

Webinar Transcript - Peer Recovery Support Services in Alaska Native Villages

Welcome to the Comprehensive Opioid Stimulant Substance Use Program, COSSUP, webinar, peer recovery support services for tribal communities in Alaska presented by Caley Small with Altarum, Caroline Lee with RurAL CAP, Sarah Chivers, with Cook Inlet Tribe Council, Bobby Jordan with Tanana Chiefs Conference and Jennifer Galvan with Alaska Behavioral Health.

And my name is Kevin Mariano. I am a project coordinator with the National Criminal Justice Training Center of Fox Valley Technical College. And I will be moderating for you today. Today's presentation is part of a webinar series of the Bureau of Justice Assistance Comprehensive Opioid Stimulants and Substance Use Program, COSSUP, which is transitioning from the Comprehensive Opioid Stimulant and Substance Abuse program, or COSSAP. The webinar is also part of a series for BJA's Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation Purpose Area 3 training and Technical Assistance program. This webinar is being delivered under an award provided by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this webinar are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Criminal Justice Training Center of Fox Valley Technical College or the US Department of Justice.

Our learning objectives for today are to summarize the core elements of peer recovery support services, PRSS, and associated benefits, describe various models that demonstrate how PRSS can be implemented within Alaska Native villages, identify common challenges associated with implementing PRSS in tribal communities, summarize the best practice for successful implementation of PRSS in tribal communities, including Alaska-specific models. With that, please launch the first poll question.

Our first poll question is, which of the following best describes your role-- tribal court official, law enforcement, peer recovery specialist, behavioral health, substance abuse treatment, other. And the results are we have tribal court officials at 13%. We have law enforcement at 13%, peer recovery specialist, 9%, behavioral health, substance abuse treatment at 3%, and other is at 63%. Sarah, I would like to turn it over to you for an opening blessing.

Thanks, Kevin. May the sun bring you new energy by day. May the moon softly restore you by night. May the rain wash away all your worries. May the breeze blow new strength into your being. And may you walk gently in this world and see its beauty all the days of your life.

Thank you for that beautiful blessing, Sarah. Caley, I will now turn the time over to you.

Great. Thanks, Kevin Hello, everyone. Good morning, and good afternoon. My name is Caley Small, and I'm a technical assistant specialist for the BJA COSSUP training and Technical Assistance Center on Peer Recovery Support Services at Altarum. Our training and Technical Assistance Center offers support to COSSUP grantees as well as other organizations and helps to implement peer support services in organizations across the criminal justice intercepts. I'm going to give you a brief overview of peer recovery support services, or PRSS, so that we're all on the same page on the language we're using here. And I'll also tell you about some of the supports and services that we offer at Altarum at the Training and Technical Assistance Center on PRSS and how you can request support around those services, should you need it.

So as most of you know or you are likely aware of, the criminal justice population has a disproportionately high rate of individuals who experience substance use disorders as well as co-occurring mental and substance use disorders when compared to the general population. And substance use and dependence rates among those involved in the system are more than four times that of the general population. In recent years, many people have begun to recognize the potential of peer recovery support services as an important resource for engaging and supporting these individuals as they navigate recovery. And that's the background for why our center exists. It's just to help support those different services.

So importantly to note is that PRSS is also a critical and central part of the efforts to address the opioid epidemic in the US, which is why this effort got started from the BJA COSSUP program. Peer supports are a vital part of the continuum of care, so, in other words, making sure individuals who are struggling with addiction continue to receive support and treatment no matter the setting that they're or where they are. Next slide, please.

So for those not yet familiar, peer recovery support services are an evidence-based model of care. And they consist of a qualified peer support practitioner or specialist who assist individuals in their recovery from substance use disorders and mental illness. Peer practitioners or specialists are people who have been successful in their recovery process and who help others experiencing similar situations. They really lead through understanding, respect, and mutual empowerment, and they help people stay engaged in the recovery process and reduce the likelihood of additional substance use.

Peer support services differ a little bit from things like professional treatment and mutual aid, so other treatment services. They can be delivered across a full continuum of care, regardless of whether or not a person or an individual is using treatment or other services. They can be offered before an individual enters treatment or when they're waiting for a service opening. They can also coincide with treatment services, and they can be done in tandem.

So peer practitioners support in four general areas, and I'll go over those briefly. The first one is emotional support, which involves providing empathy, caring, or concern that helps to bolster an individual's self-esteem and confidence. So this will look like providing coaching or mentoring. The next-- informational support, which may involve knowledge or information transfer or providing vocational skills. And this will look like maybe training for job readiness or self-advocacy.

The next is instrumental support, which involves providing concrete assistance to help others accomplish tasks, for example, finding housing or maybe childcare vouchers. And then last, affiliational support involves facilitating contacts with other people to promote social learning and recreational skills and build community. So for example, this may look like helping individuals arrange recovery-oriented outings or activities with other folks. So in general, the more robust the types of social support available to address any given recovery concern, the more likely that an individual seeking help will walk away with useful information. So peers offer support across this sort of spectrum.

And so there's a few core concepts in peer recovery support services that I'd like to go over so that everyone has the same understanding of these foundational concepts. The first is the idea that recovery is inherently linked to community. Recovery can mean different things to different people. But overall, recovery as a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. And the overarching purpose of peer recovery support services is to help individuals build and sustain a life of recovery. Peer practitioners really believe that this recovery can only happen in a community with the relationships, knowledge, and skills that a community offers. So they support recovering individuals by really focusing on community.

More specifically, they focus on creating a prosocial environment, building trusted relationships, using the recovery community's resources and assets, and providing a variety of models as the benefits as well as expectations of the life of recovery. And this is just to name a few. Next slide, please.

Another core concept in peer support is recovery capital. And recovery capital is the sum of resources that need to be mobilized within the individual, family, and community to support an individual in recovery. So PRSS focuses on strengthening existing and developing new recovery capital. So when a peer support specialist begins working with someone, they often initiate a recovery plan at their initial connection with an individual. An individual's recovery capital may be quite low, and so they focus on building that capital.

