

Steps for Becoming a Certified Peer Wellness Specialist



A **Peer Wellness Specialist (PWS)** is an individual who has lived experience, plus intensive training. PWS work as part of a person-driven, health home team, integrating behavioral health and primary care to assist and advocate for individuals in achieving well-being. Peer Wellness Specialists are a type of Traditional Health Worker.

There are four categories of Peer Wellness Specialists:

Family Support: A person with experience parenting a child or youth who has experience with substance use or mental health challenges and supports other parents with children or youth experiencing substance use or mental health challenges.

Youth Support: A person with lived experience with substance use or mental health treatment as a youth, who wants to provide support services strictly for people under the age of 30.

Adult Addictions: A person in addiction recovery with two years abstinence who provides support services to people seeking recovery from addiction.

Adult Mental Health: A person with lived experience of mental health who provides support services to other people with similar experiences

Step 1

Complete an OHA-Approved Traditional Health Worker (THW) Training Program:

For a list of approved trainings visit the OHA Office of Equity and Inclusion website:

[Oregon Health Authority: THW Training Programs](#)

Step 2

Complete Oral Health Training Requirement

All PWS are required to complete OHA's oral health training:

[Oregon Health Authority: Traditional Health Worker Oral Health Requirements](#)

The training is free of charge. You will need to save a copy of the certification to submit with your THW application.

Step 3

Complete THW Certification Application:

You can now create a Traditional Health Worker application using this portal:

[Welcome Page: Health Workforce Registry](#)

Application for THW certification requires proof of the following materials:

- Copy of your training certificate from an OHA-approved training program
- Clear copy of a government-issued identification
- Proof of Oral Health training

Note: Using the Health Workforce Registry Portal is the quickest method. If you need in-person assistance or have questions, please email THW.Liaison@allcarehealth.com.

Step 4

Complete Background Check

After you finish your application, your information is sent to the Background Check Unit (BCU). Everyone must complete a background check unless you already passed one through the THW program within the last year.

BCU will email you a link to give your consent. Check your inbox and your spam/junk folder. You have **7 days to complete this**. If you miss the deadline, your application will close. If that happens, email THW.program@odhsoha.oregon.gov to ask for a one time resubmission. If you use up your resubmission chance, you must **wait 90 days** from your first application to apply again.

Sometimes BCU needs fingerprints or more information.

- If fingerprints are needed, the THW Program will email you a letter with clear instructions.
- If BCU needs more details, they will mail you a letter explaining what to do.

Watch your email closely and respond quickly so your application doesn't get delayed.

The full background check usually takes **about 4 weeks**.

- More information regarding the criminal background check: [Background Check Weighing Test](#).

Requirements After Completion

To maintain certification status, all PWS must complete the following.

- **PWS-Adult Addiction and Adult Mental Health:** At least 20 hours of Continuing Education during every three-year renewal period. A minimum of three (3) hours within the 20 hours must be suicide prevention training.
- **PWS-Youth Support Specialist and Family Support Specialist:** At least 40 hours of Continuing Education during every three-year renewal period. A minimum of three (3) hours within the 40 hours must be suicide prevention training.
 - All trainings must be OHA-approved trainings.
 - Any “non-OHA-approved” trainings, seminars, and workshops may apply if they relate to the work you do or are within the THW’s scope of practice. It will need to be reviewed by OHA for approval. For questions on approved trainings, email OEI THW Programs: THW.program@odhsoha.oregon.gov or ask AllCare’s THW Liaison.

Renewal application can be found: [Welcome Page: Health Workforce Registry](#)

Additional Resources:

- OHA Equity and Inclusion Homepage:
[Oregon Health Authority: Welcome to the Equity and Inclusion Division](#)
- THW Recertification Requirements:
[Oregon Health Authority: THW Recertification Requirements](#)

For questions regarding these steps or technical assistance contact AllCare Health’s THW Liaison at (541) 471-4106 or THW.Liaison@allcarehealth.com.