



PEER TRAINING ACADEMY

MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Information & Enrollment Application

In the MHA Peer Training Academy, offers an interactive peer certification and preparation training opportunity and provides assistance with connecting graduates to work experiences. This can provide individuals with mental health recovery experience an opportunity to use and develop that lived experience into a professional and supportive role in mental health services.

To apply, an applicant must:

- have lived experience with mental health
- have completed high school (or equivalent/higher)
- be actively engaged in their recovery plan



We seek applicants with diverse experiences. People with mental health conditions who also have co-experiences such as a history of incarceration, housing instability, substance use, military service, identify as LGBTQIA+ and/or BIPOC are strongly encouraged to apply.

*The Mental Health Association of
Rochester/Monroe County Inc is Affiliated with
Mental Health America & the Mental Health
Association in New York State*

EDUCATE, ELEVATE,
ADVOCATE

MHA Peer Training Program

Overview and Outcomes

The MHA Peer Training Academy provides a classroom-based preparation program with support to gain work experience. This will specifically train people with mental health recovery to work as Peer Specialists in human service agencies. With your full participation to our program, you will be able to seek employment as a Peer Specialist and gain the skills necessary to become certified in New York State.

The MHA Peer Training Academy consists of three parts:

I. Classroom Training (approximately 72 hours)

Our classroom curriculum is designed to develop you in three key areas of workplace effectiveness:

Professional Development – Not only do course topics address the how/why of the peer profession, but give more knowledge, tools and skills that form a well-rounded practice for peer services.

Work Readiness – These courses offer comprehensive training in obtaining and maintaining competitive employment in a field you can enjoy. In addition to the classroom, you'll meet with an Employment Specialist and attend a study group that will support certification necessary for employment.

Individual Wellness – Our training provides a solid foundation of self-directed recovery tools that every effective employee needs.

II. Volunteer or Work Experience

Upon completion of the classroom training, you will get an opportunity to interview with a diverse group of agencies from the Rochester area at a mini job fair specifically for individuals interested in work or volunteer experiences as peer providers. (volunteer work week max of 20 hours)

Volunteer or work opportunities you may obtain can include group facilitation, peer coaching, navigating health/benefits systems and advocacy. You can work up to 20 hours per week on a volunteer basis or up to full time as a paid employee. Employment offers may be extended to you from local agencies as a result of your search efforts during this period as well, and these positions can be accepted in lieu of volunteering.

You are not required to start work or volunteer experiences immediately, however attending the job fair will give you invaluable network contacts that can be used later during your search for employment.

III. Competitive Employment Support

Upon completion of the classroom portion of the Academy, you have the option to move directly into employment! This class provides you with mutual support for your job search. Also, agencies seeking peer providers often contact us directly to fill part-time and full-time positions. We discuss these opportunities in regularly sent emails that you will be a part of. We also offer free Employment Support Services from resume building to on-the-job coaching. You also have the benefit of returning to the mini peer provider job fair at later dates if desired to connect with employment opportunities.

Benefits of the MHA Peer Training Academy

Although it is not necessary to attend and/or complete MHA's Peer Training Academy in order to become employed as a peer, our program offers unique opportunities and benefits that other employment outlets do not offer.

1) Classroom Instruction

You will be taught by professionals that have or do currently work in the field. You'll practice the material along with your classmates to develop your competency and understanding. You will be studying alongside your peers and have discussions with trainers and staff in ways that will bring to life the information you're learning.

2) Teamwork Education (Cohort based)

Both students and staff work together to secure a safe learning environment. You'll learn to work in a group setting and be part of a team – a vital workplace skill. And most important to our students – you will not be alone in the process. You will have other individuals learning the same material that you can connect with and learn alongside.

3) Supportive Peer Staff

Our staff provides support throughout your participation in the program. As a peer run program, we understand the strengths that peers bring to the recovery process. It is our intention that you discover for yourself your greatest asset – your own personal lived experience. You'll have opportunities to work with an employment specialist during your training for support through your employment search and retention.

4) Graduation Achievements

We celebrate the accomplishments of MHA graduates in two ways. First by holding a small student only party during the last day of class instruction where they will receive a class completion certificate for their efforts. Second upon gaining state certification, your name is added to a list of individuals who are invited to a graduation ceremony where you, your invited guest(s) and our program supporters come together to celebrate your accomplishment. Graduates receive certificates of program completion; partner agencies receive recognition and award and everyone experiences a great afternoon of community!

5) New York Peer Specialist Certification Preparation

You will attend twice weekly Peer Study Groups to facilitate optimal learning experiences to enhance your training and employment goals. Completing your online training for state certification can increase your chances of gaining employment. The New York Certified Peer Specialist credential application is a simple, but detailed process. Our Senior Peer Support Specialist can provide the support you need to accomplish this part of your goal.

