



# Peer Recovery Support Specialist (PRSS) Manual

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# 1. Introduction

## A. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this manual is to serve as a resource for Peer Recovery Support Specialists (PRSS) certified by the State of Vermont Office of Professional Regulation (OPR). This manual is intended to provide information and guidance about the regulations and requirements governing the PRSS Certification process. It also addresses service delivery expectations and requirements for all recovery support services delivered by certified PRSS.

**Please note:** While work is underway to develop a Recovery Support Services (RSS) Medicaid benefit, the intention of this PRSS Manual is to describe current requirements for PRSS and does not address Medicaid requirements or regulations. Nothing in this PRSS Manual should be construed to apply to Medicaid reimbursement.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact [AHS.VDHRcoveryandHRServices@vermont.gov](mailto:AHS.VDHRcoveryandHRServices@vermont.gov).

## B. Legal and Rule References

Statute: [3 V.S.A. § 122](#) establishes the Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) as the certifying body for Vermont Department of Health (VDH) Peer Recovery Support Specialists (PRSS). [26 V.S.A. chapter 60](#) regulates the practice of peer support and peer recovery support services and outlines eligibility requirements for certification, including that the applicant:

- must be 18 years of age
- has received a credential from the PRSS credentialing body
- and has passed relevant registry and criminal history checks.

Individuals interested in seeking certification must apply to OPR and pay applicable fees. Financial assistance and reimbursement are available for individuals employed by a Recovery Services Organization. See [Section 3](#) for more information about the process of becoming a certified PRSS.

Administrative Rules: The [Administrative Rules for Peer Support Provider Certification and Peer Recovery Support Specialist Certification](#) (effective 7/1/2025) provide additional detail related to the administration of the certification process, certification procedures, and eligibility.

## C. Definitions

**Recovery Support Services** are nonclinical, culturally responsive, evidence-informed support delivered by certified Peer Recovery Support Specialists in alignment with the PRSS Code of

Ethics. RSS are grounded in lived experience and provided through a mutual, peer-based relationship. Services are coordinated through an Individualized Recovery Plan (IRP) that documents a substance use disorder and reflects the individual’s strengths, needs, preferences, and goals. RSS helps individuals and families build recovery capital, support health and wellness, and connect with community and social supports. RSS do not include the provision of psychotherapy.

A **Recovery Coach** is a trained peer professional—often a Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist—who uses their lived experience of recovery or close personal experience with recovery to provide nonclinical, person-centered support. Recovery Coaches operate within Vermont’s Peer Recovery Support Services framework and uphold the PRSS Code of Ethics. Their role includes the use of motivational interviewing, resource navigation, harm-reduction support, and helping individuals identify strengths, barriers, and goals guided by the Individualized Recovery Plan (IRP).

**Recovery Coaching** is a nonclinical, person-centered support service delivered through a mutual, one-on-one relationship. It uses the evidence-based practice of motivational interviewing as well as resource navigation to help individuals explore recovery options, reduce harm, and build recovery capital. Peer Recovery Support Services (PRSS) are defined by SAMHSA as “the process of giving and receiving nonclinical assistance to support long-term recovery from substance use disorders”<sup>1</sup>.

An **Individualized Recovery Plan (IRP)** is a written, person-centered plan developed collaboratively by the participant and the Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist (PRSS) to guide the delivery of Recovery Support Services (RSS). Required under [26 V.S.A. § 3191](#) and aligned with RSO Standards, the IRP reflects the participant’s strengths, needs, preferences, cultural considerations, and informed choices.

The IRP includes goals in the participant’s own words, along with specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-limited recovery objectives and the supports needed to achieve them. It is signed by both the participant and PRSS, reviewed and updated as needed, and serves as the central roadmap for Recovery Coaching.

A **Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist (PRSS)** is an individual who holds a certificate from the Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) to engage in the practice of recovery support services in Vermont.

**Substance Use Disorder (SUD)**<sup>2</sup> is the clinically accurate term to describe the constellation of impairments caused by repeated misuse of a substance.

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<sup>1</sup> [Peers Supporting Recovery from Substance Use Disorder](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Vermont Substance Use Disorder Treatment Standards](#)

## 2. Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist (PRSS) Overview

### A. Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist (PRSS) Scope of Practice

Peer Recovery Support Specialists (PRSS) are individuals with lived experience who provide support to others navigating recovery. Peer Recovery Support Specialists must be certified by the Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) in the State of Vermont. The PRSS certification indicates to peers, employers, and the public that an individual has met the established professional standards for the provision of recovery support services. The following sections describe the regulations and requirements for certified PRSS. Please note that Peer Recovery Support Specialists are distinct from Peer Support Specialists who focus on mental health. For more information about Peer Support Specialists in Vermont, please find a link to the Certified Peer Support Specialist Manual in [Section 5. Key Resources](#).

