questions in your own words. In this application there are no right or wrong answers.  
Your answers can be brief. Use complete sentences.  
If you need additional space, use the reverse side or attach a separate sheet of paper.

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Why do you want to become a Peer Specialist?

What is your definition of Recovery?

What factors are important in your own recovery?

GEP 2010 Peer Specialist program Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Describe your interests or experiences that have prepared you for this role, and why you are good at working with other peers or consumers in the mental health field.

In your county or town, think of a mental health related organization or group that you know about.

What could be your personal plan to help improve the lives of the clients or members there?

Is there anything else you would like us to know in considering you for the Peer Specialist program?

**Assurances**

I understand that Wisconsin Peer Specialists work from the perspective of their personal lived experience with mental health and recovery.

I agree to be open about the fact that I have personal experience with, or have been diagnosed with, a mental illness.

I understand that in doing so I help educate others about the reality of recovery.

PLEASE SIGN YOUR INITIALS TO ONLY THOSE THAT APPLY TO YOU:

\_\_\_\_\_ YES, I agree to disclose my history with mental illness & recovery when acting as a Peer Specialist.

\_\_\_\_\_ NO, I do not want to disclose my history with mental illness & recovery at this time.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that this is not a job placement program.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that I must make all travel arrangements and that the GEP Peer Specialist Program will not be able to arrange transportation for me.

\_\_\_\_\_ I completed this application myself.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have not been trained as a Peer Specialist by any other program. (If you attended the 2006 Wisconsin training program, that would not disqualify you from this.)

\_\_\_\_\_ If accepted, I agree to read and study the assigned course material. I agree to attend the full training program, participate by listening and speaking, complete a written course examination, and evaluation form at the end of the week.

\_\_\_\_\_ After completing this training program, I will apply to take the state certification examination.

Mental health providers often check criminal background, as well as any past abuse by persons they hire. **Any history of crime or abuse would not necessarily disqualify you from employment or volunteering.** We are informing you that this could be an issue for some applicants.

**Please inform us immediately if you become unable to meet any of these conditions. If for any reason you must cancel your participation, please tell us immediately, and allow someone else the opportunity.**

Please print your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_