

Bureau of Justice Assistance

Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Program

The Peer Recovery Support Services Mentoring Initiative

Increasingly, peer recovery support services are an important—and sometimes central—part of efforts to effectively address the opioid epidemic. Peer-based services can be a vital part of the continuum of care for substance abuse and of efforts to address alcohol and drug abuse—including opioid misuse.

The Peer Recovery Support Services Mentoring Initiative (PRSSMI)—a special learning opportunity offered through the Bureau of Justice Assistance’s (BJA) Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Program (COAP)—supports programs, organizations, and jurisdictions interested in incorporating peer recovery support services (PRSS) into their portfolios of substance abuse intervention and treatment strategies. The purpose of PRSSMI is to:

- ◀ **Promote peer-to-peer learning** among organizations that are implementing PRSS in criminal justice settings.
- ◀ **Disseminate evidence-supported PRSS** programming, promising approaches, and best practices.
- ◀ **Enhance the capacity to develop PRSS** as a component of organizations’ diversion, alternatives to incarceration, or other criminal justice-focused programs.
- ◀ **Improve ability to successfully implement a PRSS program**, in collaboration with community partners.

PRSSMI provides an opportunity for new or early-stage peer programs to be matched with and learn from an

experienced program in a structured way. Mentee sites receive consultation and support from the staff of experienced programs, culminating in visits to mentor sites (PRSSMI will cover travel for two to three persons). Mentee sites are expected to:

- ◀ Engage a consistent team of three to five individuals.
- ◀ Participate in monthly virtually learning sessions during the first quarter of the mentorship.
- ◀ Have at least two team members participating in site visits to the assigned mentor sites.
- ◀ Develop a brief workplan for program development based on lessons learned from the mentorship.
- ◀ Complete a survey questionnaire at the end of the mentorship.



Inaugural PRSSMI mentor sites.

Four Sites Selected as Mentors

In the first application round, four sites were selected to serve as mentors. These programs work with first responders, law enforcement, courts, jails, prisons, and community corrections to help persons with opioid use disorders to achieve and maintain recovery from addiction.

- ◀ **Faces and Voices of Recovery Greenville (South Carolina)** serves small communities and rural areas in northwest South Carolina with innovative programming; a wide array of peer supports; and strong partnerships with law enforcement, hospitals, and treatment agencies.
- ◀ **The Council of Southeast Pennsylvania**, through its Pennsylvania Recovery Organization–Achieving Community Together (PRO-ACT) program, runs a comprehensive peer support program. PRO-ACT was a partner and the service hub in the launch of a pre-booking diversion pilot with the Philadelphia Police Department.
- ◀ **Recovery Point of West Virginia** serves small communities and rural counties across the state of West Virginia. Recovery Point provides recovery coaches for the city of Huntington’s Quick Response Team (QRT), which was developed with a BJA-

supported COAP grant. Recovery Point has also launched peer support in local hospital emergency rooms and is planning similar support for individuals who are admitted to the hospital because of abusing opioids and other substances.

- ◀ **University of Alabama at Birmingham, School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry, Community Justice Programs (CJP)** is a unique model of community, clinical, and research collaboration housed in a university setting. Across time, CJP has thoroughly integrated the peer voice into all of the program’s behavioral health projects. CJP is particularly strong in its peer supports in the courts, providing services within several specialty courts in Jefferson County, Alabama.

These sites were selected on the basis of several criteria, including: (1) advocating for the value peer support services within the larger context of behavioral health, recovery-oriented systems of care, criminal justice, and child welfare; (2) leveraging the uniqueness of peer status in program design; (3) using sound evidence-supported practices and policies; (4) focusing on outcomes and using data to assess program efficacy; and (5) having strong collaborations with law enforcement, the courts, child welfare, substance abuse treatment agencies, and others.

Learn More About COAP

Visit the COAP Resource Center at www.coapresources.org for more information about the program. The material located in the COAP Resource Center supports effective state, local, and tribal responses to the opioid epidemic.

Learn More About the PRSSMI

To learn more about the PRSSMI, including applying to participate:

Visit: TTA Center for Peer Recovery Support Services at prss-tta.com.

Contact: Elizabeth Burden, M.S., Technical Assistance Director, at elizabeth.burden@altarum.org.

Visit the COAP Resource Center at www.coapresources.org.

About BJA

BJA provides leadership and services in grant administration and criminal justice policy development to support local, state, and tribal law enforcement in achieving safer communities. To learn more about BJA, visit www.bja.gov and follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/DOJBJA) and Twitter (@DOJBJA). BJA is part of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs.