

Peer Support Specialist Apprenticeship

OVERVIEW

As part of the National Institute for Work and Learning's Apprenticeship Programs, FHI 360's Peer Support Specialist Apprenticeship partners with the Public Works Alliance (PWA) to train apprentices who have experienced recovery from personal and societal challenges. These include substance use disorder, PTSD, the re-entry process, and many other challenges. This shared experience enables apprentices to support others who are going through similar hardships.

By partnering with FHI 360, employers can use this apprenticeship to reinforce a holistic approach in their mental health services. Apprentices who complete their apprenticeship earn a state-recognized credential of completion and a national credential from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL).

THE IMPORTANCE OF PEER SUPPORT

Peer Support Specialists have an invaluable effect on the recovery process for people coping with mental health issues. Through empathy rooted in shared experiences, Peer Support Specialists can connect with those they serve on a deeper, personal level. A 2021 study from the Harm

Reduction Journal even asserts that Peer Support Specialists serve as "bridges" between patients and more conventional mental health professionals.

As a result, there is a growing need for more workers to enter this profession. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a 13% growth in employment owing to shortages in the care economy. The Peer Support Specialist Apprenticeship aims to bolster this field by connecting employers with individuals with the necessary lived experiences who are motivated to help those in their communities.

WHAT APPRENTICES LEARN

Registered Apprenticeships consist of 2,000 hours of paid, on-the-job training and 150 hours of coursework, wherein Peer Support Specialist apprentices will learn trauma-informed care approaches, communication techniques, case management, resilience training, and more. Apprentices going through the program benefit from:

- An alternative, fulfilling career path into the mental health industry.
- A means of simultaneously learning different concepts and applying them at work while getting paid.
- A state-recognized certificate of completion.
- A nationally recognized credential from the DOL.

EMPLOYER BENEFITS

Registered Apprenticeship programs offer many benefits for employers. The U.S. Department of Labor has found that employers utilizing apprenticeship programs:



- Hire, train, and retain more highly skilled, entry-level workers (with apprentice retention rates at 90%)
- Better utilize diversity, equity, and inclusion in their organizations.
- Improve productivity and profitability through efficient application of employee skills to employer needs.
- Can adapt to address specific needs of employees through customizable training options.

FHI 360 works with community and education partners to provide related training instruction and supports supervisors and mentors. Employers recruit, supervise, pay, provide training release time and mentor apprentices, with apprentices getting a midpoint pay increase and a position as a standard employee at the apprenticeship's conclusion.

CONTACT

For more information on the Peer Support Specialist Apprenticeship and FHI 360's apprenticeship efforts, please contact apprenticeship@fhi360.org

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About NIWL: FHI 360's National Institute for Work and Learning (NIWL) advances access, equity, and excellence in education and workforce systems. We focus on two key drivers of individual well-being - education and employment - to improve lives. NIWL seeks to strengthen the capacity of public and private organizations, providing information, resources, and support needed to make decisions, strengthen programs, and improve outcomes for individuals.

WASHINGTON DC OFFICE
2101 L St, NW Suite 700
Washington, DC 20037 USA
T 1.202.884.8000
F 1.202.884.8400

FHI 360 HEADQUARTERS
359 Blackwell Street, Suite
200
Durham, NC 27701 USA
T 1.919.544.7040
F 1.919.544.7261

CONTACT

For more information about NIWL's learning and workforce programs and services, contact:

Lisa Johnson
Director, NIWL
apprenticeship@fhi360.org