CANDIDATE GUIDE

Certified Peer Specialist Examination

PURPOSE OF THE CANDIDATE GUIDE

The examination for Certified Peer Specialists (CPSs) is an examination that tests knowledge and skills about peer support. The exam is based on current research in the field.

The purpose of the Candidate Guide is to provide guidance for the CPS examination process. By providing you with background information on examination core competencies your preparation for the exam can be enhanced.

EXAMINATION CONTENT

Questions for the examination were developed from SAMHSA's Core Competencies for Peer Workers in Behavioral Health Services (2015). All questions on the examination must be linked to the Core Competencies and a reference.

Examination development for the CPS Examination is a multi-step process and is Subject Matter Expert (SME) driven. The most important qualification of these SME's is that they all hold the CPS certification. SME's are chosen based on their experience, education, and diversity. This ensures that examination questions are not too difficult or too easy for applicants. The credential and examination will always be developed for and by Certified Peer Specialists.

The main purpose of any certification and examination is public and consumer protection, not for protection of the professional. These processes ensure that a professional is competent and knowledgeable to provide services. Examinations are designed to prove competence, therefore not everyone should or will pass.
The purpose of an examination is to identify candidates possessing the necessary competencies to practice in order to protect the public NOT to demonstrate expertise, exceptional talent, or knowledge of obscure topics. A multi-step question writing, and review process is used: (1) questions are written by SMEs, (2) a separate group reviews and edits the questions, and (3) and a final group ranks the questions for level of difficulty and provides additional feedback.

PCB HAS SUMMARIZED THE SAMSHA CORE COMPETENCIES INTO THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES FOR THE EXAMINATION:

1. Recovery Planning and Collaboration
   - Recovery planning: goals, etc.
   - WRAP
   - Documentation
   - Wellness tools
   - Relapse prevention/signs
   - Daily maintenance plans
2. Ethical Responsibility & Professionalism
   - Boundaries
   - Ethics
   - Confidentiality
   - Self-care
   - Mandated reporting
3. Person-Centered and Relationship-Focused
   - Trauma-informed
   - Communication
   - Story telling/self-disclosure
   - Self-advocacy
   - Links to resources
   - Stigma
   - Active/Reflective listening
   - Definition of peer support
   - Resilience
   - Stressors
   - Hope

TAKING THE EXAMINATION

The CPS examination is multiple-choice, with one correct or best answer. There are no true/false or fill in the blank questions. Questions are never developed to try to trick or confuse a candidate. For security reasons, questions on the examination are not released to anyone.

The examination consists of 50 multiple-choice questions. One and a half (1.5) hours is provided for completion. Successful candidates will draw on knowledge, analysis, and application to identify the correct or best option.

The CPS examination follows a 3 and 4-option multiple-choice format. Questions of this type begin with a stem, the premise statement, and are followed by three or four options. In answering the questions, candidates should read the stem and options carefully. They should then select the one correct or best answer.

EXAMINATION RULES: IN-PERSON EXAMINATIONS

Seating is limited and based on a first come first-served basis. If seating capacity is reached at site that date will be closed. The dates listed on the examination form are the only in-person examinations scheduled at this time.

Upon fulfillment of the appropriate eligibility requirements and completion of the application process for CPS, you will be seated for the examination. PCB will send you a confirmation email confirming your enrollment approximately two (2) weeks prior to the examination date. This confirmation email will also contain the reporting time, test time, location, contact person, and other relevant information.

A PHOTO IDENTIFICATION CARD (Work ID, Driver's License, etc.) must be presented for entrance to the examination.

No books, papers, or other reference materials may be taken into the examination room. No examination materials, documents, or memoranda of any type may be taken from the room by any candidate.

The examination will be given only on the date and time noted on the confirmation email you will receive. If an emergency arises and you are unable to take the examination as scheduled, you must contact the PCB Office.

No questions concerning the content of the examination may be asked during the examination period. The candidate should listen carefully to the directions given by the Proctor and read the directions carefully in the examination booklet.

EXAMINATION RULES: ONLINE EXAMINATIONS

Candidates can choose to take the examination on an on-demand basis on any computer (desktop or laptop computers only – no cellphones or tablets may be used) if they meet all requirements listed below. No exceptions will be made.

1. Reliable high-speed internet (not hotspot)
2. Computer with quality webcam and microphone
3. A valid ID with picture will be required to show prior to the examination. Examples of valid IDs include state issued ID card, driver's license, passport, work ID and/or college/university ID.
4. Google Chrome web browser
5. Proctorio Extension – instructions for download will be provided upon approval
6. Private and interruption free area to take the examination

Do not register for an online examination until you are sure you can meet the above requirements. If you cannot meet the requirements you must choose an in-person examination.

Do not access your online examination until you have:

1. Downloaded and installed Google Chrome
2. Installed the Proctorio Google Chrome extension
3. Tested your webcam and microphone

A valid ID with picture will be required to show prior to the examination. Examples of valid IDs include state issued ID card, driver's license, passport, work ID and/or college/university ID.

Before your examination begins, you will be taken through a series of pre-checks. These will establish and verify your internet connection, operating system, camera, and microphone. The time allotted to take the examination will NOT begin until the pre-checks are completed.

You will be asked for permission to access the camera and microphone. You **must** click "Allow" to continue. Your entire online examination will be audio and video-recorded and the audio and video-recording will be reviewed by PCB personnel for examination irregularities.

Clear away any materials from your area. Cell phones and tablets are not permitted in the room while you are taking the examination. Reference materials are not permitted.

Each question in the examination will be followed by three or four choices. Only one of these choices is the correct or best answer. You should have time to work on every question. Try to answer all of the questions. If you are not sure of an answer, you may guess.