Long periods of substance use or current experience of the criminal justice settings can really deplete whatever recovery capital an individual might have. So it's really important to build that. Even the smallest of amount of recovery capital is a strength. So peer practitioners really help individuals to build this recovery capital over time. Next slide, please.

And then finally, another core concept is peer support is built on the idea that recovery exists on a continuum. So individuals progress in their recovery from stages through prerecovery engagement, recovery initiation and stabilization, maintenance, and long-term recovery. And understanding this, the peer practitioners meet individuals where they are. And they offer supports across this full continuum of the recovery process. So this can be prior to treatment, during treatment, post treatment, and even in lieu of treatment. They are designed and delivered to be responsible and appropriate to all stages of recovery. Next slide, please.

So given all that background, what does Altarum do? And what do we provide? Altarum runs the Training and Technical Assistance Center for Peer Recovery Support Services. And we provide support, as I said, to COSSUP grantees, states, communities, tribes, and others to help build and sustain PRSS programs. And that's part of a multidisciplinary effort to address the opioid epidemic in criminal justice settings. Our staff provide in-person and virtual consultations, facilitation training, and capacity building to support organizations. And we tailor our services to each setting. And we work in a number of both criminal justice settings and community settings to really help organizations build their PRSS programs. Next slide, please.

So just to be a little bit more specific, we provide organizations with the training and tools they need to successfully implement peer support services across the criminal justice intercepts. These include providing support around peer support resources, infrastructure, organizational learning, and organizational culture and climate, and then engagement partnership. And they look different within each of those areas of focus for each of the different organizations we help.

So in practice, what it looks like is our team provides in-person and virtual consultation for organizations who are looking to build their programs. We provide training and facilitation around core concepts in PRSS. So for example, this will look like helping to build trainings for new peers entering treatment settings or helping guide the recruitment and hiring process for peers. We also provide capacity building for PRSS organizations. And this could be building knowledge or skills they need to get to the next level in their program stage. And finally, we provide thought leadership in the field. So we gather gaps, strengths, and needs in the field and try to push the field forward in terms of releasing publications or materials that help other organizations in their journey to implement their peer support programs. You will hear more from RurAL CAP next about the collaborative effort Altarum has been graciously part of with RurAL CAP and NCJTC that has touched each of these services.

OK, so I've dropped a link to a two pager in the chat that provides information about one of our programs we offer at Altarum. It is a peer recovery support services and mentoring initiative that is essentially a year-long mentoring program that brings newer and more experienced peer programs together to learn and grow from one another. The peer mentoring program really focuses on building capacity in the mentee organization by sharing information and tips from those that are more experienced around these core activities that I just discussed.

And so that is the 50,000-foot view, I know. I went through that kind of quick. We have a lot of great presenters today. So that's just talking about peer recovery support services and what our program at Altarum offers to COSSUP grantees, states, communities, tribes, and others nationwide to help build and sustain PRSS programs. And you can contact me directly using my contact information on the screen if you'd like to know more, if you need information, if you need support, or if you'd like to get technical assistance on peer recovery support services.

With that, I'll turn it back over to Kevin. Thanks, Kevin.

Thank you, Caley, for the great information. And I will turn it over to Caroline.

Quyana. Thank you. Caroline Aranagial Lee, tribal justice coordinator for RurAL CAP under Alaska Tribal Justice Resource Center. Our program started in 2019 with a grant from CTAS Purpose Area 3 to provide free training and technical assistance to Alaska Tribal courts. Why peer recovery support services?

My grandmother taught me to help others. My namesake did the same for her community generations ago, making sure everyone in the community had what they needed. Peer recovery support services is much like that. There's a certification program you can go through for your community members to help others. They utilize, like Caley said, their life experiences to lift each other up in their own community.

Examples are re-entry participants. People that are returning from incarceration, they can be trained and certified to help other members returning in their community. Substance abuse and alcohol misuse problems are common in most of our communities. We can have recovery individuals get certified in peer recovery support services to help their community members in their community. We all know there's a lack of treatment in a lot of our smaller Alaska communities. Peer recovery support services is a tool to help build up our community members.

After treatment, after going to meetings and after healing begins, these people can help others and lift them up to heal. So many of our people have mental health issues. These are compounded by isolation, lost culture, and lost traditions. It's not the native way to leave people to suffer in silence. We need to have trained support in every community to lift our people up.

Peer recovery support services certification can be done online in your community. And peer recovery support services is sustainable. There are 229 federally recognized tribes in Alaska. Each tribe has their own culture. Each tribe has their own history. Who better to provide cultural-relevant peer recovery support services than a community member who has gone through it?

Your peer recovery support services is yours to design, yours to create with your culture from your community. In Reno, I was honored to sit at a table with the chief justice in their tribal court they designed. When they had somebody come in front of their court members as chief judge and her husband, the first thing they said to this person was [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] not asking about what they did or what happened, they asked [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]

This is, are you OK? That is the first thing they ask the person that came in front of their court. They made that protocol. They work to help each person and meet them where they're at to help them become whole again, to provide connection to the community so they can learn their culture and practice their tradition.

You make up your community. You can make up your peer recovery support services the way you need to make it in your own community. Next slide, please.

Our ancestors paved the way. My grandma taught me how to get along with others, how to help one another, and how to survive in our different climates and our different communities. Utilizing these teachings that we got from our ancestors, our elders, and our community members, our aunties, and our uncles can help strengthen your peer recovery support services in your community. You want to connect these people with other leaders in your community that can teach them how to berry pick, teach them how to fish, teach them how to cut their moose and catch them and do it in a safe way, thereby facilitating healing to these people that are a little lost. And when they heal, healing people lead to healthy communities.

This project was started in collaboration with RurAL CAP, Alaska Tribal Justice Resource Center, National Criminal Justice Training Center of Fox Valley Technical College, COSSUP and Altarum. It was a wish for me to have an Alaska Tribal training on their website to tell you that peer recovery support service is available here in Alaska. And we're going to hear from others that are practicing peer recovery support services here in Alaska in just a few moments.