*Note: The Peer Specialist Certification is a New York State initiative of the Office of Mental Health – Consumer Affairs and is separate from our peer training program. For more information about the New York State Peer Certification process/application, please contact:

*New York Peer Specialist Certification Board
204 Second Street, Albany, NY 12210
<https://www.NYPSCB.org>*

Considerations for Successful Completion of the MHA Peer Training Academy

The MHA Peer Training Academy's design works on a group level: All expectations, standards, structure, and rules support the safety and success of the entire body of students, as a group. The standards ensure equity for all students and offer effective methods for employment preparation as well as self-directed recovery. Students often find support through each other in the classroom, with the added benefit of having the cohort for support.

The MHA Peer Training Academy is employment-focused, which means:

The training and staff are focused on your ability to obtain and maintain work as a peer specialist and will take into consideration each individual's strengths and skill sets to help facilitate success. Each student is expected to support their own well-being while abiding by the program's structure and design.

The MHA Peer Training Academy is meant to be followed "as is", which means:

The program cannot be 'divided' up and students are expected to commit to the 6-week class schedule. *A maximum of 3 days can be missed, any more than 3 will result in having to withdraw from the program. Students who withdraw, or do not complete the program on the first attempt, will have the option to re-enter the academy during the next academy session.* If you have any concerns or questions regarding the absentee policy, please reach out to the Senior Peer Support Specialist.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a typical class like in the MHA Peer Training Academy?

Each day for the classroom portion of the program, we encourage all students to arrive 15 min before class begins. You'll have time to settle into your classroom, have a snack, chat with your classmates and take care of any personal needs before the session starts. Required attendance is 4 hours (10 am to 2:30 pm), and you will receive a short 30-minute break midway. Classes can include guest speakers, power point slides, workshops, worksheets, and lots of discussions. You'll also have opportunities to share your experiences during these topics and discuss your state certification progress with your classmates. If you have any needs for learning, please remember to mention these to the Senior Peer Support Specialist.

2. How much does the MHA Peer Training Academy cost?

This MHA program is free of charge for all participants, as are all programs. The online courses required for state certification and the state certification itself are also free due to generous funding NYSOMH (New York State Office of Mental Health) Office of Consumer Affairs. If you are currently working with an ACCES-VR Counselor, please indicate this on your application, so that we can connect with them to better support your training.

3. Do you offer any financial help/bus-fare during the training?

It is your responsibility to find transportation to and from class each day. We want to stress that this program is designed to help individuals with mental health lived experience gain employment. Therefore, it is crucial that applicants also think about independent methods of transportation and living arrangements that will be necessary to make this goal achievable. MHA Staff can offer support to help find transportation methods if this is a challenge.

4. I'm interested in attending the MHA Peer Training Academy, but I have a long-standing weekly appointment that conflicts with classroom time. What should I do?

If you are accepted into the MHA Peer Training program, please note we have guidelines regarding absenteeism to ensure each student's knowledge and competency from the various trainings. We suggest that you attempt to book your appointments so that they do not conflict with the 6-week class schedule. *The program carries a strict 3 missed day policy. If rescheduling is an issue, please reach out to the Senior Peer Support Specialist.*

5. *I'm concerned about my history of incarceration and/or convictions. How will that affect my chances of actually getting work?*

It's crucial to have a conversation about your concerns regarding this type of history before training begins so that we can better assist you with your employment goals. Convictions that typically prohibit or limit employment in human services:

- Sexual assault
- Arson
- Felonies against vulnerable populations (such as children, elderly, disabled persons)
- Violent crimes within the past 10 years

This list is not all-inclusive and there may be other convictions that may prevent successful employment in human services. Please check the Justice Center's website for more details:

<https://www.justicecenter.ny.gov/criminal-background-check-cbc-process>

6. *I feel concerned about my benefits, can I work part-time as a peer specialist?*

Yes, there are full-time, part-time and per diem peer specialist jobs. Please check on the websites www.ccsi.org or www.indeed.com for examples of work available. In addition, if you have questions, you have the option to speak with one of our Employment Team, who can assist you in determining how work might affect your benefits.

7. *This program requires a great commitment of time – can you guarantee me employment?*

The Mental Health Association has established strong relationships and a positive reputation among local agencies that employ peers. We partner with local agencies and connect them with the MHA Peer Training Academy for employment candidates through our Peer Employment Job Fair at the end of each session.

