PATH Peer Support Specialist

Program: Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH)
Organization: Jacky's Recovery Support Services (JRSS)
Employment Status: 1 Full-Time; 1 Part-Time positions; bilingual preferred (Spanish)
FTE: 1.0 and 0.5
Location: Salt Lake County, Utah
Reports To: [PATH Program Supervisor/Program Director]

Position Summary

The PATH Peer Support Specialist is a community-based outreach and recovery-support position serving individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness who are living with serious mental illness (SMI) or co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders (COD).

As a person with relevant lived experience and professional peer-support training, the PATH Peer Support Specialist uses the principles of mutuality, hope, self-determination, recovery, and community connection to engage individuals who may be disconnected from traditional systems of care. The Peer Support Specialist works alongside the PATH Case Manager and JRSS's clinical, treatment, and recovery teams to identify eligible individuals, build trusting relationships, increase engagement, support treatment and housing goals, and help participants successfully navigate complex systems.

The position is intentionally field-based. Peer support is provided where participants are—physically and emotionally—including shelters, encampments, public spaces, courts, hospitals, crisis settings, partner organizations, JRSS offices, and housing locations.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities

Street, Shelter, and Community Outreach

- Conduct proactive PATH outreach in shelters, encampments, public spaces, courts, hospitals, crisis centers, and other locations frequented by individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Participate in outreach at the frequency established by the PATH program, including regular targeted outreach multiple times each week and additional outreach in response to referrals and urgent needs.
- Prioritize individuals experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk who demonstrate indicators of SMI or COD, chronic homelessness, justice involvement, repeated crisis-system utilization, or other significant vulnerabilities.
- Use repeated, relational engagement rather than one-time contact, recognizing that trust may require multiple interactions before an individual is ready to accept services.
- Respond to referrals from hospitals, shelters, courts, crisis services, behavioral health providers, treatment programs, coordinated entry teams, and community partners.
- Work closely with the PATH Case Manager to connect potentially eligible individuals to screening, verification, enrollment, and services.

Peer Engagement and Recovery Support

- Use lived experience appropriately and intentionally to establish rapport, reduce stigma, communicate hope, and demonstrate that recovery and stability are possible.

- Provide individualized peer support based on participant-defined goals, strengths, culture, needs, and preferences.
- Support participants experiencing mental health challenges, substance use disorders, co-occurring conditions, homelessness, justice involvement, trauma, social isolation, and other barriers.
- Provide recovery coaching, mentoring, emotional support, advocacy, and practical problem-solving.
- Assist participants in identifying strengths, developing self-advocacy skills, strengthening natural supports, and increasing confidence in navigating systems independently.
- Reinforce relapse-prevention, harm-reduction, wellness, coping, and recovery strategies.
- Support community reintegration, social connectedness, and participation in meaningful recovery and community activities.
- Facilitate or co-facilitate peer-support groups, recovery activities, psychoeducational opportunities, and community-connectedness activities as assigned.

Service Engagement and Warm Hand-Offs

- Help participants access JRSS's in-house services, including psychiatric care, medication management, mental health therapy, substance use disorder treatment, co-occurring disorder services, case management, support groups, and other recovery supports.
- Accompany participants to initial appointments when appropriate to reduce anxiety and strengthen engagement.
- Provide peer-based warm handoffs to primary healthcare, behavioral health treatment, SUD services, housing programs, vocational services, education, benefits assistance, veteran services, and other community resources.
- Help participants prepare for appointments, understand service expectations, formulate questions, and advocate for their preferences.
- Follow up after referrals and appointments to identify barriers and encourage continued engagement.
- Maintain appropriate connection with participants during transitions from hospitals, crisis care, jail, detoxification, residential treatment, shelters, and other systems.

Housing and Community Stability Support

- Work alongside the PATH Case Manager to support housing searches, coordinated entry participation, housing applications, appointments, and housing-placement activities.
- Help participants obtain identification and other documents needed for benefits, treatment, and housing.
- Support participants during housing transitions and help reinforce skills necessary for successful housing retention.
- Provide peer-based support related to budgeting, daily living, transportation, interpersonal skills, community integration, and other recovery-oriented habilitation activities.
- Connect participants with food, clothing, hygiene resources, transportation, communication resources, and other immediate supports when allowable and appropriate.
- Help participants build supportive relationships and meaningful community connections that reduce isolation and support long-term stability.