During this project, we established a peer recovery support work group. We met with people that are practicing, like Sarah Chivers, Bobby Dorton, Jennifer Galvan, and other members in Alaska that are doing peer recovery support services and learned what they were doing, what's working, what's not. This workgroup would like to continue meeting and work on improving PRSS in Alaska.

If you members that are practicing peer recovery support services wouldn't mind putting your contact information in the chat, if you're OK with that, so others can reach out to you. You'll also hear from them in a few moments. We at Alaska Tribal Justice Resource Center provide free training and technical assistance to tribes in Alaska. If you're in need of training and technical assistance, please go to our website at www.atjrc.org, or click the link on the slide. A training and technical assistance form will pop up. You can complete that form, and scroll down, and submit it.

We also have Resource Basket Training and Technical Assistance here at RurAL CAP. They provide free training and technical assistance to Purpose Area 8, juvenile healing to wellness grantees, and Purpose Area 9, tribal youth program grantees. And you can get their form at that link provided on this slide at www.resourcebasket.org.

This is our staff for Alaska Tribal Justice Resource Center-- Joie Millett is our community development director, Kimberly Martus, our founder and is the Alaska Tribal Justice Resource Center supervisor. Galen Kelly is our tribal justice manager, and Caroline Aranagial Lee, the Tribal Justice coordinator. We have Adam Davis, who is the community development assistant. And we are currently looking for another tribal justice coordinator. Qu yana chin'an for your time.

Caroline, thank you for the great information. Sarah, the time is now yours.

Good morning, everyone. I am Sarah Chivers. I am the peer recovery supervisor at Cook Inlet Tribal Council's Recovery Services Department. Here at CITC, our mission is to work in partnership with our people to develop opportunities that fulfill our endless potential. Our values are interdependent, resilient, accountable, respectful, humorous.

At CITC, we kind of have this array of services available to every one of our participants-- child and family for people who are needing support raising children, who have OCS involvement, recovery services and our reentry team, employment and training services, youth empowerment. Our Alaska's People work with our participants to fill out job applications and do resumes.

Alaska Native Justice Center, we have Clare Swan Early Learning Center, Get Out the Native Vote, and the Native Youth Olympic Games Alaska. Our tribal partners here in the Cook Inlet region are Chickaloon, Eklutna, Kenaitze, Knik, Ninilchik, Salamatof, Seldovia, and Tyonek. So as our peer supports, our principles are looking at recovery-oriented, person centered-- every individual needs kind of their own treatment-- relationship focus, focusing on those relationships, interpersonal and learning to develop relationships with new people, and trauma-informed care.

Peer engagement-- so our peers initiate first contact with our participants, listening to what the participant's content is and the emotion that's being communicated. We also reach out to engage participants across a whole continuum of recovery. We have residential facilities. We have outpatient services. We have alumni services.

And we demonstrate genuine acceptance and respect. At the end of the day, we are all people. Demonstrating understanding of participant's experiences and feelings-- if we cannot listen, how are we supposed to help when people are coming in to talk? I feel like our team has the funnest job when working in a recovery services field, pure functions and events.

We do all sorts of things-- barbecues, potlucks. We take participants bowling. We do holiday parties. We take participants fishing. We've done movie nights. We do check ins. We go blueberry picking.

Trying to engage people in sober activities that keep them and their recovery safe, and the purpose-- to validate experiences and feelings for each person, encourage exploration and pursuits of other community roles, conveying hope by sharing our lived experience, celebrate participants' efforts and accomplishments, providing support to create concrete tasks and goals, appreciate and respect cultural, spiritual beliefs, and practices of participants and their families.

We have a variety of peer support meetings that we do for the community as well as for our participants. We do a group called Recovery Refresh three times a week. We have Warrior Down, a number of other peer support gatherings as well as the Red Road to Wellbriety. Recovery refresh focuses on the elder's meditation of the day, which is a white bison Wellbriety 12-step focusing on Native American traditional values. So this is our daily meditation. We discuss and we share lived experience with the peers and provide an opportunity for other peers to support one another in their recovery.

Warrior Down-- Warrior Down provides a relapse prevention and recovery support programs for Native Alaskans and American Indians, focuses on recovery coaching, setting goals, mind mapping, and creating safety plans for those uncertain events that could potentially arise. Peer support gatherings-- this is fellowship in recovery, being able to showcase that there are things that our participants can do that are fun and sober activities. We do community givebacks focusing on building Narcan kits for Project HOPE. We build brown sack lunches for participants, the homeless population. We work on various forms of outreach, especially with the homeless population. We do game nights, potlucks, and barbecues.

Our Red Road to Wellbriety. This is the Medicine Wheel and 12-step program that was developed to provide a cultural-based program for Native American people. The program was developed by White Bison based on the teachings of the Medicine Wheel, the Cycle of Life, Four Laws of Change. This focuses on character and values. The program includes a book study, speaker meetings, talking circles, cultural activities, and smudging.

Our services at CITC are billable services. Each of the peers is required to go through different trainings in order to bill for the 1115 Residential Service Through Medicaid. You'll hear from Jen Galvan, who will talk a little bit more about the peer certification process. But we have a total team of nine, including leadership. And all of us are certified as traditional peer support professionals in the state of Alaska.

Again, we look at pretreatment groups that we're doing closed for our active participants enrolled in services. We do individual one-on-one sessions with these participants as well. We have peer support services for our outpatient and intensive outpatient participants.

We also do individual sessions with those outpatient participants. We do residential individual sessions in groups. We do state plan residential individual groups. All these services are billable with the correct certifications.

Cultural peers. Our theme is "come as you are." First contact when people come to recovery services is the peer team. We have that lived experience. And it's scary opening the idea of recovery to people. And so we really use our lived experience to support individuals to know that we can meet them where they're at.