We're always speaking with current working MHA Peer Training Academy graduates to ensure we offer information and training that supports real life situations. This program works *if you work it!*

With all that said – we can't guarantee you will find work. It is up to you to commit to the program as well as to your personal growth and competency to work in the field. Our staff will work with you to identify employers with gainful opportunities.

8. *The MHA Peer Training Academy sounds great – I'd like to help empower others in their recovery, but I need to start working now. What should I do?*

The MHA offers an Intensive Supported Employment (I.S.E.) Program – a supportive employment service to help people in mental health recovery gain employment of their choosing. The program is an on-going, year-round enrollment basis. If interested, please call our main line 585-325-3145 and ask for an Employment Specialist.

9. *Is there any support for me once I start working?*

The MHA offers job coaching and mentoring services to help people in mental health recovery maintain employment of their choosing. In addition, we offer work related benefits advisement services to assist you in making decisions regarding SSDI/SSI/Medicare/Medicaid benefits while working. If interested, please call our main line 585-325-3145 and ask to speak with a member of the Employment Team.

10. *Where do I go to learn more about the Family Peer or Youth Peer Advocate Certification?*

Through our office, you can learn about Family Peer Advocacy from our Agency Ambassador, Sam, at: sbeach@mharochester.org or our Family Support Services at 585-325-3145.

This credential is a New York State initiative of Families Together NYS and is not provided through our peer training program. For further information about the Family Peer Advocate Certification process/application, please contact:

*Families Together in NYS - Department of Workforce Development
737 Madison Avenue, Albany, NY 12208*

<https://www.ftnys.org/workforce/family-peer-advocate-credential/>

ENROLLMENT APPLICATION PROCESS

Please read and follow the application instructions of this packet.

Please print all responses neatly.

When your initial enrollment application is received, you will be contacted by phone to set up an appointment for an interview. Attempts to contact you at the information provided will **only occur three (3) times**. If there is no return contact within those three attempts, *your application will be considered withdrawn.*

After the interview and all documents are received, you will receive confirmation your application was accepted and the status of your enrollment.

Applicants will know their status before the training term starts via email.

You will receive a letter of enrollment before the session is set to begin.

(If contact information changes after application is submitted, it is your responsibility to inform MHA of these changes. *This includes changes of email, address, or phone numbers.*)

You may choose to submit a completed application with all documents and interview questions in the form of an essay. You are still required to come into the office for an interview. Enrollment applications can be submitted by being dropped off or mailed to:

Mental Health Association of Rochester/Monroe, Inc.
Peer Training Academy
274 N. Goodman St., Unit D103
Rochester, NY 14607

Applications and supporting documents must be received 10 days before the start date.

Admission Status:

NOT ACCEPTED – If your application is not accepted, we will provide the reason(s) with recommended changes of how you can correct your enrollment application.

ACCEPTED – An email or verbal invitation will be extended to those who are accepted into the class. *It is your responsibility to respond promptly.*

LETTER NOTIFICATION – After you have received an email to confirm acceptance and enrollment into the current class, you will receive an enrollment letter in the mail stating the location, date and time of the first day of class participation.

WAITLIST – If you have completed an enrollment application (including all documents) during the middle of a session, you will be notified that your completed application will apply to the next available start date in the order received.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Please complete all the information requested truthfully and accurately. Misrepresenting, omitting and/or providing false information is not recommended.

ENROLLMENT APPLICATION: Please complete page 9: Demographics, optional ACCES –VR Involvement, and optional survey. Keep page 8 for your own records. Return page 9 to our offices. You can also go online to our website and apply online: <https://www.mharochester.org/mha-peer-training-academy-application/> Upon receiving the enrollment application form, a Senior Peer Support Specialist will reach out to you by phone to arrange a time for an interview.

THE INTERVIEW: During the informal interview you will meet with a staff member and be asked the following questions.

- *What is the role of a peer provider as you understand it?*
- *How long have you been in recovery? Please describe your recovery plan.*
- *Why do you want to become a peer provider?*
- *What do you intend to do after completing the MHA Peer Training Program?*

You will also be asked about your educational background, entitlements, available character references and job history (see below).

ITEM #1 - EDUCATIONAL DOCUMENT: Please submit one of the following:

- a copy of your high school diploma or transcript
- a copy of your high school equivalency/TASC/GED certificate
- a copy of your college/university diploma or transcript

The New York Peer Specialist Certification Board as well as most employers in human services require an applicant to have a minimum of high school diploma or HSE/TASC/GED to be certified and hired by an agency. Since our program is employment-focused, we want to ensure that each student has attained this educational requirement. Don't have one of these documents? Please reach out to the MHA for assistance in connecting to solutions that can help you get started.

