

PEER SPECIALIST BENEFIT FOR COMMERCIAL & MAPD: PROVIDER REFERENCE



Peer Specialists provide nonclinical support services for members with mental health and substance use diagnoses.

What is the Peer Specialist benefit change?

Beginning January 1, 2024, a new peer specialist benefit will be available for Commercial and Medicare Advantage (MAPD) members experiencing recovery and mental health challenges. The benefit will be available for members across all commercial and Medicare Advantage plans when services are received from a provider that contracts with Blue Cross. Additional resources can be found at: [For Providers | BCBSMN \(bluecrossmn.com\)](https://www.bluecrossmn.com/for-providers)

Peer Specialists can assist members with:

- Social connection that supports recovery
- Connecting to tools, resources, appointments, and care
- Dispelling stigma around mental health and substance use disorders
- Assisting with the development of recovery goals, modeling wellness, & resilience
- Engaging members with strength-based wellness strategies
- Family peer specialist supporting caregivers and youth

Peer Specialist qualifications and certification standards:

Peer Specialists have prior experience receiving mental health or substance use care and have completed the training and certification exam specified by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). All agencies interested in offering a peer specialist service must adhere to DHS requirements in addition to credentialing, contracting, and billing requirements with Blue Cross.

There are three types of peer specialists covered by this benefit who can support members' behavioral health needs.

- **Certified Peer Specialists:** have had a mental health diagnosis and are available to assist members with their recovery journey.
- **Certified Peer Recovery Specialists:** have had a substance use diagnosis and are available to assist members with their recovery journey.
- **Certified Family Peer Specialists:** have raised or are raising a child with a mental health or substance use disorder and are available to assist families and increase parents' ability to support the treatment goals of the child or youth **(This type of peer specialist is not covered for MAPD members).**

Member Eligibility Criteria:

- Members must have one of the following diagnosed mental health or substance use disorder to be eligible for this service.

○ Mental Health Disorders	○ Substance Use Disorders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Anxiety Disorders: F40-F41 ○ Bipolar and Related Disorders: F31 ○ Borderline Personality: F60.3 ○ Depressive Disorders: F32-F34 ○ Dissociative Disorders: F44 ○ Eating Disorders: F50 ○ Emotional Disturbance & Severe Emotional Disturbance F92-94, F98 ○ Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders: F42 ○ Schizophrenia Spectrum & Other Psychotic Disorders: F20-F29 ○ Trauma and Stressor Related Disorders: F43 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alcohol-Related Disorders: F10 ○ Inhalant Related Disorder: F18 ○ Opioid-Related Disorders: F11 ○ Sedative Related Disorders: F13 ○ Stimulant Related Disorders*: F14-F15 <p style="text-align: center;">*Not appropriate for caffeine or tobacco diagnosis.</p>

Authorization requirements:

- No prior authorization is needed to begin or continue service when a member meets diagnostic and insurance criteria (has a commercial or MAPD that is active).

Services are covered for a member as zero cost if provided by and in network provider:

- Outpatient mental health or substance use facilities and professional service providers that contract with Blue Cross.

If the provider is out of network, members will have to pay per their benefit plan:

- Outpatient mental health or substance use facilities and professional service providers that are **not** contracted with Blue Cross.

Services are not covered if provided:

- While a member is admitted to an inpatient or residential facility.

Network details:

- This benefit will be applicable to all BCBS MN provider networks.
- As a reimbursable service, it follows the current fee schedules and impacts all commercial and MAPD networks.
- Providers must be participating with Blue Cross for members to receive the benefit at zero cost share.
- For out-of-network providers, members will be liable for their plan cost share.
- The service is only available for Blue Cross Minnesota members.

Billing specifics:

- Code for billing is H0038 (self-help/peer services, per 15 minutes)
 - \$15.77 Commercial
 - \$15.77 Medicare advantage with a signed contract amendment

2024 Peer Specialist Services			
Code	Mod	Brief Description	Units
H0038		Self-help/Peer Services by Level I Certified Peer Specialist	15 minutes
	U5	Self-help/Peer Services by Level II Certified Peer Specialist	
	HQ	Self-help/Peer Services in a group setting	
	U8	Peer Recovery Specialist	
	HA	Certified Family Peer Specialist	
	HA HQ	Certified Family Peer Specialist group setting	

- The rates are the same for individual and group settings.
- There are no annual or lifetime visit/service limits for code H0038

Contact Blue Cross for:

- Questions regarding billing, authorizations, and eligibility can be directed to Provider Services at (651) 662-5200 or 1-800-262-0820, Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Provider toolkit: delivers answers to commonly asked questions from providers <https://www.bluecrossmn.com/providers/provider-toolkit>
- Contract and credentialing information can be found on our website at <https://www.bluecrossmn.com/providers/network-participation/join-our-network>.

Legal references:

[Minnesota Statutes 256B.0616](#) Mental Health Certified Family Peer Specialist
[Minnesota Statutes 245I.04](#) Provider Qualifications and Scope of Practice
[Minnesota Statutes 245I.06](#) Treatment Supervision

Contact DHS for:

- Agencies interested in employing Certified Peer Specialists must submit a Certified Peer Specialist Agency Request for Technical Assistance through the Department of Human Services. Technical assistance for employers will be provided by DHS Mental Health Division staff. For more information, please contact Shelley White at shelley.white@state.mn.us or 651-431-2518.