



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 career focused, classroom-based preparation program with support to gain employment or work experience. This will specifically train people with mental health recovery to work as Peer Specialists in human service agencies. With full participation in this program, you will be able to gain the skills necessary to become certified in New York State and seek employment in peer provider roles.

The MHA Peer Training Academy consists of two parts:

I. Classroom Training (6 weeks – 3 days per week)

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

Professional Development – Through our academy the course topics not only address the how/why of the peer profession, but also offer more knowledge, tools and skills that will form a well-rounded practice for peer services.

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

Individual Wellness – Peer Specialists need to be self-aware and have a keen grasp of their own self-care and recovery tools. Our training provides a solid foundation of self-directed recovery tools that every effective employee needs.

II. Career Development

You will have opportunities to work with MHA Staff to meet your goals in 3 ways:

- 1) Take part in a comprehensive assessment to develop a plan for finding volunteer opportunities or paid work.
- 2) An opportunity to work with staff for certification coaching; support to complete the modules necessary for state certification, as well as assistance when you are ready to apply for the certification.
- 3) An opportunity to speak with staff about benefits advisement for those that collect them.

Upon completion of the classroom instruction, you will have an opportunity to network and interview with a diverse group of agencies from the Rochester area at the MHA Peer Provider Job Fair. This is specifically for individuals interested in work or volunteer experiences as peer providers. By completing the classroom portion of the Peer Training Academy, you can come to any of the future Peer Provider Job Fairs that are held at the end of each session.

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.

Benefits of the MHA Peer Training Academy

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

1) Peer Instruction

You will be taught by Peers that have worked or currently work in the field. You will study alongside your cohort and have discussions with presenters 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 practice the material along with your classmates to develop your competency and understanding. 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. Our intent is for you to discover for yourself your greatest asset – your own personal lived experience.

3) **New York Peer Specialist Certification Preparation**

As part of the class programming, you will attend our Study Group, twice weekly; this will be to facilitate an optimal learning experience that can enhance your certification and employment goals. Completing your online training for state certification can increase your chances of gaining employment. The New York Certified Peer Specialist (NYCPS) credential application is a simple, but detailed process. Your instructor can provide the support that you need to accomplish this part of your employment goal.

*Note: The New York Certified Peer Specialist (NYCPS) 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>

4) **Supportive Peer Coaching**

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. Time has been set aside during each week for you to utilize these supports to work through the state certification process. You'll also have a referral to work with an employment specialist during your training to support your employment goals.

5) **Graduation Achievements**

To fully complete this program, there are three steps:

- 1) Participation in and completion of the 6-week classroom instruction with the MHA
- 2) Completing the 13 Core Courses online through the Academy of Peer Services (APS)
- 3) Applying for Provisional certification with the New York Peer Specialist Certification Board

By completing the steps listed above, we celebrate the accomplishments of PTA graduates during an annual graduation ceremony where you are recognized with a certificate of accomplishment. You and your guest(s) will be invited to enjoy an afternoon of celebration.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Do I need to have my own laptop and internet access?

No. Having your own laptop is not required nor is having internet access. While it would be helpful, it's not required to complete the MHA Peer Training Academy Program. Twice weekly you'll have an opportunity to participate in our APS Study Group, which are held in a space that has access to computers and internet.

During APS Study Groups, bring note taking supplies, and headphones or earbuds if you have some, you can also bring your own laptop if you have one. You will be using the internet to access the Academy of Peer Services core courses. You can also discuss the courses, help and get help from your fellow classmates and instructor.

2. What does a typical class look like at the Peer Training Academy?

We encourage all students to arrive 15 min before class begins. You'll have time to settle into your classroom, grab a drink, chat with your classmates and take care of any personal needs before it starts. Required attendance is 4 hours (10 am to 2:30 pm) with a short 30-minute break midway for lunch. You are welcome to bring a bag lunch and water bottle from home. Class Instruction days 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 with your classmates.