ITEM #2 - TWO LETTERS OF CHARACTER REFERENCE: We are looking for people to speak about you in a way that demonstrates your commitment to self-direction, self-awareness, and personal responsibility for your own recovery as well as a commitment to contributing to others. Good places to find character references can include friends, co-workers, neighbors, team leaders, sponsors, or spiritual leaders – Someone who can talk about your recovery journey. ***No relatives and current or past providers please (including therapists.)***

ITEM #3 - A RESUME OR BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WORK HISTORY:

We are looking for a resume or a description of your work and/or volunteer activities. If you don't have a current resume, send in what you have. You will have the opportunity to edit this document over the course of the 4-week instruction period. If you don't have a resume at all, just send in a brief list of your work and volunteer activities with dates that our Employment Specialist can use to create one for you.

MHA Peer Training Academy Enrollment Checklist

For more information about the enrollment, please refer to the FAQ section of this application.

Please refer to page 7 for details on each item.

APPLICANT NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____

- 1. Enrollment Application (page 9 of this packet):**
- Handed in | mailed in | online submission*
 - Interview Date/Time: _____*
- 2. Interview – Please take notes on the following 4 questions:**
- What is the role of a peer provider as you understand it?*
 - How long have you been in recovery? Please describe your recovery plan/journey.*
 - Why do you want to become a peer provider?*
 - What do you intend to do after completing the MHA Peer Training Program?*
- 3. Copy of an educational document(s) (only one required):**
- a copy of your high school diploma or transcript*
 - a copy of your high school equivalency/TASC/GED certificate*
 - a copy of your college/university diploma or transcript*
- 4. TWO Letters of Reference:**
- Reference Name: _____*
 - Ph/Email: _____*
 - Reference Name: _____*
 - Ph/Email: _____*
- 5. Resume (if available or an outline of work/volunteer history)**

Please submit documents as soon as possible to our office.

You're welcome to bring your documents to our office or mail them to (do not send originals please):

Mental Health Association of Rochester/Monroe Inc.

**MHA Peer Training Academy
274 N. Goodman St., Unit D103
Rochester, New York 14607**

Application Deadlines:

Applications with supporting documents are due ten (10) days before each start date.

Any application received after the deadline may be considered for the current term only up to three days into the session and if space is available. Otherwise, applications will be considered for the next available session.

***For questions, information or to get the next start date, please contact the
Peer Training Academy @ 585-325-3145***

ENROLLMENT APPLICATION

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

LEGAL NAME (First & Last): _____ PRIMARY LANGUAGE: _____

PREFERRED NAME: _____ ARE YOU OVER 18? Yes No

PRONOUNS: _____ GENDER IDENTITY: _____ COUNTY: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____ PHONE NUMBER: (_____) _____

EMAIL: _____ ARE YOU EMPLOYED? Yes NoCAN YOU PROVIDE PROOF OF HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION (an equivalency or higher)? Yes NoDO YOU HAVE RELIABLE TRANSPORTATION TO ATTEND CLASS? Yes No

Please explain: _____

HAVE YOU ACCESSED EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN THE LAST 3 MONTHS?*(ie. CPEP or a Psych ED. This doesn't include regular therapy or counselling sessions. Your answer will not disqualify you from enrollment, rather it allows us to better support you on your recovery path.)*Y N If Yes, enter date: _____**ACCES-VR INFORMATION**Are you currently enrolled in ACCES-VR (formerly known as VESID)? Yes No

IF YES: ACCES-VR Counselor Name: _____

Phone/Email: _____ Date of last Contact: _____

 I would like the MHA to work with my ACCES-VR Counselor to support my peer specialist training.IF NO: Were you ever enrolled in ACCES-VR? Yes No If Yes, which year: _____Has ACCES-VR sponsored you for any other training? Yes No

What training? _____

CO-EXPERIENCE SURVEY

The Mental Health Association Peer Training Academy welcomes a diverse student makeup of persons with co-experiences – people with a mental health diagnosis who also have other lived experiences, such as military veterans, LGBTQIA+, incarceration, housing instability and/or substance use. This diversity of experience reflects the needs and perspective of mental health service users – the very people MHA graduates will be supporting in their work. It's important to us as a peer program that our classroom reflects the people we support.

 I have read the above paragraph and agree to answer the following questions to the best of my ability.**INCARCERATION:** Have you experienced incarceration for more than 3 months? YES NO**SUBSTANCE USE:** Do you have alcohol/substance use recovery experience? YES NO**HOMELESSNESS:** Have you experienced housing instability? YES NO**LGBTQIA+:** Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community? YES NO**MILITARY VET:** Are you a military vet? YES NO

DATE RECEIVED:

CONTACT LOG: