



# CARE Act

## Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment Act

### SAMPLE PEER SUPPORT WORKER RECRUITMENT RESOURCES

This document provides sample peer support worker recruitment resources designed to support counties in developing job descriptions, interview processes, and role expectations for peer support positions within county behavioral health (BH) Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Act teams. These sample recruitment resources focus on peer support workers, but they can be adapted to focus on providing family peer support work based on the needs of the county BH recruitment and hiring goals.

County BH teams should thoughtfully customize all content—including responsibilities, qualifications, workflows, and language—to reflect their local structure, staffing models, community needs, and program design, while ensuring responsibilities reflect the evidence-based practice of peer support. Roles within CARE teams vary across counties, and each jurisdiction is encouraged to adapt these samples to ensure alignment with county practices and operational requirements.

#### Sample Peer Support Worker Job Description

**Reports To:** Peer Support Supervisor or Program Manager

**Location:** [Indicate county and whether the position is in-person, hybrid, or remote]

**Status:** [Indicate Full-Time / Part-Time]

#### Position Summary

The peer support worker role is a member of the [Name of County Agency] Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Act team who uses their training in the evidence-based practice of peer support and their lived experience with mental health and/or substance-use disorder (SUD) recovery to provide person-centered, recovery-oriented support to individuals participating in the CARE process. This role focuses on building trust, fostering engagement, and promoting empowerment throughout the CARE continuum—from outreach and court proceedings, to care planning, and to graduation. While applicants who have received formal training and certification to

## CARE Act: Sample Peer Support Worker Recruitment Resources

become a Medi-Cal Certified Peer Support Specialist are encouraged to apply, individuals can seek this certification during their employment.

Key responsibilities could include:

- **Outreach and Engagement:**
  - Connect with individuals referred to CARE to explain the process and reduce barriers to participation.
  - Build rapport through culturally responsive and trauma-informed approaches.
- **Court Support:**
  - Accompany CARE participants to hearings and provide emotional support.
  - Help CARE participants understand court procedures and communicate preferences to counsel.
- **CARE Agreement and CARE Plan Development:**
  - Collaborate with the CARE team to co-create treatment plans that reflect the individual's goals and priorities.
  - Advocate for person-driven solutions and supported decisionmaking.
- **Ongoing Engagement:**
  - Maintain regular contact through calls, texts, and visits.
  - Support engagement with treatment plans and encourage self-advocacy.
- **Crisis Response:**
  - Assist individuals during setbacks or crises, using de-escalation techniques and recovery strategies.
- **Transition and Graduation:**
  - Help individuals connect to community resources and peer-run organizations post-CARE.
- **Qualifications**
  - Lived experience with mental health and/or substance use recovery, preferably with direct experience with court processes and SUD.
  - Completion of Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification (or willingness to obtain within [X] months).
  - Knowledge of trauma-informed care, cultural responsiveness, and recovery principles.
  - Strong communication and interpersonal skills.
  - Ability to maintain confidentiality and adhere to ethical standards.
- **Preferred Skills**
  - Experience working in behavioral health or peer support roles.
  - Bilingual skills are a plus.
- **Compensation and Benefits**

- Competitive salary based on experience and certification.
- Paid professional development and continuing education.
- Comprehensive and competitive benefits available.
- Opportunities for advancement.

### Interviewing Peer Support Applicants

Interviews for peer support roles should be approached with consideration for how this role is unique. Peer support workers are trained in the evidence-based practice of peer support and bring expertise grounded in lived experience, recovery, and relationship-based support. The interview should reflect the value of that perspective.

Whenever possible, the interview panel should include at least one team member with experience providing peer support and/or training in peer support competencies. This helps ensure that candidates are evaluated through a recovery-informed lens rather than solely through clinical or managerial expectations. The interview committee should have a clear understanding of the role the peer support worker will have on the team and the demonstrated value this service can add to the treatment experience of persons served.

As much as possible, the interview should feel more like a conversation than a test, with an emphasis on creating an equitable and welcoming environment. Candidates should not be expected to answer every question perfectly. Interviewers should reflect on their own biases, particularly around communication styles, self-disclosure, and assumptions about what a “typical” treatment team member looks like. Peer support workers may express themselves differently, and those differences are often strengths. Rather than prioritizing a particular personality type or communication style, interviewers should look for peer support candidates who demonstrate a supportive, recovery-oriented approach and a willingness to listen and adapt to the needs and preferences of the individual receiving services. These qualities are often stronger indicators of success than technically precise responses.

Interview questions for peer support workers should be applied equitably across other roles, which can help to reinforce the value of peer support within behavioral health teams. Interviewers should also avoid reinforcing bias—for example, by assuming that peer support workers hold fixed views about treatment approaches or are less open to evidence-based care than other members of the team. Interviewers should reflect on whether questions are being framed differently based on role rather than relevance. Ensure that expectations around professionalism, neutrality, and collaboration are applied consistently across all team members.

Consider incorporating some of the sample questions below when interviewing peer support workers. Also, keep in mind that the questions below are oriented toward peer support, although adaptations can be made to support the recruitment for a family peer support worker.

## Assessing Direct Lived Experience and Recovery Orientation

Interview Question	What the Question Is Assessing	What the Interviewer Should Be Listening For
<p><b>Please share your direct personal experience with recovery and how it shapes the way you support others.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Direct lived experience relevant to behavioral health, substance use, or systems involved in CARE.</li> <li>- The ability to reflect on recovery as an ongoing, self-defined process, not a fixed outcome.</li> <li>- Capacity to translate lived experience into intentional, ethical peer support, rather than advice-giving.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identification of lived experience without pressure to overshare or disclose unnecessary details.</li> <li>- Reflection on lessons learned (e.g., hope, autonomy, setbacks, trust-building).</li> <li>- Evidence that lived experience informs how support is offered, not what choices others should make.</li> <li>- Language that emphasizes empowerment, choice, and self-determination rather than compliance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What does peer support mean to you, and why is it important?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding of the distinct role of peer support versus clinical or case management roles.</li> <li>- Alignment with recovery-oriented, person-centered values foundational to CARE.</li> <li>- Awareness of how peer support relationships reduce stigma and build trust.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Definitions that emphasize mutuality, respect, shared humanity, and non-hierarchical relationships.</li> <li>- Recognition that peer support services help individuals navigate systems while maintaining autonomy.</li> <li>- Discussion of trust-building, normalization, and hope as key peer support contributions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How do you maintain boundaries while using lived experience?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding of ethical boundaries in peer support work.</li> <li>- Ability to use lived experience intentionally and appropriately.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concrete examples of deciding what to share and what not to share.</li> <li>- Language that emphasizes purpose-driven disclosure.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness of risks related to over-identification, role confusion, or emotional over-involvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognition of supervision, consultation, and self-reflection as boundary supports.</li> <li>- Responses that demonstrate the person’s ability to honor multiple pathways to recovery.</li> </ul>
--	---	--

## Evaluating Skills in Engagement and Advocacy

Interview Question	What the Question Is Assessing	What the Interviewer Should Be Listening For
<b>Describe a time you helped someone make an important decision.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Skills in supported decision-making.</li> <li>- Ability to foster autonomy without directing outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of open-ended questions, reflective listening, and validation.</li> <li>- Emphasis on the individual’s values, goals, and pace.</li> <li>- Avoidance of persuasion, pressure, or “knowing what’s best.”</li> </ul>
<b>Describe a time when you advocated for someone. What went well and what didn’t go well?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand the importance of engaging the individual throughout the process and supporting their choices.</li> <li>- Comfort navigating power dynamics respectfully.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparation steps (clarifying preferences with the participant beforehand).</li> <li>- Strategies for translating participant goals into clear, respectful language.</li> <li>- Strategies for engaging individuals to understand their needs and preferences.</li> <li>- Willingness to support the individual in advocating for themselves, if preferred.</li> </ul>
<b>Please describe any experience you have with behavioral health and court systems.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Familiarity with complex systems.</li> <li>- Insight into barriers participants face.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reflection on challenges such as stigma, system navigation, or power imbalance.</li> <li>- Understanding of how systems can feel intimidating or disempowering.</li> </ul>
<b>What challenges have you encountered in providing peer support and how could we improve on the peer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ability to recognize opportunities for improvement.</li> <li>- Insight into barriers participants face.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognition of challenges in how peer support is provided.</li> <li>- Concrete strategies for improvement.</li> </ul>

<b>support we provide?</b>		
----------------------------	--	--

## Testing Cultural Responsiveness and Trauma-Informed Practice

Interview Question	What the Question Is Assessing	What the Interviewer Should Be Listening For
<b>How do you ensure cultural responsiveness?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commitment to humility, curiosity, and adaptability.</li> <li>- Alignment with CARE's emphasis on person-centered engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Examples of asking about how a person's identity and/or culture shapes their world, rather than assuming.</li> <li>- Recognition of cultural, community, and identity-based strengths.</li> <li>- Avoidance of stereotypes or generalized statements.</li> </ul>
<b>What does trauma-informed care mean to you?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding of trauma-informed principles.</li> <li>- Ability to translate concepts into everyday peer support interactions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language around safety, choice, collaboration, building trust, cultural humility, and empowerment.</li> <li>- Communication of an understanding of how trauma impacts mental health, substance use, and associated recoveries.</li> </ul>
<b>How do you work to check your own biases when providing support to others?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Self-awareness and reflective capacity.</li> <li>- Openness to learning and growth.</li> <li>- Commitment to equity and respectful care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acknowledgment that bias exists rather than denial.</li> <li>- Willingness to pause and reflect on impact vs. intentions.</li> <li>- Accountability without defensiveness.</li> </ul>

