



# Office of Mental Health

## **Q & A for Youth and Family Peer Advocate Workforce Expansion Grants: Ensuring Access to Diverse and Inclusive Peer Support**

Q1. Eligible applicants (Peer Support Champion Organizations) must be a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3), that is one the following:

A NYS OMH funded community-based organization that provides direct peer services to children with mental health needs and their families in the community through family peer and/or youth peer support.

An agency with OMH licensed or designated programs/services that offer credentialed family and/or youth peer services, defined as:

- Agencies with more than one OMH licensed or designated community-based programs authorized to offer family and/or youth peer services including, Children and Family Treatment and Support Services (CFTSS), Mental Health Outpatient & Treatment & Rehabilitative Services (MHOTRS) (clinic), Youth Assertive Community Treatment (Youth ACT)

Does a 501-3 (c) organization that is designated only as a CFTSS provider of the three “non-clinical” services listed below, meet the eligibility criteria for this grant?

1. Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services
2. Family Peer Support Services
3. Youth, Peer Support and Training Services

A: There is a typographical error in Section 2.4 Eligible Agencies. Correction is highlighted below.

Eligible applicants (Peer Support Champion Organizations) must be a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3), that is one the following:

1. A NYS OMH funded community-based organization that provides direct peer services to children with mental health needs and their families in the community through family peer and/or youth peer support.
2. An agency with OMH licensed or designated programs/services that offer credentialed family and/or youth peer services, defined as:
  - Agencies with one or more OMH licensed or designated community-based programs authorized to offer family and/or youth peer services including, Children and

Family Treatment and Support Services (CFTSS), Mental Health Outpatient & Treatment & Rehabilitative Services (MHOTRS) (clinic), Youth Assertive Community Treatment (Youth ACT)

In consideration of the above correction, the answer to this question is Yes. A 501(c)(3) organization that is designated by OMH as a Child and Family Treatment and Support Services (CFTSS) provide of Family Peer Support Services and Youth Peer Support Services is eligible to apply.

Q2. What type of organizations qualify as a Grassroots Organization and what should be included in a subcontract? Is it possible to provide a template?

A: Grassroots Organizations could be non-mental health community agencies and organizations (such as social and membership clubs, places of worship, community service agencies, agencies focused on specific populations, civic organizations, other specialized neighborhood entities that are well-positioned to know individuals that could be recruited to work in the peer workforce, etc.), with demonstrated experience serving diverse, disenfranchised and/or marginalized communities.

Q3. Page 22 of the RFP notes a possible allocation structure. Does this mean that there are other possible allocation structures? Is it a requirement that funds be paid to Grassroots Organizations? Is the structure of the Peer Stipend/Incentive allocation prescribed (per Page 18 in the RFP), or are other alternatives acceptable?

A: Yes. The allocation structure outlined in the RFP is provided as an example. There are other allocation structures, however, each grant must be allocated across the three categories listed in section 5.3 "Operating Funding." The three categories include Subcontracts with Grassroots Organizations, Peer Stipends/Incentives and PSCO funding. Awardees should allocate funding to maximize the number of youth and family peers that receive their provisional youth or family credential, are connected to employment, and begin to offer peer services under their provisional certification.

As per page 18, there are three possible levels of Peer Stipends/Incentives, and those amounts are prescribed. The first stipend, in the amount of \$250 will be issued to the individual upon registering and completing Level 1 of the Advocate Credentialing Pathway. The second stipend, in the amount of \$500 will be issued to the individual upon receipt of their provisional youth or family peer credential. The third stipend, in the amount of \$1500, will be issued as an employment bonus to the youth/family peers that have been connected to employment and are beginning to offer peer services under their provisional certification.

Q4. Are the 48 individuals who are required to complete Level 1 allowed to be a combination of Youth Peers and Family Peers?

A: Yes. The number of individuals that complete Level 1 of the Advocate Credentialing Pathway and receive a stipend/incentive in the amount of \$250 may be a combination of prospective youth peers and family peers.

Q5. Upon examining the RFP there is a reference to Section 2.10 intended to give a detailed description of the needed format and content requirements for the required response. Could you please tell me where we can locate this Section of the RFP. The version we are looking at goes from 2.9 to 3.1 and 2.10 is not listed in the table of contents. Any help with this would be most appreciated.

A: Section 2.10 is erroneously listed in this RFP. The correct section is 2.9.