It's not about paperwork. It's about meeting the person where they are and letting them know that we are here to help. We have a cultural room, which is just a safe place for our participants to be, share stories with the staff sitting in there. We have beading supplies, sewing supplies in there. There's Alaska Native and American Indian literature for reading. We have Red Road to Wellbriety books in there. And we meet our participants where they are in their lives.

And we do a number of cultural activities, focusing beading, canning, cooking, drumming, making medicine bags. We're taking our participants blueberry picking. We try to engross each one of our groups with some sort of cultural foundation behind it.

If you have any questions, if you're interested on how you can get something started in your organization, our senior director of recovery services is Angela Michaud with her contact information. And I have also left my contact information if anybody has any questions. Peer supports are it. And how we can help smaller communities is providing support for people where they are and where they're at in their treatment and in their treatment journey. Thanks. Back to you, Kevin.

Thanks so much for sharing your great program information, Sarah.

So Bobby, I will now turn it over to you.

Hello, everyone. My name's Bobby Dorton. This picture here shows some elders drumming. And so this is what traditional peer support looks like to me in interior Alaska. That picture was taken in Tanacross. Some of you might know Jerry Isaac. He's there dancing on the far right.

I'm a father of three and a grandfather of one. I'm from Northway, Alaska, in the Upper Tanana Region, Athabascan tribe. My clan is [NON-ENGLISH], which means sky people. And that's my grandson there having a good time with me.

I recently took a job with Tanana Chiefs Conference. And at Tanana Chiefs Conference, we believe in [NON-ENGLISH], which is true love, accessible and trusted world-class services provided with unconditional love, compassion, dignity, and respect. We believe in that here at Tanana Chiefs. And so I'm excited to come over to Tanana Chiefs. Before that, I was working at Ralph Purdue Center as a substance abuse counselor and peer support for three years. And so that's where I got involved in peer support work.

That's me with Richard Carvalho and Jose with Homeboy Industries. And Richard Carvalho is actually the guy on the right. He plays in the *Mayans*, the show *Mayans*. And he's actually got some help from peer support. And I wanted to point that out, that no matter who you are, peer support can be instrumental in your recovery and in your road to recovery.

So he's a very good actor and became a good friend of mine. So I wanted to point that out also I've been a member of the peer support advisory board, along with Jen Galvan and about six others besides us. And we were working on the certification process for Alaska to become certified peer supports in Alaska. And after we got the certification process out, Jen Galvan and myself and another member of the peer support advisory moved on to become commissioners for the ACBHD which is the certification board in Alaska.

In addition, I'm a member of the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse in Alaska Mental Health Board, which are governor-appointed positions. And what we do is we advocate for people that are providing services in Alaska and for the people that are receiving services in Alaska. I have a different view than most people. And so they thought that it would be very good to have somebody that sees things a little bit different as a person coming out of incarceration. I did, I think, a total of 14 years in prison. And also, I have 10 years of clean time today from all mind-altering substances, after 25 years of drug use.

The importance of case management and peer support working together is really important because sometimes people get those two mixed up. Case managers help navigate the systems and access services. And peer supports actually walk alongside the clients, helping them find their way. And so a lot of times, I wear these different hats. I have to check myself and say, know your audience. Know who you're helping. And how are you helping them?

So if you're a peer support, do peer support, if you're a case manager, do case management. If you're a counselor, do counseling, but work as a team to come alongside of the person that you're helping. That way everybody plays a part as a team, and it works better that way.

So this is my first year back in society from this picture. And I'm bringing a couple of guys that got out around the same time as me to a meeting. And I was really excited about being out. And I knew my safe place was in meetings.

So I went to meetings. And the only way that I'm able to keep what I have with my recovery, with my clean time, is to give it back to people that are in need of help. And so the more I help, the more I'm blessed with other people helping me. And I end up in places like I am today, here in this Zoom meeting with you guys. Because people see that all I want to do is help other people. And that's how I stay clean today.

Also, when you think of peer support, you're actually helping other people find their superhero. Everybody has a gift. Walk alongside of them. Don't tell them what to do or how to do it. Just point out their gifts. Point out what they're good at.

Some people that have been selling drugs forever are really good at selling cars. And I've seen this in Fairbanks, Alaska. They're like the top salesman for cars when they were some of the top salesman for drugs. So we all have gifts. It's just finding those gifts, finding those superheroes inside of people.

This is my Uncle Harold. He's still my peer support. These are peer supports that have been peer supports before the name peer support ever was announced to me or introduced to me. Harold Northway's making a drum there.

And what he's done is he's reconnected me back to the land, back to my cultural ways, back to my traditions. And he's doing this through storytelling and through working on drums and different things around me and explaining how to do it and why it's important to keep that as part of my story. My grandfather was Stephen, which was Harold's dad. And one of the cool things is Stephen would sit me on his lap and play his drum and sing his songs.

And I was five years old, and I never thought that I would ever have anything to do with that when I got older. But anyway, getting out of prison, all of that has returned to me. So now, all of a sudden, I'm remembering all these songs and sharing it with my grandkid and my daughters and my community. And it all came back to me. So it's really important to pay attention because one day it will come back.

I have a short video I want you to watch before I wrap things up. I have about a minute or two after the video, so bear with us.

Yeah, that is pretty emotional, looking back at that, knowing how close I was to death. And the more money I made, the more miserable I was. And so-- oh, I didn't turn my video on. There you go. The more miserable I was. And so for me, peer support actually became a way of life for me.

If I wasn't working at Tanana Chiefs, I would be still out here peer supporting people, bringing them a new pair of socks and a sandwich, whatever I could do to help people. It's the way I get to keep what I have. And so when I look at what's ahead for peer support, it's the continued peer support certification, which I'm a part of the ACBHC, the certification board, with Jan Galvan and a team of us. I think there's 12 of us total now.

Peer-led supportive housing and employment. We're actually-- here at Tanana Chiefs, we're putting together-- we actually went after a grant. We're waiting on an answer back on subsidized employment program. And so we want to help our tribal members find meaningful employment, and actually, careers.

