

Community Autism Peer Specialist (CAPS)



CAPS pairs an individual with autism who has completed a peer support training program with other individuals with autism to achieve personal wellness and community integration goals. Activities are chosen by the participant to build employment and/or post-secondary education and leadership skills, to live independently, care for their own health, navigate interpersonal relationships, use public transportation, engage in the community, and other areas of growth.

CAPS Objectives



- Assist participants in identifying areas of interest, meaningful activity, and personal wellness
- Encourage community living and participation
- Promote self-discovery and self-advocacy, individual choice and active involvement in personal wellness/resiliency
- Share information to increase awareness of behavioral and mental health issues
- Support the development of healthy relationships and connections

CAPS Training



Twelve individuals with Autism graduated from the first CAPS training class. They completed a 75-hour training consisting of classroom instruction, self-paced homework, and four hours shadowing a mobile mental health peer specialist in the field. Requirements for the training included:

- Adult diagnosed with autism
- High school diploma or GED
- Maintained 12 months of paid or volunteer work experience OR obtained 24 credits in post-secondary education within last 3 years

CAPS Service Launch



The program will launch with a supervisor and 3-4 full and part-time autism peer specialists who completed the CAPS training. The CAPS program is expected to begin September 2019 and will initially offer peer support to approximately 15-30 participants. Eligibility requirements to receive peer services are:

- Age 14 and up with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder
- Reside in Philadelphia County
- Have Community Behavioral Health (CBH) insurance



CAPS is a wellness-oriented program that will utilize 1:1 mentoring, social activities and wellness groups to support participants with building healthy community connections, developing self-advocacy skills and enhancing personal relationships. As a mobile peer support team, the peer specialists will work with participants in their own communities, bringing practical knowledge and experience as a person with ASD to guide the participants to achieve their personal goals.