Crisis, Harm Reduction, and Safety

- Recognize signs of behavioral health crisis, suicide risk, overdose risk, intoxication, withdrawal, and other urgent concerns and follow JRSS safety and escalation protocols.
- Utilize trauma-informed de-escalation and engagement strategies.
- Provide overdose-prevention education and Naloxone support consistent with training and organizational procedures.
- Assist participants with safety planning and connection to crisis services when appropriate.
- Maintain professional boundaries and recognize situations requiring clinical, medical, supervisory, or emergency intervention.

Collaboration With the PATH Case Manager and Treatment Team

- Participate in individualized service planning and monthly case reviews, contributing peer-informed observations regarding participant strengths, goals, barriers, engagement, and recovery needs.
- Coordinate closely with the PATH Case Manager to prevent duplication and ensure continuity between outreach, case management, treatment, housing, and recovery support.
- Participate in interdisciplinary team meetings, case consultation, coordinated case conferencing, and discharge/re-entry planning as appropriate.
- Communicate relevant participant needs and concerns promptly while maintaining confidentiality and respecting the unique role and ethical boundaries of peer support.

Community Partnerships and PATH Awareness

- Develop positive working relationships with shelters, behavioral health programs, hospitals, crisis centers, courts, housing providers, outreach teams, and community organizations.
- Educate community partners about PATH eligibility, referral pathways, and available JRSS services as assigned.
- Participate in community outreach events, provider meetings, and collaborative activities that increase identification and engagement of PATH-eligible individuals.
- Support culturally and linguistically responsive engagement of communities that experience barriers to traditional behavioral health and homelessness services.

Documentation and Program Accountability

- Document outreach contacts, peer-support encounters, referrals, service activities, participant progress, and outcomes accurately and within required timelines.
- Complete documentation in required JRSS and PATH systems, including HMIS and PDX when applicable.
- Maintain participant confidentiality and comply with all privacy and information-sharing requirements.
- Track referral follow-through and communicate barriers to the PATH Case Manager and supervisor.
- Participate in quality-improvement activities, supervision, program evaluation, and performance review.
- Support achievement of PATH enrollment, behavioral health engagement, referral/service attainment, and housing outcomes.

Required Training and Professional Development

The PATH Peer Support Specialist will complete and maintain required or assigned training in:

- PATH program requirements and eligibility
- Certified Peer Support practice and ethics
- Housing First
- Trauma-Informed Care
- Motivational Interviewing
- Harm reduction
- SMI, SUD, and co-occurring disorders
- Crisis intervention and de-escalation
- Suicide prevention
- Naloxone administration and overdose prevention/response
- Person-centered planning
- Cultural humility and culturally responsive services
- HMIS and PDX documentation
- SOAR awareness and benefits-navigation fundamentals
- CPR/First Aid as required by JRSS

Qualifications

- Current Utah Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) credential, or other credential specifically accepted by JRSS and the PATH contract.
- Lived experience relevant to behavioral health recovery and the ability to use that experience professionally and appropriately to support others.
- Experience working with individuals experiencing homelessness, behavioral health conditions, substance use disorders, co-occurring disorders, justice involvement, or significant social-service needs strongly preferred.
- Understanding of peer-support values, recovery principles, self-determination, mutuality, and appropriate use of lived experience.
- Ability and willingness to provide services in nontraditional community settings, including shelters, public spaces, courts, hospitals, and outreach environments.
- Strong interpersonal, communication, documentation, and relationship-building skills.
- Ability to work collaboratively with clinical providers, case managers, housing providers, courts, hospitals, and community partners while maintaining the distinct role of peer support.
- Commitment to person-centered, trauma-informed, culturally responsive, harm-reduction, recovery-oriented, and Housing First practices.
- Bilingual English/Spanish strongly preferred.
- Certified Case Manager credential, or willingness to obtain it if required by JRSS, preferred.
- Valid driver's license, reliable transportation, and ability to travel throughout Salt Lake County for outreach and participant services.

Core Competencies

Authentic peer engagement; intentional use of lived experience; empathy; hope; recovery orientation; cultural humility; persistence; relationship-building; advocacy; crisis awareness; harm reduction; professional boundaries; community navigation; teamwork; reliability; and respect for participant choice and self-determination.