If you have any needs for learning (ie. accessibility needs or concerns), please remember to mention these to your instructor.

3. Are the online modules required?

Yes. The only pathway to state certification as a New York Certified Peer Specialist (NYCPS) is to complete the 13 Core Courses on the Academy of Peer Services (APS) website. Their website is free to use as long as you live and/or work in NYS. During Orientation Day, the Presenter will discuss this website, and certification requirements.

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

Currently, this MHA program is free of charge for all participants. The online courses required for state certification are free due to generous funding through NYSOMH (New York State Office of Mental Health) Office of Consumer Affairs.

5. I don't live in Rochester, can I apply?

Yes! The MHA operates the Peer Training Academy in Monroe, Livingston and Ontario Counties. Residence of these counties are encouraged to apply. When your application is received it will be distributed to the appropriate contact for the county that you live in.

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

It is your responsibility to find transportation to and from class each day. It is crucial that applicants also think about independent methods of transportation that will be necessary to make this goal achievable. MHA Staff can offer counsel to help find transportation methods if this is a challenge.

7. I'm interested in attending, but I have a long-standing weekly appointment that conflicts with classroom time. What should I do?

We have guidelines regarding absenteeism to ensure each student's knowledge and competency. We suggest that you attempt to book your appointments so that they do not conflict with the 6-week class schedule. Please bring any schedule conflicts to the attention of your instructor prior to the commencement of class.

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

It's crucial to have a conversation with an MHA Employment Specialist about your concerns regarding this type of history prior to the start date, so that we can better assist you with your employment goals.

While it is the agencies who have the final say to whom they will extend employment offers to, it is up to you to determine how you would like to address anything that comes up in a background check. Employment Specialists are available to discuss these matters.

Convictions that typically prohibit or limit employment in human services:

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

This list is not all-inclusive and there may be other convictions that may prevent employment in human services. For more information, please go to the Justice Center website:

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

9. I feel concerned about my benefits, what should I do?

There are part-time and per diem Peer jobs for those interested. The MHA has a Work Incentives Benefits Advisor, who can assist you in determining how work might affect your benefits. If you are interested in this, please ask about a referral.

10. 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 Provider Job Fair at the end of each session.

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.

11. What happens if my application is not accepted?

If your application is not accepted, we will contact you and provide the reason(s) with recommended changes of how you can correct your enrollment application. If your completed application is approved and received after the deadline, your name will be placed on the waitlist for the next session. You will be contacted and given information on the session you are eligible to enroll in.

12. 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 Ambassador, Sam, at: sbeach@hharochester.org or our Family Support Services at 585-325-3145. This type of credential is an initiative of Families Together NYS and is not provided through our peer training program at this time. For further information about the Family Peer Advocate or Youth Peer Advocate training or certification process, 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.

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 will be made through the information you provided. If there is no return contact within three attempts, *your application will be withdrawn.*

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

Applicants will know their status before the training session starts. 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 a typed essay. You are still required to come into the office for an interview. Enrollment applications can be submitted by drop 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 30 DAYS BEFORE THE START DATE.***

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 and 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 staff member will reach out to you by phone to arrange a time for an interview.

THE INTERVIEW:

During an informal interview you will meet a staff member and discuss the following:

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

You will be asked about your educational background, entitlements, available character references and employment 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.

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 6-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 help create one with you.

NOTES

Please refer to page 6 for details on each item.

APPLICANT NAME: _____

1. Enrollment Application:

- Handed in | mailed in | online submission
- Interview Scheduled For (date/time): _____

2. Interview – Please consider the following 4 questions:

- What is the role of a peer provider as you understand it?
- Please describe your recovery plan/journey. How long have you been in recovery?
- 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, through mail or in person, to our office.
(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 thirty (30) days before each start date.
Any application received after the deadline 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:

(Office Use Only MHAPTA vs.01.2025)