Traditional peer support is a big part of my story because as a peer support advisory board member, we were, like, two weeks out from finalizing our certification process for peer support. And I threw a monkey wrench in there and said, what about the Natives? What about the guys that can't get their GEDs and that have peer support, but it's not the same as the just regular peer support? What about the traditional populations?

And so I submitted that traditional peer support. And you should have seen their eyeballs. They're like, what is that? Two weeks out, really, you got to do this? But it was just important for me to be able to be that voice for my people, for the traditional people of Alaska and the nation because now I'm starting to have some connections with other tribes throughout America, throughout the United States. So it's really important to be that voice when you're able to. You can tell the advocacy is coming out of me now.

Also, we're looking at trying to get peer supports to work alongside of behavioral health aides and other professions. Like, traditional peer supports could also work alongside a VPSOs and help de-escalate situations in the villages. So those are some of the talks that we're having here at TCC. And the manager for the public safety program, Daryl Hilderbrand, has become a good friend of mine. And it's very nice to have that connected-- how we connect here at Tanana Chiefs.

It's more like working for a family than an agency. It's more like a family organization. That's what I like about it. I feel very valued here. And so for me, I was hired on as the reentry program manager through the Tribal Government and Justice Division. That's who I work for here at Tanana Chiefs Information. And I think that I'll give some time for the next guys. Thank you for allowing me to be here today. [NON-ENGLISH]

Thank you so much, Bobby, for the information. Jennifer, we will now turn it over to you.

Thank you. Wonderful Hi, guys. I'm Jen Galvan with Alaska Behavioral Health. I am the primary trainer for the state of Alaska right now, since Alaska Behavioral Health holds the contracts. We have since we initiated this back in 2020. And we got awarded our first trust grant to pilot this idea about writing a strong peer support curriculum that empowered people to use what they had and be able to use their stories just like I do.

I've been a peer support professional for 15 years now. I am the inaugural class from Washington state back in 2008. Can't believe it's been that long. But I've been blessed to work with many different walks of life. My target population is our most acute, living with schizophrenia and personality disorders. And their struggle is real. And peer support changes that.

So they asked me to talk today about what the training looks like and why it's so important that we have standardized training for peer support. First and foremost, consistency. We have expectations of people working in this field, working in behavioral health, working in trauma-informed situations where we empower people. We give them the tools, but we don't do it for them.

And so I feel like the more tools we give and the better we equip the teams, the more authentic services we get. So there's four parts to the training that AKBH developed. Part 1, how to go from that underground gig of the movement around just being there to support each other. I really do believe 12 stepping is where this all started. The cultural sweat houses, all that stuff started peer support.

Peer support is not something that's been invented recently. And so I get really into that detail. I also talk about the tools for peer work, how to use the story, and then how to understand the field coming from the other side of it as a consumer into the role of a helper.

So in that first part of it we talk about the history of peer support. We go all the way back to the club houses that started, the individuals who get to tell their stories in such authentic ways that really do empower the next generation to step up and show up for themselves and the next person behind them. We get into recovery 101. And I don't want anyone to think that this is the cookie-cutter version. This is just giving you the basic ideas of what contributes to good, strong recovery. And it starts with building an empathic understanding and an inner space of hope and healing at home.

We have to be our best selves, at the best point in our recovery to show up and step up for somebody else to walk with us and learn from us. This really is a mentoring gig. This is really about helping people see the value of their whole person, broken and all because the brokenness is what makes us amazing.

We get into the laws as they've been written for our system of peer support and mentoring services and how they've aligned with Medicaid and 1115 waivers. And then we get into the real parts of what peers bring to the table, both as a unique team member, but also the foundational tools that really fuel long standing recovery and community, which is the most important part of recovery.

The next section we get into is the tools for peer work. We talk about a toolbox. And I'm sorry, guys. This is the one part of me that I don't hide. I am proudly an aviation mechanic's daughter. My dad has taught me to love work because of what he did for 50 years, the same job, only three employers.

And you can't make that up. So I talk about all the things that foundationally have to be in our toolbox to help people, not make people use our tools, but to help them, to mentor them to build their own. I talk about cultural humility in peer support and trauma-informed care in peer support. These are some of my favorite topics because this is where I hand the classroom over to the students.

This is where all my learners become my teachers. There's a handful of people on here that have been in my classes already so they know what I'm talking about. I get to a certain point in talking about the background and the stuff around culture.

But then I turn it to them, and I say, so what does your culture do with behavioral health and recovery? How do you guys help each other heal? Or what have been your experiences in this stuff? And maybe, just maybe, one of us is hiccuped into making a mistake and sounding like we didn't care for somebody based on what we said. So this is a great opportunity for people to really dive into not being better than each other, being equals, being able to empower each other through storytelling.

The third part I get into is kind of the meat and potatoes of the class. We talk about how to tell our stories in a way to empower somebody, not retraumatize ourselves, not retraumatize the people we're serving. We talk about being proud of that story, about really honing into it, and taking it and sharing it in a way that everyone in the room can see I was that person. But guess what I got to do with it?

One of the things we talk about in here is we get into the SMART goals context. I bring up-- Bobby, I don't want to sound like I'm throwing you under the bus. But you inspired me to talk about this, about individuals with backgrounds. And so my first question is SMART goals is, show of hands, who served time. And it's not uncommon the majority of you raise your hands.

Show of hands, who can list all the skills that got them into prison? Now, I'm going to tell you how to use them the right way because guess what? Distribution has a long list, like you were saying, Bobby, of great skills for sales, great skills for running a team. And we really get into that, about having a better conversation about what those goals can look like, even with those backgrounds.

It's about inspiring our consumers to want more, to be more, to know they are more. And then group facilitation I have in here just because it's one of those little tricks in the trade. If you aren't comfortable with public speaking, let me give you a couple of tools to help inspire and build that because one of the greatest things peers do is we share. And we share what we know, and we do it in a group all the time. So just helping people understand that they have the skills, and it's not as bad as it sounds.

And then the last section I get into understanding the field, how to partner with people outside your agency because we're allowed to talk to each other, the ethics and boundaries and self care, and really honing in on prioritizing the safety of the person providing services. Like we have to be safe to do the job, and then working into the safety of the team and the consumer, et cetera. Treatment planning and documentation, there's a whole different verbiage to nonclinical services, which is what peer support is.

And so I make sure to touch on that with people. I do a little bit of a review. And then I give them a little cheat sheet, if you will, of all the things to make them their best self, both professionally and at-home in recovery and kind of align them together.

So who are these people? The great thing, probably 95% of the world can have this job. It's a matter of them choosing it because you have to want it. This job consumes us. It is one of the best parts of our recovery. So as someone who has lived experience their own or the family member-- and that family member is a little bit of a large group. So you think your parent, your siblings, your partner, your children, longtime friends, people who have become family and been part of this story, been part of the journey of what people have had to overcome of choosing life over addiction and all the things in between.

The other part of what I have seen happen-- so over the last 3 and 1/2 years, we've probably run almost 50 maybe 60 classes. There are over 800 trained peers in the state of Alaska right now under just this curriculum. And I realized that only one person was not going to do well to sustain this.

So Bobby and Sarah and some other people have blessed me and humbled me by taking a chance and learning how to be a great, authentic trainer so that they can use our curriculum in house, and they can personalize it like they are over at CITC, like they have at some other agencies in Juneau. Everyone has taken the time. I still go out and teach in person for them. But I have given them tools so they can do this themselves. And we now have almost 80 trainers across the state that can use this curriculum systemically in-house for their onboarding staff and any clients who are interested.

I don't want to take away, but I really don't see a point in reinventing the wheel. This curriculum got approved on the first go with the state. I figured I'd have lots of cleanup to do. And I was really shocked and really pleased that they welcomed me in and gave me the ability to teach.

And then the other part, I serve with Bobby. So a big part of what we do is go over all of the curriculum in class. Part of the curriculum that we teach is actually the certification process and having to know the difference between traditional and standard peer support certifications and the importance of why we did it.

I will back Bobby 120% for this. It's got to happen. They need the space where we have our tribal members showing up and being 90% of the solution for the people that we're trying to serve. We all need to learn from our communities at large. And so I go over the recovery attestations. This is always really wonky to people.

People are horrified to tell their recovery story. Guess what? Our paper, our form only gives you a space about two inches big to write what you are doing to sustain recovery. There's a difference from your recovery story and the sustainability because the sustainability is the tools we're using to help the others.

I talk about training records and walk them through how to find those trainings and opportunities. There's lots of great resources out there. AKBH was just recently approved to teach CEUs to ACBHC certifying bodies. So anybody with behavioral health aides, CDCs, or peers, they can come through ours as well. And we've got probably half a dozen right now. But pretty much anything we're offering as our apprentice program, we're also offering as a continuing education course for peers because it's specific to peers.

We talk about the employee volunteer verification. Again, a lot of places didn't have peer support before we started this journey at least four years ago. Bobby, you can correct me. I think we started in '19. But before then, there were lots of different names for the peer job.

And so we purposely put a caveat on this form where it asks you, does the job title the person has currently, does it meet this criteria? And how much of their work is this? It's asking for a percentage and a copy of that to be attached to the form. So don't stress, guys. There's space in here to help make sure the right people are getting the certifications.

And then we only have three types of recommendations, the personal, the professional, or the supervisor. And those forms are broken up in each of the packets. So the ones you need for each of those is there and then the matrix. I feel like we've all got a pretty good understanding of how these matrices were written. We have the degree and the nondegree tracks.

And so I just like to throw that out there. If you have a degree that you got years ago and you haven't used, by all means, get credit for it at this point in your career. And if there are any other questions-- next slide-- feel free. I am always available. I love what I do. I love anything and any chance I get to advocate and speak on behalf of the development of strong peer systems.

I've been blessed to work in them for my own recovery and healing from trauma. And it's made a world of difference in what I do for my own life. So I am happy to help. And I will get it back to you.

Thank you so much for the helpful information, Jennifer. We will now have our final poll question. Does your village or the tribe utilize peer recovery as part of a substance abuse treatment? And there are your listings of the first one being, yes, we have our peer recovery specialist providing support to tribal members. Second is yes, we have a program but have not fully implemented it yet. No, we don't have a program, but we'd like to set up one. No, we don't have a program and have no current plans for one.

The poll is now closed with the results as first one, yes, we have peer recovery specialists providing supports is at 19%. The second is yes, we have a program but have not fully implemented at 19%. And the third, no, we don't have a program, but we'd like to set one at 29%. And no, we don't have a program and have no current plans, which is at 32%. So thank you for submitting your answers there.

So Jennifer, Caley, and Caroline, Sarah, and Bobby, Thank you all for the great and wonderful information that you all presented today. And with that, we will now turn it over to some question and answers. And it looks like we do have some here in the Q&A. So whoever wants to go answer the questions first, please jump in.

And the first one here that we have is, how can we be added to that group? I'm not really sure which group that was referring to. So if you submitted that, if you can give me more insight on that. I'm going to jump to the second here. We can get the first one with more information on it.

The second one here is, could you talk about how often the peer support specialists talk with participants about experiences they may have had with domestic violence, sexual assault, or other experiences related to being victims of crime? And there's another question to that. And if so, do the peer support specialists make referrals to victim service providers in the community?

Absolutely, yes. That's a huge part of what a lot of people talk about when they get into recovery and they decide to do this job. One of the things is we talk about what we've experienced. And me personally when I work with consumers, clients who have those lived experiences, I'm more of a "me too." I don't get into my details. But I do give a space for that person to be heard, to break down, and then discuss two things. Here are some resources, and how do you feel about having this conversation with your therapist?

Because it's not that I can't because that's one of my specialties. But it's that I want to make sure that you have ongoing support for that specific thing. And peers are more broad range.

And I'll just kind of add to that, right? So as a peer, especially here at CITC, we do have ANJC, our Alaska Native Justice Center. So. If we are working with individuals that are significantly struggling from domestic violence or some sort of trauma-based care, where there could be potential legal things going on, we do hold that space for the individual to be safe and to talk and then having those kind of questions, like how do you feel about going to talk with ANJC?

And so we have this idea of a warm handoff to any place that we are working with people. We take them and say, OK, here we go. This is so-and-so. So-and-so's going to tell their story. We are there to help support. But you're going to have individuals who bring up some of those significant traumas. And just like Jen had said, we don't necessarily get 100% detailed with our experiences. But I can share my lived experience, which is that I, too, faced domestic violence during this time. So it's kind of how we do it here when we have legal support that we can also offer participants.

Great. Thank you, Jen and Sarah. The next question we have here is, does a peer support specialist stop working with a person if they backslide and start using drugs again? And there's another question to that is, how long does the specialist work with a person?

I can take this one.

So that's a good one. Go ahead, Bobby.

Well, we never give up on them. We walk beside them. And for me, it was I went to seven different treatments-- Lakeside-Milam, Old Minto, I mean, you name it. I went to seven different treatment programs, and it wasn't until I went to my last treatment, which was Akeela that actually it stuck and stayed. And it was the affirmations that had played a big part in it. I noticed the daily morning affirmations that we do, it got me to see the things that I needed to see.

And that's why Akeela is really near and dear to my heart because of that helping me see that part that I played in my own destruction. So I try to do that with guys that I work with. Also, the question before talking about sexual assaults and violence and all that stuff, one of the things that I taught as-- I wasn't quite a counselor yet, but I was more a peer support-- was knowing when you were safe to talk about those things. That's the main thing is knowing when you're safe to talk about those things.

You definitely don't want to tell your drug dealer how you feel about sexual assault and all these things because then you're just an easy target. You put a target on yourself. So I think of *Seeking Safety*. I read the book. And then I taught the book for three years straight. And it talks about those situations. And people were always saying, hey, can we talk? Can we talk? I'm like, yeah, definitely because they felt safe around me. I guess I look like a big teddy bear. I look safe to talk to.

And one of the greatest things that I was able to learn from that was just building that connection with people. And so today, there's people that reach out to me saying, hey, I've got four years clean and thank you because you were a great peer support. You were a great counselor. You were a great residential aide.

I was cleaning toilets when I first started. And I wanted to do it as a volunteer. And the guys over at Fairbanks Native Association said, no, we're going to pay you to do that. And so that was how I got my foot in the door. And I was able to work the system of actually getting a variance through the state. It's a waiver for the crimes that are on my record.

And Tanana Chiefs-- actually, I don't know of anybody else over here that has a list of crimes on their record like I do. But they were able to work with their legal department on getting me in over here with the variance process. And it's just been a blessing to walk beside people and not give up on them.

They get mad at you, and sometimes they don't want to talk to you for a while. But then later they come around and, hey, I still need your help. Like, I've been waiting for you. You told me to leave you alone until you come and talk to me. I'm not going to go bug you. So it's great. Connection is the key because when you're in addiction, you don't have no connection. Yeah, so. That's all I got on that.

Great. Thank you, Bobby. For that. Sarah or Jen?

I think you pretty much nailed it. I don't feel like there's anything else to add. When you think about what people seeking recovery need, they don't need you to walk away when they fail. They need that reassurance that the door is still open, and so is the window.

Great. Thank you, Jennifer. Sarah, anything to add to that?

I'll just wrap up, right? That's exactly it. We never give up. You never give up. When somebody's ready, you want them to know that, hey, when you're ready, I'm going to be right here waiting. So, yeah.

Great. Thank you for that. The other question here is, do you have a recommended amount of time that a person has to be in recovery sober before they can be a peer support specialist?

I got this one, too, I think, Jen. It's all the agency's discretion. It's all up to the agency. But most of them, I noticed, are like six months to a year. Six months is kind of fairly new, but a year-- definitely, I would say a year. But some say six months. So I think I'm right on that, right, Jen?

You are. For the certification piece, so I can share being the main instructor in the state, I've had people where my class was day one. And they've already been employed. They are currently employed or fill in the blank. So I feel like sometimes the class itself is the wake up call. Like, am I really ready for this?

And accountability-- I wouldn't tattle on anybody. I don't feel like what I learned in class about this person-- this goes in that privacy and confidentiality stuff. But what we have to be mindful to is how are we helping the larger amount of people that are going to be impacted by this person? And sometimes that's the best resolution is to know their impact.

But I've seen people be in there on day one. I've seen them where the year still wasn't enough. They really needed to pour more into their own cups to be able to effectively do the job, and they weren't quite there. So it definitely is a case-by-case basis, as much as I hate to say that.

Mm-hmm. Very true.

Great. Thank you, Bobby, Jennifer. Sarah, anything to add to that before we jump to the next question?

We all kind of go over the same thing, usually kind of a year. I know for me, I didn't start healing until I was sober for six months. So then that was just the healing from the damage I caused in my life. And then the next six months was that opportunity for me to really get everything on board. And then I stepped into a position as a peer support at a year.

Great. Thank you all for that. The next question here is, how do you deal with the first part of recovery, the detox part?

I'll hop in here. So I am very blessed in the sense that CITC, we do two peer support groups at Southcentral Foundation, which is another organization that we work very closely with. And I go in twice a week to do group with the participants of theirs that are there. And it's a very informal kind of thing.

It's really just talking about relapse prevention and that. But what I have started to see is that sometimes those people end up reaching out to me while they're still there struggling. And detox is the hardest part. When I talk about my healing, it took me six months. I did detox before I went into treatment to do all of those things.

And so, it is, I think, realistically being honest with the people that you're working with. Detox is tough. You're getting your body back on track. And sometimes it's a dangerous kind of thing. And so again, it's part of the process. All you can do is continue to give support and really just show that lived experience that, hey, I, too, have had to go through this process. It is possible, even though it's uncomfortable.

Thank you, Sarah, for that. Bobby or Jen, anything to add to that?