Q6. We are interested in submitting an application for the Youth and Family Peer Advocate Workforce Expansion Grant. However, we are seeking clarification on the eligibility requirements, specifically whether applicants must be:

1. A New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) funded community-based organization, or
2. An agency with OMH-licensed or designated programs offering credentialed family and/or youth peer services.

We do not currently receive direct OMH funding, although we administer a number of city, state, and federally-funded programs in around mental health, workforce development, and peer support that seem to align well with the RFP's objectives. Given our alignment, we are wondering

1. Would there be any pathway for us to establish eligibility through OMH recognition, licensing, or designation before the proposal deadline on January 14, 2025?
2. Are there specific steps we could undertake to meet the eligibility criteria within the given timeframe?
3. Is there any flexibility in the eligibility requirements that might allow consideration of our extensive experience in peer support services?

A: No. Applicants must meet the eligibility requirements at the time of the RFP in order to submit an application.

Q7. Can we submit RFPs for two regions (ex. Central and Western NY)?

A: Yes, if eligibility requirements stated in section 2.4 "Eligible Agencies" are met for each of the regions included in the submission. If applicants are applying for more than one region, applicants must submit a separate proposal for each region for which they are applying.

Q8. If we are applying for two separate regions, do we need two applications or can it be combined into one application?

A: If applicants are applying for more than one region, applicants must submit a separate proposal for each region for which they are applying.

Q9. We missed the deadline for the Letter of Intent to Apply. Can we still apply for the grant?

A: Yes. RFP submissions were not contingent upon the submission of a Letter of Intent.

Q10. Please clarify if the proposal scope for the NYC region can focus on one of the boroughs (Bronx, Kings County, New York, Queens and Richmond) noted on page 13 of the RFP, or if the proposal scope for the NYC area is expected to cover all of the regions noted for the NYC region.

A: Each award should include a minimum of 3 contiguous counties or one borough in each region that will be served. Proposals will be ranked, and awards will be made to the applicants with the highest score in each of the OMH regions. After an award is made for a given county based on score, proposals including that county will be excluded from consideration. OMH reserves the right to request applicants modify their proposed catchment area if a higher scoring and awarded proposal contains an overlapping county.

Q11. Can an agency recruit from their own staff?

A: Yes, an agency can recruit from their own staff, but it is important to remember that these awards are meant to maximize the number of youth and family peers that receive their provisional youth or family peer credential, are connected to employment, and begin to offer peer services under their provisional certification. Current staff are permitted to take the training and receive the stipend if their intention is to offer and bill for peer services as a condition of their employment. However, this does not preclude the awardee from engaging and issuing a minimum of two, maximum of six, subcontracts with Grassroots Organizations throughout the region to grow a diverse and equitable youth and family peer workforce.

Q12. Can an agency recruit from their own support groups?

A: Yes, however, this does not preclude the awardee from engaging and issuing a minimum of two, maximum of six, subcontracts with Grassroots Organizations throughout the region to grow a diverse and equitable youth and family peer workforce.

Q13. Do community colleges/colleges/universities qualify as Grass Roots?

A: Yes

Q14. Can a peer acquire more than one certification providing they meet the criteria?

A: A peer could acquire more than one certification provided they meet criteria, however; for the purposes of this grant, an individual can only receive payment for each of the stipends once.

Q15. Can the sponsoring agency hire people we have recruited/trained?

A: Yes, the Grassroots Organization can hire individuals that they have recruited to participate in the youth and/or family peer credentialing if they will be offering and billing for peer services.

Q16. If an agency has OMH funded programs, are those staff eligible to take the training and receive the stipend for employment?

A: Yes. These awards are meant to maximize the number of youth and family peers that receive their provisional youth or family peer credential, are connected to employment, and begin to offer peer services under their provisional certification. Current staff are permitted to take the training and receive the stipend if they will be offering and billing for peer services as a condition of their employment. However, this does not preclude the awardee from engaging and issuing a minimum of two, maximum of six, subcontracts with Grassroots Organizations throughout the region to grow a diverse and equitable youth and family peer workforce.

Q17. Are PSCOs required to serve all counties listed within an OMH region (pages 19-20 of the RFP outline regions & counties)?

A: Each award should include a minimum of 3 contiguous counties or one borough in each region that will be served. Proposals will be ranked, and awards will be made to the applicants with the highest score in each of the OMH regions. After an award is made for a given county based on score, proposals including that county will be excluded from consideration. OMH reserves the right to request applicants modify their proposed catchment area if a higher scoring and awarded proposal contains an overlapping county.

Q18. Are PSCOs expected to employ Peer Advocates at the PSCO (RFP page 15, Stipend Three - "Issued upon connection to employment and offering of peer services using the provisional credential")?

A: The PSCO is expected to provide linkages to/offer employment options to individuals who receive a provisional Family or Youth Peer credential through partnerships with a wide array of mental health agencies so that they may continue to gain the experience necessary to receive their professional credential.

Q19. If expected to employ Peer Advocates at the PSCO, can this grant funding be used to support the positions?

A: This funding is not meant to support individual(s) in the provision of direct Youth Peer Advocate or Family Peer Advocate services but rather to expand the peer workforce and create a career pipeline for individuals with lived experiences. This funding is available to ensure that Youth and Family Peer Advocates have the support that they need for their professional development, including completion of the credentialing pathway. However, A PSCO may choose

to employ a Peer Advocate to manage the deliverables of this award as outlined in section 5.2 "Objectives and Responsibilities." Funding from this grant may be used to support deliverables management.

Q20. Are PSCOs expected to link Peer Advocates to employment (RFP page 15, Stipend Three - "Issued upon connection to employment and offering of peer services using the provisional credential")?

A: Yes, the PSCO is expected to provide linkages to/offer employment options to individuals who receive a provisional Family or Youth Peer credential through partnerships with a wide array of mental health agencies so that they may continue to gain the experience necessary to receive their professional credential.

Q21. Might GROs choose to employ Peer Advocates and can this grant funding be used to support the positions?

A: This funding is not meant to support individual(s) in the provision of direct Youth Peer Advocate or Family Peer Advocate services but rather to expand the peer workforce and create a career pipeline for individuals with lived experiences. This funding is available to ensure that Youth and Family Peer Advocates have the support that they need for their professional development, including completion of the credentialing pathway. However, A GRO may choose to employ a Peer Advocate to manage the subcontracted deliverables of this award as outlined in section 5.2 "Objectives and Responsibilities." Funding from this grant may be used to support deliverables management.

Q22. Page 2 references a career pipeline - please provide more detail on the career pipeline, as peer advocacy jobs are not plentiful.

A: This funding is meant to create a career pipeline for individuals with lived experience by supporting the recruitment, credentialing, and linkage of Peer Advocates to the workforce. The awardee would collaborate with agencies who offer peer support funded through Medicaid or State funds to connect new peer advocates to employment opportunities.

Q23. Is there existing funding available for employment of Peer Advocates?

A: This funding is not meant to support the employment of Youth Peer Advocates or Family Peer Advocates but rather to expand the peer workforce and create a career pipeline for individuals with lived experiences. This funding is available to ensure that Youth and Family Peer Advocates have the support that they need for their professional development, including completion of the credentialing pathway.

Q24. Will there be additional funding to sustain Peer Advocates in the workforce?

A: These grants do not provide additional funding to sustain Peer Advocates in the workforce.

Q25. What plans are in place to better fund Peer Advocate jobs, ongoing?

A: This is out of scope of the award.

Q26. What is the Minority Owned Business Enterprise goal?

A: 0%

Q27. What is the Women Owned Business Enterprise goal?

A: 0%

Q28. Are there character limits for each response in the proposal narrative?

A: There are no character limits to the application.

Q29. Are applicants required to submit an initial workplan through the SFS portal as part of the complete application, or is the detailing and submitting of such a workplan required only after award notification?

A: There is a workplan that needs to be filled out in SFS.

Q30. In Section 6.4, page 24 of the RFP, prompt 6.4 (j) indicates, "Describe the process that will be used to link individuals who receive a provisional Youth or Family Peer credential to the agencies in (h) above and describe..."

Should the reference to "(h)" instead be a reference to "(i)"?

Relatedly, in the Word template provided among the SFS portal attachments for applicants to complete the application, should this same reference to "(h)" instead be a reference to "6.4.9" in that Word Document, which corresponds directly to instruction/prompt 6.4 (i) in the RFP/PDF document?

A: Yes, the reference in 6.4(j) should be to 6.4(i) and not 6.4(h).

Q31. Clarification on Earning the 100 Hours for Provisional Credential Application: The RFP does not mention that recruits must earn 100 hours to apply for the provisional credential. Could you please clarify the process by which recruits are expected to accumulate these hours? Is this a requirement, and if so, what are the expectations on how the hours will be accumulated?