## Problem Solving and Crisis Response

Interview Question	What the Question Is Assessing	What the Interviewer Should Be Listening For
<b>Tell me about a time you supported someone through a crisis.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experience with crisis support and distress tolerance.</li> <li>- Ability to reflect and learn from experience.</li> <li>- Understanding of the peer support role during crises.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasis on de-escalation, presence, and emotional support.</li> <li>- Recognition of limits and when to involve additional supports.</li> <li>- Respect for dignity of the person going through crisis moments.</li> </ul>
<b>If a CARE participant refuses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Application of non-coercive engagement practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Curiosity about underlying barriers or fears.</li> </ul>

# CARE Act: Sample Peer Support Worker Recruitment Resources

<p><b>to attend a CARE hearing, what would you recommend?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alignment with CARE’s recovery-oriented intent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trauma-informed framing rather than punitive responses.</li> <li>- Suggestions that preserve choice and dignity.</li> <li>- Collaboration and communication with the team without blaming the participant.</li> </ul>
---	---	--

## Use of Lived Experience, Boundaries, and Workforce Sustainability

Interview Question	What the Question Is Assessing	What the Interviewer Should Be Listening For
<p><b>What does a work wellness culture look like to you, and how would you contribute to that?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commitment to peer support.</li> <li>- Proactive contribution to wellness culture.</li> <li>- Skill in providing and receiving strength-based support and collaborating on teams.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sharing of concrete strengths-based, trauma-informed, and recovery practices and activities.</li> <li>- Collaboration with supervisor and fostering a supportive environment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How do you decide what parts of your lived experience to share in your role as a peer support worker?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Professional judgment in disclosure.</li> <li>- Role clarity.</li> <li>- Ethical use of lived experience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intentional, inspiring, brief, and relevant disclosure.</li> <li>- Focus on the benefit of the person served, not personal processing.</li> <li>- Ability to redirect back to the person’s own needs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How do you promote helping others navigate their own personal recovery pathway?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recovery oriented communication.</li> <li>- Capacity to differentiate personal history from others’ experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reflection, grounding, and checking assumptions.</li> <li>- Respect for different recovery paths.</li> <li>- Curiosity rather than certainty.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Can you describe a time when you supported a colleague in managing their well-being during a challenging period at work? What strategies did you use, and</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peer support skills.</li> <li>- Empathy.</li> <li>- Active listening.</li> <li>- Self-awareness.</li> <li>- Problem solving.</li> <li>- Use of healthy coping and boundaries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Examples of effective peer support.</li> <li>- Strategies discussed.</li> <li>- Lessons learned.</li> <li>- Self-care considerations.</li> </ul>

<p>how did you ensure both your well-being and theirs?</p>		
--	--	--

## Understanding Openness to Evidence-Supported Approaches

Interview Question	What the Question Is Assessing	What the Interviewer Should Be Listening For
<p><b>How do you support someone whose recovery plan includes treatments or interventions that differ from your own past experiences or preferences?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Respect for multiple pathways to recovery.</li> <li>- Ability to separate personal experience from professional role.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Non-judgmental language.</li> <li>- Willingness to support CARE participant choice.</li> <li>- Understanding that peer support workers are not there to promote a single approach.</li> <li>- Alignment with CARE’s individualized planning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How would you support an individual who is unsure about using medication or feels conflicted about it?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Comfort discussing sensitive treatment topics.</li> <li>- Ability to hold ambivalence without directing decisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Validation of concerns.</li> <li>- Encouragement of informed discussion with providers.</li> <li>- Support for autonomy and shared decision-making.</li> <li>- Avoidance of anti-medication or pro-medication bias.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How do you see yourself collaborating within a multidisciplinary team?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Team readiness and collaboration skills.</li> <li>- Understanding of complementary roles.</li> <li>- Respect for different forms of expertise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language that values lived experience as expertise.</li> <li>- Comfort communicating perspectives respectfully.</li> <li>- Understanding of how peer support worker input enhances clinical care.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Describe a time in which you helped support someone who was considering Medications for Addiction Treatment (MAT) and/or</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- General understanding of MAT, MAR, or harm reduction more broadly and/or a willingness to learn more.</li> <li>- Knowledge related to the increased risk of mortality for people who have opioid use disorder and are</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding of the importance of each type of MAT/MAR and that each of them are useful (rather than promoting one type over another).</li> <li>- Openness to learn about MAT/MAR if they have limited knowledge.</li> </ul>

## CARE Act: Sample Peer Support Worker Recruitment Resources

<p><b>Medication-Assisted Recovery (MAR) in their recovery journey, but felt ambivalent.</b></p> <p><b>If you do not have experience with this, how would you approach this type of request from a CARE participant?</b></p>	<p>not using MAT/MAR, or willingness to learn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Ability to help another person navigate treatment choices in a manner that avoids bias.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Support for multiple pathways to recovery.</li></ul>
--	--	--