A certified PRSS provides a range of recovery support services (RSS) to assist individuals in their recovery from substance use, including:

- Recovery coaching
- Individualized Recovery Planning
- Resource provision
- Group facilitation\*

\*Providing group facilitation of recovery groups may require additional training or certification outside of the PRSS process. PRSS certification does not allow for the provision of clinical services or case management. Individuals working as certified PRSS must adhere to the scope of practice as defined in [26 V.S.A. § 3191](#).

### B. Population Served

Recovery support services (RSS) are available to people with substance use disorder living in Vermont, as well as their family members.

### C. Supervision Requirements

Supervision for certified Peer Recovery Support Specialists (PRSS) will be provided by a more experienced certified PRSS.

Vermont's peer-to-peer supervision model aligns with national best practice, which emphasizes that supervision by experienced peers strengthens role clarity, ethical practice, and fidelity to peer support values. This approach is consistent with emerging federal guidance recognizing that qualified, experienced peers may supervise other peers without requiring clinical licensure. Supervisors play a key role in supporting PRSS integration within

multidisciplinary teams and ensuring that peer roles remain distinct from clinical or case management functions.

\*Additional information about a credential for supervisors is forthcoming.

### 3. Certification Pathway for Peer Recovery Support Specialists (PRSS)

To obtain the Peer Recovery Support Specialist (PRSS) certification in Vermont, individuals must complete the following phases in the order listed:

#### A. Phase One: Certified Recovery Coach (CRC) Credential

To be eligible for Peer Recovery Support Specialist (PRSS) certification through the Office of Professional Regulation (OPR), individuals must first earn and maintain the Certified Recovery Coach (CRC) credential. Prevention Works!VT, Vermont's approved credentialing body and member board of the International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC), is responsible for issuing the CRC credential within the state.

To be eligible for the CRC credential, individuals must:

- Be employed or volunteer at a Vermont-based Recovery Services Organization.
- Complete a Vermont Recovery Coach Education Committee-approved Recovery Coach Academy training curriculum
- Complete at least five hundred hours as a volunteer or paid recovery coach. Hours are eligible to count toward the credential if obtained within the last seven years following completion of the Recovery Coach Academy.
- Twenty-five of the five hundred hours must be under direct supervision by a Recovery Coach Supervisor
- Have a High School Diploma or GED
- Receive a passing grade on the IC&RC Peer Recovery Examination
- Sign the [Code of Ethics](#)

To be eligible for renewal, a Certified Recovery Coach must:

- Complete twenty (20) hours of continuing education every two years -
- Six (6) hours in ethics, six (6) hours in motivational interviewing, and eight (8) hours of training in the five recovery domains.

For more information about the process of obtaining the Certified Recovery Coach credential, please visit [Certified Recovery Coach – Prevention Works Vermont](#). For a visual representation of the steps to obtain the IC&RC credential, please visit [obtaining the IC&RC credential through Prevention Works!VT](#).

## B. Phase Two: Peer Recovery Support Specialist (PRSS) Certification

Once an individual has obtained the Certified Recovery Coach (CRC) credential, they may seek PRSS certification through the Office of Professional Regulation (OPR). Please note that this is a voluntary certification. This is not a license and is not legally required to deliver recovery support services in the State of Vermont.

To be eligible for PRSS certification, individuals must:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Hold a valid Certified Recovery Coach (CRC) credential from the IC&RC credentialing body approved by the Department of Health and Prevention Works!VT
- Complete and submit the online application
- Pay the application fee of \$50.00
- Disclose whether you are currently under investigation, have pending charges, or have ever been convicted of a criminal misdemeanor or felony in Vermont or any other state.

To be eligible for recertification, a PRSS must maintain their Certified Recovery Coach Credential, complete and submit a renewal application, and pay the \$50.00 renewal fee. Recertification is required every two years. Please find additional information about PRSS Certification renewal in the [Appendix](#).

For more information about the process of becoming a certified PRSS, visit the [Office of Professional Regulation Online Services Platform](#). For a visual representation of the steps to obtain the PRSS certification, please visit [steps involved in obtaining the PRSS certification through OPR](#).

## 4. Service Delivery Requirements

Requirements for Peer Recovery Support Specialist (PRSS) service delivery are governed by [26 V.S.A. Chapter 60](#), the Code of Ethics, and RSO Standards. Please note that the service delivery requirements outlined in this section and the provisions of this PRSS Manual more broadly apply to all individuals who hold the PRSS certification in the State of Vermont, regardless of their place of employment.

### A. Code of Ethics

Peer Recovery Support Specialists must engage in the practice of Recovery Support Services (RSS) in a manner that is consistent with the PRSS Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics establishes the professional standards, boundaries, and values that guide all Certified PRSS in delivering person-centered, non-clinical, recovery-oriented support.