Once you begin your examination, you may not leave the room. You have 90 minutes to complete your examination. The time will be shown to the left of the examination questions.

Reproducing or copying the examination you are taking is a serious copyright violation, a breach of security and an ethics violation. Any individuals caught copying or attempting to copy examination materials, by any means, will not be allowed to continue the examination and the examination will be invalidated. The consequences for cheating or copying examination materials include denial of your application for the certification you are pursuing and financial responsibility for any examination materials compromised by your actions.

Reasons an examination result will be invalidated include but are not limited to:

- Someone in or entering the room while you are taking the examination.
- Talking to anyone while you are taking the examination.
- Leaving the room once the examination has started.
- Attempting to copy examination content.
- Attempting to open web browsers or any other documents.
- Attempting to block your webcam or muting your microphone.
- Indications of head and/or eye movement away from your computer screen when the examination is underway that suggest you are reading, viewing, or handling materials.
- Looking at/holding/reading/using any reference materials of any sort during the examination.
- Any use of electronic devices (cellphones, tablets, etc.) other than the laptop or desktop computer being used for the examination.

REMINDER:

Your entire online examination will be audio and video-recorded and the audio and video-recording will be reviewed by PCB personnel for examination irregularities.

Any examination irregularity will result in your examination being invalidated and you will not be permitted to take the examination again.

SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIONS

Individuals with disabilities and/or religious obligations that require modifications in test administration may request specific procedure changes, in writing, to PCB, no fewer than 60 days prior to the scheduled test date. With the written request, the candidate must provide official documentation of the disability or religious issue. Candidates should contact PCB on what constitutes official documentation. PCB will offer appropriate modifications to its procedures when documentation supports the need for them.

SCORING

PCB will score all examinations and mail score reports to candidates. Scores will be broken down by category so that candidates can see areas of strength and weakness. This process takes approximately three to four weeks. The passing point is fixed to assure that all candidates must achieve the same score to be granted certification. To achieve a passing score, candidates must correctly answer 37 questions out of 50 total questions.

TEST DISCLOSURE

If candidates wish to appeal their scores on the examination, they must submit a written request to PCB within

30 days of the postmark on the test score report. Candidates should be aware that test security and item banking procedures do not permit candidate's access to test questions, answer keys, or other secure materials.

RE-TESTING

Candidates who fail the test may re-test if they choose. Candidates must re-test at least one time in the 12-months following the date of the test they failed. All reasonable requests will be considered if a candidate is unable to re-test within the 12-month time frame. Such requests for additional time beyond the 12-months must be submitted in writing to PCB prior to the 12-month deadline.

REFERENCES

The following resources were used as the basis for most of the questions on the CPS examination. Consulting these references may be beneficial to you as you prepare for the exam. Please note that not all questions on the exam came from these references.

1. Copeland, ME (2018). *Wellness Recovery Action Plan.* Sudbury, MA: Human Potential Press.
2. Copeland, ME (2012). *WRAP: Wellness Recovery Action Plan for the Effects of Trauma.* Peach Press.
3. Davidson, L., Bellamy, C., Guy, K., Miller, R., (2012). Peer Support among persons with severe mental illness: A review of the evidence and experience. Retrieved 1/31/2019. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3363389/pdf/wpa020123.pdf *
4. Drebig, C. (2013). The Peer Specialist Pocket Resource. Holliston, MA: Alderson Press LLC.
5. Mead S. (2017). *Intentional Peer Support: An Alternative Approach.* West Chesterfield, NH. Intentional Peer Support.
6. Mead, S. (2001). *Crisis as an Opportunity for Growth and Change.* Retrieved 2/1/2019. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vmkGKN93bj6xADCc8ZL3VHllM0AT6RVRr5_goQz5wBg/edit
7. Mead, S., MacNeil, C. (2006). *Peer Support: What Makes it Unique.* Retrieved 1/31/2019.
8. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1csIJZuuh2r6h_R6U6IilRHrmszKg1wi9KtLBbhttuPs/edit
9. Mead, S. Copeland, M.E. (2006). *What Recovery Means to Us.* Retrieved 1/31/2019. http://www.intentionalpeersupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/What-Recovery-Means-To-Us.pdf *
10. Mead, S. *Defining Peer Support.* Retrieved 1/31/2019. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WG3ulnF6vthAwFZpJxE9rkx6lJzYSX7VX4HprV5EkfY/edit
11. Miller, W.R., Rollnick, S. (2002). *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change.* New York, NY: Guilford Press.
12. Repper, J. (2013). *Peer Support Workers: Theory and Practice.* Retrieved 1/31/2019. https://imroc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/5ImROC-Peer-Support-Workers-Theory-and-Practice.pdf * (some good text, from Europe)
13. Solomon, P. (2012). *Peer Support / Provided Services Underlying Processes, Benefits, and Critical Ingredients.* Retrieved 2/1/2019. https://numerons.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/6peer-support-peer-provided-services.pdf *(some good useful definitions, some of the language is advanced)
14. SAMHSA-HRSA Center for Integrated Solutions (2015). *Whole Health Action Management (WHAM) Peer Support Training Participant Guide.* Retrieved 1/31/2019. https://www.integration.samhsa.gov/health-wellness/wham/wham_participant_guide.pdf

15. SAMHSA Recovery to Practice: Resources for Behavioral Health Professionals (2014). *Recovery to Practice Next Steps: Continuing Education for Peer Support Providers: Participant Workbook.* Retrieved 2/1/2019. https://inaps.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/RTP%20Next%20Steps%20Manual.pdf
16. Tondora, J. Miller, R., Slade, M., Davidson, L. (2014). *Partnering for Recovery in Mental Health.* Chichester, West Sussex UK: John Wiley and Sons.