A: The requirements to earn Provisional Certification for Family Peer or Youth Peer Advocate does not include a minimum number of demonstrated hours providing the service(s). Please

refer to Families Together in New York State for credentialing requirements. [Workforce Development - Families Together in NYS](#)

Q32. Pre-Screening and Staff Exclusion List: We understand that youth and family peer recruits must meet specific hiring requirements, including passing various clearances. However, the RFP does not explicitly mention pre-screening protocols to ensure recruits meet these criteria, such as checks against the Staff Exclusion List (SEL), State Central Registry (SCR), Sex Offender, and the Justice Center, for example, and eligibility to work in the United States. Not knowing if a possible recruit is able to pass the Staff Exclusion List or other necessary screenings for the youth and family peer position, until after the fact for example. Could you clarify whether pre-screening is required before recruits can be enrolled in the program, and if so, what specific requirements or processes will be necessary to ensure compliance?

A: Pre-Screening is not a requirement for individuals to participate and earn their Provisional Youth or Family Peer Credential (Stipend One and Two). It is the responsibility of the hiring agency to verify that individuals meet specific hiring requirements. Stipend Three is issued upon an individual being connected to employment and offering peer services using their provisional certification.

Q33. Requirements for Assisting Recruits with Gaining Employment: The RFP indicates that assisting recruits in obtaining employment is a key deliverable. However, the RFP does not provide details on the expectations for demonstrated experience required for hires. We would appreciate further clarification on what qualifications or experience (e.g., prior peer support work, lived experience) are necessary for youth and family peer advocates to be hired into these roles. Ensuring that recruits possess relevant skills and experience is critical for providing the highest quality of service to the youth and families we aim to support. Can you confirm if this is a requirement, and how it should be incorporated into our recruitment and support strategies?

A: The deliverable in question requires the PSCO to “Provide linkages to/offer employment options to individuals who receive a provisional Family or Youth Peer credential through partnerships with a wide array of mental health agencies so that they may continue to gain the experience necessary to receive their professional credential.” There are specific and necessary qualifications and experience that an individual must possess to receive a Provisional Youth or Family Peer Credential. Please refer to Families Together in New York State for credentialing requirements. [Workforce Development - Families Together in NYS](#)

Q34. Is there any limit to the number of pages (type/font/margins) for the proposal narrative section?

A: There is no character limit in the proposal narrative section.

Q35. The RFP refers to appendices. Where are they located?

A: These are located in the comments/attachments section in SFS.



Q36. A NYS OMH funded community-based organization that provides direct peer services to children with mental health needs and their families in the community through family peer and/or youth peer support. Is this referring to a specific family/ youth peer program(s) or are agencies that service families and youth with peer services eligible?

A: The eligible community based organizations are those specifically funded by OMH for the provision of family and/or youth peer support services provided directly to children with mental health needs and their families in the community. These services may be provided under a program funding code such as, but not limited to, 1650.

Q37. Once individuals go through the training and certification program, are there specific positions or funded by certain grants that would make them eligible for the last stipend payment? If yes, which program(s)?

A: To obtain Stipend Three is the amount of \$1500, the individual must be employed as a Youth Peer Advocate or Family Peer Advocate and must provide Youth Peer Support Services or Family Peer Support Services.

Q38. If the last stipend is contingent upon a certain position or funded via certain grants, does OMH anticipate that funding to support these programs will be forthcoming?

A: Funding to support the employment of Youth Peer Advocates or Family Peer Advocates is not included in these grants. However, Youth Peer Support Services and Family Peer Support Services are either funded through a state funded contract or billable to Medicaid if provided by a credentialed Youth Peer Advocate or Family Peer Advocate.

Q39. Can a peer support champion organization (PSCO) apply for two contracts within the same region?

A: Yes, a PSCO can apply for two awards within the same region. If applicants are applying for more than one award, applicants must submit a separate proposal for each award for which they are applying.

Q40. Upon reviewing the Request for Proposal, we have observed that Section 2.10, which is referenced in Sections 2.4 concerning additional prequalification information, Section 2.7 about required format instructions, and Section 3.10 pertaining to format and content requirements, and Section 4.2 regarding required components, is not included. Could you please advise us on where we might find or obtain Section 2.10?

A: Section 2.10 is erroneously listed in this RFP. The correct section is 2.9.

Q41. Is the OMH's expectation that awardees will serve the entire region identified?

A: No. Each award should include a minimum of 3 contiguous counties or one borough in each region that will be served. Proposals will be ranked, and awards will be made to the applicants with the highest score in each of the OMH regions. After an award is made for a given county based on score, proposals including that county will be excluded from consideration. OMH reserves the right to request applicants modify their proposed catchment area if a higher scoring and awarded proposal contains an overlapping county.