The Code of Ethics for Certified PRSS can be found [here](#).

## B. Medical Necessity Screening Questions

### Background

In accordance with [26 V.S.A. § 3191](#), certified PRSS must determine medical necessity using the PRSS Screening Questions below. Documentation of a substance use disorder is required for each participant receiving recovery support services (RSS), determining whether the participant may benefit from SUD-focused Recovery Support Services within the scope of practice of the PRSS. Completing the medical necessity screening provides foundational information that will enable the certified PRSS to begin developing an Individualized Recovery Plan (IRP) in collaboration with the participant.

Certified PRSS and PRSS supervisors are expected to continuously reassess medical necessity by asking participants the screening questions, on at least an annual basis, with discretion from the certified PRSS.

### Medical Necessity Screening Questions:

- What substances, including alcohol, are you concerned about in terms of your previous or current use?
  
- How often are you or were you using this/these substances?
  - Daily
  - Most Days
  - Fewer than 3 days a week
  - Currently in recovery
  
- Which of these areas of your life have been impacted by substance use?
  - Relationships and social support
  - Employment
  - Housing
  - Transportation
  - Physical and Mental Health
  - Legal
  - Financial, budget, and money management
  - Recreation and relaxation
  - Spirituality, mindfulness, and culture

## C. Individualized Recovery Plans (IRP)

Per [26 V.S.A. § 3191](#), certified Peer Recovery Support Specialists (PRSS) are required to document each participant's plan to address their substance use and progress toward the plan in an IRP.

The IRP must be developed and maintained in accordance with Standard 11.0 of the [Recovery Services Organization \(RSO\) Standards](#), which outlines the requirements for

person-centered planning, goal development, measurable recovery objectives, signatures, and ongoing review.

A Participant Chart Review Checklist, designed to support certified PRSS in meeting these IRP documentation requirements, is available in the [Key Resources section](#).

## D. Documentation Retention

Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialists (PRSS) employed by certified Recovery Services Organizations (RSOs) are expected to maintain documentation of participants with services provided in accordance with standards 10 and 11 in the [RSO Standards](#).

## E. Minimum Standards for Service Notes

Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialists (PRSS) working at certified Recovery Services Organizations (RSOs) must produce and retain service notes from each interaction with a participant. Minimum service note requirements can be found in Standard 10.2 of the [RSO Standards](#).

## F. Referral Guidelines

Individuals seeking the support of a certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist (PRSS) may be self-referred or referred by family, friends and people in the health care and social service fields.

## 5. Key Resources

Resource	Link
Department of Health	<a href="#">Vermont Department of Health</a>
Department of Health – Recovery Support Services	<a href="#">Recovery Support Services (RSS)   Vermont Department of Health</a>
Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) Application Portal	<a href="#">Welcome to OPR's Online Services Platform</a>
OPR Licensing Inbox – Contact the licensing administrator for any questions regarding PRSS Certification	<a href="mailto:SOS.OPRLicensing1@Vermont.gov">SOS.OPRLicensing1@Vermont.gov</a>
Prevention Works!VT	<a href="#">Prevention Works Vermont</a>
IC&RC Peer Recovery	<a href="#">PR - ICRC</a>
Prevention Works!VT Certified Recovery Coach Application	<a href="#">Certified Recovery Coach Application</a>
Vermont Recovery Coach Certification Board's (VRCCB) Certified Recovery Coach (CRC) Credential Manual – October 2025	<a href="#">Certified Recovery Coach (CRC) Credential Manual</a>

Vermont Certified Recovery Coach (CRC) Public Registry	<a href="#">Vermont CRC Public Registry</a>
Office of Professional Regulation – (PRSS) Professional Roster	<a href="#">Find a Professional or Download Current PRSS Roster</a>
Peer Support Provider Manual through Vermont Department of Mental Health (DMH)	<a href="#">DMH Peer Support Provider Manual</a>
RSO Certification - Participant Chart Review Checklist	<i>Resource forthcoming</i>

## 6. Appendix

### Additional Information about PRSS Certification Renewal

The Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) uses standard expiration dates for all professions. This means that every PRSS certification renews on the same fixed two-year schedule, regardless of when an individual was first certified.

Your initial PRSS certification will be set to expire on the profession’s established renewal date. After you complete your first renewal, your certification will then be issued for a full two-year period.

The timing of your initial certification affects when you must renew:

- If your first PRSS certification is issued within 90 days of the profession’s renewal date, your certification will be valid through the entire next two-year cycle. You will *not* need to renew right away.
- If your first PRSS certification is issued more than 90 days before the renewal date, you will be required to renew at the upcoming renewal.

## 7. Version History

Version Number	Version Date	Summary of Changes	Section/ Page	Author
1	June 26, 2026	Initial issue	All	Vermont Department of Health, Division of Substance Use Programs