

The Power of Peer Support: Q + A with West Central's Peer Support Supervisor

By WCBH Staff

Peer Support is an important part of the therapeutic environment at West Central Behavioral Health (WCBH) and at community services nationwide. Peer Support Specialists, also known as Peer Navigators or Peer Specialists, draw on their own lived experiences to mentor and encourage individuals facing similar mental health or substance use recovery challenges while advocating for individuals and assisting in their care coordination (NH Behavioral Health Workforce Center).

As a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC), West Central provides an integrated, person-centered model of care. Collaborating with behavioral health professionals, peers are an integral part of team-based care models, providing connection, hope, and understanding that come from someone who has walked a similar path.

This unique role is one of nine required services for all CCBHCs, “a clear signal that lived and living experience belongs at the center of behavioral health care” (National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 2026). West Central currently has five Peer Support Specialists on staff across its New Hampshire locations. Our outreach team recently spoke with Peer Support Supervisor, Aubrey, to learn more about Peer Support and its important role at West Central and in the community.

Q: Can you tell us how long you've been with WCBH and your role as Peer Support Supervisor?

A: I've been with WCBH for a little over a year. As Peer Support Supervisor, I oversee our peer programs for adults, Rapid Response, and ACT, supporting our staff across locations. I'm also a peer support for adults currently.

Q: What is peer support?

A: Peer support meets someone where they are and advocates for individuals during their recovery journey, providing ongoing, judgment-free support. This advocate is part of a therapeutic team, drawing from their lived experience in mental health and/or substance use recovery to help clients navigate the mental health system, share tools, and offer guidance on how to apply them to everyday life.

Q: How do peers fit into counseling services at WCBH?

A: Peers meet one-on-one with individuals and also collaborate with their counselor, case manager, prescriber, and/or others to support them throughout their journey. While there

are differences between these roles, they share the same goal of supporting clients and providing the best possible care.

Q: Can you share some of the unique aspects of this role, and how it differs from but directly supports clinical work?

A: Peers typically meet with individuals in informal/relaxed locations. This could be at a community spot or sometimes at people's homes. Sometimes, meetings entail going for a walk together. There are times when we meet in an office, too.

Peers do not diagnose or provide medical advice—they are there to encourage, help build coping mechanisms and apply skills, and model healthy recovery. They cheerlead big and small successes and work to build peer-to-peer rapport.

Another unique aspect of this role is sharing one's own story when appropriate. This disclosure is not typical in other clinical roles, and it's an important part of creating an environment of support to let an individual know they're not alone in their experience.

These are just a few of the facets of this role that make it not only unique but also a powerful support in an individual's recovery journey. The peer is a teammate and a sounding board when you need one.

Q: How many Peer Support Specialists does WCBH have?

A: We currently have five Peer Support Specialists: two for Rapid Response, two for ACT, and one for adult programs.

Q: What is one thing you would like someone who is considering seeking help to know about peer support?

A: Peer support is a safe space. It's a space to work on things, and it's driven by the client—I'm not going to tell a client what to do. Our clients can play an active role in their recovery, and as peers, we support them every step of the way.

Resources

National Council for Mental Wellbeing. (2026, August 6). *Mental health peer support professionals in CCBHCs*. <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/resources/mental-health-peer-support-professionals-workforce-integration/>

Behavioral Health Workforce Center. (2026). *Peer support specialists - Career pathways*. <https://bhnh.org/peer-support-specialists>