

How to Become a **Certified Peer Support Specialist** with the Oregon Health Authority

A Peer Support Specialist (PSS) is an individual with shared, lived experience with substance use and/or mental health challenges who provides supportive services to a current or former consumer of mental health or addiction treatment.

Recovery Peer: A person in addiction recovery with two years abstinence who provides support services to people seeking recovery from addiction.

Mental Health Peer: A person with lived experience of mental health challenges who provides support services to other people with similar experiences.

Family Support Specialist: A person with experience parenting a child or youth who has experience with substance use or mental health challenges who supports other parents with children or youth experiencing substance use or mental health challenges.

Youth Support Specialist: A person with lived experience with substance use or mental health treatment who also had difficulty accessing education, health or wellness services who wants to provide support services strictly with people under the age of 30.

PacificSource Community Solutions (PSCS) employs Traditional Health Worker Liaisons (THW Liaisons) who are available to help PSSs through the certification process with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA).

STEP 1

Complete an OHA-approved PSS training program

For a list of approved trainings, contact your area THW Liaison or find more information at the OHA Office of Equity and Inclusion website: [Oregon.gov/oha/OEI/Pages/THW-OHA-Approved-Training-CEU.aspx](https://oregon.gov/oha/OEI/Pages/THW-OHA-Approved-Training-CEU.aspx).

Or

Provide documentation that you are certified by a group other than an OHA-approved training program and complete at least 20 hours of continuing education every three years. OHA's Office of Equity and Inclusion may grant you reciprocity.

Or

Provide documentation that you have worked or volunteered as a Peer Support Specialist for at least **2,000 hours in Oregon from January 1, 2008, to June 30, 2021.**

STEP 2

Complete the oral health training requirement

Effective May 13, 2019, Peer Support Specialists are required to complete the OHA's THW oral health training: [Oregon.gov/oha/OEI/Pages/THW%20Oral%20Health%20Requirements.aspx](https://oregon.gov/oha/OEI/Pages/THW%20Oral%20Health%20Requirements.aspx).

The oral health training on the OHA OEI website is free of charge. After completion, the OHA will notify you by email that you have completed this requirement. Keep a copy of your proof of completion to submit with your THW certification application.

STEP 3

Email your THW certification application to:

thw.program@state.or.us

Applications are available on the OHA Office of Equity and Inclusion website:

[Oregon.gov/oha/OEI/Pages/THW-PSS.aspx](https://oregon.gov/oha/OEI/Pages/THW-PSS.aspx)

You will need to scan and attach copies of the following documents to your application email:

- Government-issued identification
- Certificates of attendance at required trainings, including oral health

Emailing is the fastest method. Applications sent by mail or fax may be delayed as much as 90 days.

STEP 4

Complete your background check

- Once the OHA OEI receives your THW certification application and supporting documents, you will receive an email from the Office of Human Resources Shared Services Background Check Unit (BCU) with a link to verify your information.
- If you do not receive an email within 1 to 2 weeks of submitting your application, check your spam folder for an email from the CRIMS BCU. If you still have not received an email, contact the OEI THW program at thw.program@state.or.us.
- Pay careful attention to the instructions in the email. You only have 21 days to complete the process. If you do not complete the process within 21 days, you will need to request a new link.
- If you have lived outside of Oregon in the past five years, you will also need to submit fingerprints. Follow the instructions from the BCU.
- This background check is required even if you have had one in the past.
- The BCU will notify you and the OHA OEI once your background check is completed. If approved, the OHA OEI will then process your THW Certification application.
- OHA will notify you by email of your THW Certification approval or denial, and, if approved, will provide you with your THW registration number.
- Save this notification, as it will have your registration number and date of certification expiration.
- OHA OEI will automatically add your information to the THW registry.

Note: Steps 5 through 7 are for peer support specialists who plan to bill PSCS. Ask your employer if you need to complete these steps.

STEP 5

Obtain a National Provider ID (NPI)

In order to bill Oregon Medicaid, you will need to obtain an NPI number: Apply on the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System website: [NPPES.cms.hhs.gov/#](https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/#).

STEP 6

Email your validation (credentialing) application to PSCS:

Credentialing@pacificsource.com

Validation is the PSCS version of provider credentialing and is only required for those billing PSCS. The application, listed as the *Medicaid Provider Validation Application*, is available on the PSCS website: CommunitySolutions.PacificSource.com/providers/documentsandforms. Contact your THW Liaison if you need help filling out the application.

STEP 7

Apply for an Oregon Medicaid ID Number

In order to bill Oregon Medicaid, you will need to obtain an active Medicaid ID number. If you do not have an Oregon Medicaid ID number, you may ask for assistance in obtaining one when you send in your Validation application. Check the box that says “*Please check if not currently enrolled with Oregon Medicaid, and assistance with enrollment is required.*”

CommunitySolutions.PacificSource.com/providers/documentsandforms.

Please contact us for additional assistance: ProvNetSupport@pacificsource.com.

For information on how to renew your PSS certification, visit:

Oregon.gov/oha/OEI/Documents/Recertification%20Process%20for%20Traditional%20Health%20Workers.pdf

THW certifications are valid for three years (36 months). You must complete at least 20 hours of an OHA OEI approved continuing education training for renewal.

About Continuing Education Units (CEUs):

- CEUs are awarded for additional THW trainings offered by an OHA-approved training program.
- CEUs are awarded for OHA approved trainings, events or conferences.
- Non-OHA-approved seminars, workshops, and conferences may also count if they relate to work you do, your scope of practice and THW type. It will need to be reviewed by OHA before being accepted as a qualifying CEU.
- 10 hours of the CEUs can be from online courses (50%).
- 10 hours of the CEUs must be in class, with in-person interaction (50%).
- For questions regarding approved trainings, contact the THW program at: thw.program@state.or.us.

Additional Resources

Traditional Health Worker Toolkit: Oregon.gov/oha/OEI/THW%20Documents/Traditional-Health-Worker-Toolkit-2019-Final.pdf

PSCS THW Liaisons by Region

Columbia Gorge: Kate Karlson, RN, BSN, IBCLC, kate.karlson@pacificsource.com

Lane County: Iris Bicksler, CHW, PSS, Doula, iris.bicksler@pacificsource.com

Marion and Polk Counties: Todd Santiago, MBA, PSS, todd.santiago@pacificsource.com

Central Oregon: Tanya Nason, tanya.nason@pacificsource.com