Yes. So one of the things that really helped me was learning the HALT. It's Hungry, Angry, Lonely and Tired, watching out for those feelings, and I explain these feelings to them. So snacks is really important, healthy snacks like vegetables and fruits. At the treatment center I worked at we always had that available. Also just having sandwich stuff and all that different things that they can easily make when they're hungry.

Because a lot of times, they're starving. And I remember that feeling of feeling starving in prison as I was getting clean. I was hugging the metal toilet with my face against the metal toilet because it was the only cold part in the room. And I was making this noise saying, [MOANING] because I was heroin sick. And these guys would say, hey, just die already. You're making too much noise over there.

And I was able to go through that. And then there was some guys that felt bad, and they were giving me pieces of candy. And the sugar in the candy really helped me with the detox part. And so that fruits and vegetables are really important, also, just knowing those feelings as you're feeling them, being hungry, angry, lonely and tired, being able to point those out.

And I always share my experience with them saying, hey, for a year straight, I was dreaming about drugs every night. I would dream about getting more drugs for the whole first year that I'm getting clean. Two years go by, and it was like somebody came along and flipped the light switch in my life. I was walking on the yard, and I looked up at the sky, and the sky was turquoise blue, and I started crying.

And the guys were like, what's wrong with you? And I'm like, isn't that beautiful? And they're like, what are you talking about? And I was like, look how blue that sky is. Has it been like that before? And they're like, yeah, as long as I could remember. And I'm like, I've never seen the sky blue before. It's always been gray to me, all my life.

And so now when I see a turquoise blue sky, man, I take a second look at it, and I appreciate it. And I explain this to them. And they're like, come to think about it, the sky's been gray for me too. And so I'm able to share those experiences with the guys that I work with. And I think I've talked about this with Sarah and Sam. Really, we have a lot of similarities in peer supporting. And it's been great to share those things with other peer supports and people that they end up leaving the program saying, I want to be a peer support.

And I shuffle them over to Jen's program. A lot of them did the program, did the training while they were in our program. And I told them, you're not going to be eligible to work right away. But guess what? What you can do, though, is you can volunteer and get those hours. That way when it comes to that year, you've already done all the things.

And so I helped them get signed up to volunteer with different nonprofit organizations in town and stuff like that. I sure miss some of that work. But that's definitely what I think about that. And it's just being available and showing others the route that you took.

Lots of great information on that. And I know we're coming up on the time. But I want to hopefully get at least two more questions in here. The next one here is, our tribe requires a background check for all employees and volunteers. This deters a lot of potential people from helping. Have you encountered this issue? And if so, how was this addressed?

I think kind of talked about it a little bit with the--

Yeah, variance.

Yeah, getting the variance process going. That's a very long process. But agencies can help you apply for your variances. Also, in the state of Alaska, what we do is we can do that individually as well. We don't need an agency to do it for us. So I did mine individually.

And it follows me to any organization I go to. And also, one of the great things about a variance is my description of my variance changed with my job that I've moved positions. So all you have to do is work with the background check unit and make them aware. And also there's a form that the agency fills out.

And so it's been a very blessing moment to be able to work through that process. But I don't know if you could put that in their agenda, Alaska Background Check Unit. I think it's--

Well, yeah, we talk about that in the training, about the importance of just breathing because I send out all the variance information. I send out the documents and the background with all the barriers so they know up front. But I also let them know we advocated as a team to make sure that these people could work in the field after what they've done because they're coming back with the intent to be present. And so I give them that.

Great. Thank you for that. I've got one more question. I can squeeze one more in here. So to be certified, it is myself that needs to have been addicted, or can I qualify if my spouse was the one? There's another question to that.

Yeah, I read that one.

Oh, you did? OK.

So I am the family member. I am the parent of two adult daughters. I am the daughter of an addicted mother. I am the sibling. I have never picked up a drug for recreational use in my life. But you know what I can show up with? Compassion and empathy from what I have seen happen in the family members that have experienced addiction.

There is no shame in having a family member who's living with addiction. You are showing up. You are loving without limits. You are doing everything without enabling them is the intent of a peer. And that work is just as powerful and important as the work of the person who's lived it.

Great. Thank you for that, Jennifer. And that brings us up to our time here. And there's really been some great questions in the chat feature there. So thank you all for putting that in there. And want to thank you for your time and finish out on a couple of slides here. Here's some information in regards to the COSSUP Resource Center is a valuable resource. In addition to being able to request TTA, there are numerous featured resources available, including funding opportunities, COSSUP grantees' site profiles with a data visualization tool, information about demonstration projects, peer-to-peer learning, and the recording of all previous COSSUP webinars covering a range of substance use disorder-related topics and strategies.

Of particular significance is the ability to request Training and Technical Assistance, TTA, whether you are a COSSUP grantee or not. The COSSUP TTA program offers a variety of learning opportunities and assistance to support local, tribal, and state organizations, stakeholders, and projects in building a sustaining, multidisciplinary response to the nation's substance abuse crisis. For more information, you can contact the COSSUP program. And there's all the information listed there. And Bobby, now we'd like to turn it over to you to close out in a good way.

First of all, [NON-ENGLISH] is our God in Athabascan. So we want to say-- [NON-ENGLISH] is thank you. So [NON-ENGLISH] for your time that you brought us all together here to work together for a bigger purpose of serving the people that need us, of walking beside the people that are lost. We thank you for the time that you've allowed us to be stewards to this and to better the lives of other people that need it right now.

Also, we thank you for the time that you spent with us and the time that we're able to share that with others. So we just take this time to thank, be thankful with gratitude. We want to show our gratitude, and we want to show that we know that there is a higher power out there, whatever that higher power might be. We want to be mindful for other people. Everybody has their own road to recovery. And we want to be able to be mindful for that. So we're thankful that you've provided so many different roads to recovery. We thank you.

Bobby, and to all the presenters and to all who joined us today, I want to thank you all for joining us. This concludes our webinar today. Thank you to everyone on our panel for sharing your time and knowledge with us. And thank you to our attendees for joining us today. We hope you can join us again for future webinars. Have a wonderful day.