

Community Support Journal

Montgomery County Community Support Program Committee *Newsletter*

July 2025

Volume 7



CSP Logo designed by
Chris Ford

14 New Certified Peer Specialists graduate At county's 29th CPS Graduation



Photo from the Montco Department of Health and Human Services Website and Facebook

By: Tracey Ripper-Thomas
Mental Health Coordinator of Peer Support and Career Services

On June 13th, **fourteen** individuals choosing to share their lived experience with mental health challenges, graduated as a part of Montgomery County's Twenty-Ninth Class of Certified Peer Specialists. Congratulations, CPS'! These incredible individuals will use their own lived experience to walk alongside others to assist with goals, filling an indispensable role in the mental health system.

Peer Support Services consist of agency employees with Mental Health lived experience helping others with Mental Health challenges. Pam Howard, Administrator of the Office of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, Early Intervention, within the

Continued on page 2

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Beat the Heat! Tips to stay cool

NUMBER 1.



NEXT PAGE

Department of Health and Human Services, shared how Peer Support has grown in the County (Currently having Peer Specialists employed in 35 programs)!

Recovery stories and other important information were shared in support of a long-standing Montgomery County service. Peer Specialists are often “the light at the end of the tunnel” for the peers they serve. Recovery happens in the community by engaging in work, having a holistic support system and by setting an example for others who are struggling. If you know someone who may be interested in the training and a rewarding career, and to learn more about the program, visit our webpage: www.montgomerycountypa.gov/CPSTraining.

What is a Certified Peer Specialist?

A Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) is a person who is trained and qualified/credentialed to be an employed staff member with lived experience of mental health or co-occurring challenges.

A CPS is trained to provide peer support and mutual aid, promoting recovery and self-advocacy, for others facing similar challenges. By offering insight into the recovery process based on their own experience, peer specialists are able to provide a unique perspective. Peer support is intended to inspire hope and demonstrate that recovery is achievable.

(Graduation Photo includes the Department of Health and Human Services Leadership and the Mental Health Administrator, Deputy Administrator, and CPS Coordinator.)

Congratulations graduates!
Wishing you all the best.

From– The CSP Committee

Beat the heat tips!

2.



3.



Be the change that you wish to see in the world!

We have exciting Peer Support employment opportunities at The Ferns Peer-Run Respite, for per diem work Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays, at our location in Pottstown, PA. To ensure success as a Ferns Peer Partner, you will have significant experience with and understanding of advocacy, group facilitation, and peer support, and will be familiar with Intentional Peer Support, Trauma-Informed Practices, and related values and principles. This is a peer role, **requiring lived experience**. As a peer, you will be someone who has personally experienced crisis, trauma, and/or extreme distress.

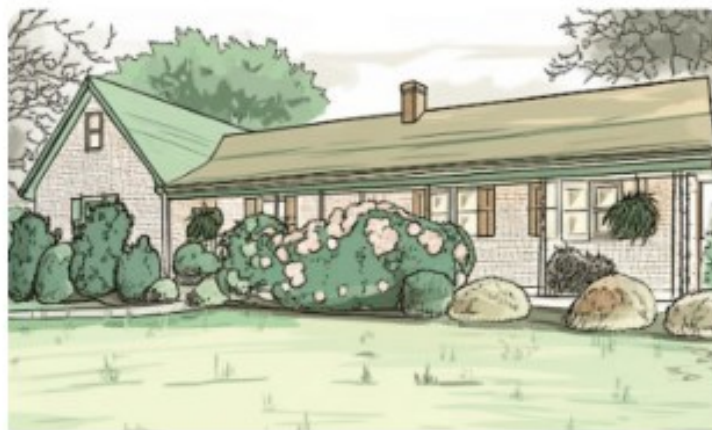


If you are interested in a per diem position at The Ferns, please forward your resume and a cover email to Kim Renninger at krenninger@theferns.org.

Please be sure to address the following in your cover email:

- Will you be able to reliably commute to Pottstown, PA for this job?
- How many years of Direct support experience do you have?
- As much as you feel comfortable, please share experience you have supporting others with their mental health struggles. We are looking for candidates who have experience that will help our guests connect and heal during their stay at the respite.
- As much as you feel comfortable, please share some insight as to your own experiences with your mental health and/or the mental health system. We ask this because as team members of the Ferns respite, we want to ensure that our staff can connect and empathize with our guests and be able to share stories and relate in a way that helps their healing journey.
- Note the days of the week, hours, and/or schedule available to work

Please see full job description on page 2!!



<https://www.hopeworxinc.org/services/ferns-peer-respite/>

krenninger@theferns.org

The Ferns Peer-Run Respite

Ferns Peer Partner Job Description

Job Title: Ferns Peer Partner

Salary Range: \$18.00 for Regular Per diem staff with \$1.00 differential for night shift

Job Summary: The Ferns Peer Partner will offer support through an Intentional Peer Support (IPS) and trauma-informed lens. The goal of this position is to create connections and provide support to guests during their stay, as well as sharing resources as needed and participating in regular house upkeep.

Supervisory Relationships: The Peer Respite Director will directly supervise the Ferns Peer Partner.

Employment Status: Non-exempt, Check one: ☐ Regular Part-time ☐ Per diem with at least one shift a month.

Location: Pottstown Region

Principal Duties and Responsibilities

1. General

- a. Hold and exemplify the values of the Peer Respite model, including Intentional Peer Support (IPS) and trauma-informed peer support. This includes an awareness of broader social justice issues, such as how oppression intersects with the mental health system.
- b. Maintain confidentiality and privacy of guests staying at the Respite.
- c. Perform required documentation and guest log standards per Director's instruction.
- d. Assist in entrance and exit process as needed for each guest.
- e. Take part, along with other team members and guests, in the general upkeep of the Respite space which will include periodic assigned cleaning, meal preparation, and maintenance of the exterior of the space (shoveling, raking, mowing).
- f. Share responsibilities for answering the respite phone.
- g. Be responsible for other duties assigned as they evolve.
- h. Complete all required training and continued education as needed.
- i. Job duties may vary depending on shift and position.

2. Direct Support

- a. Maintain an accessible presence at the Peer-Run Respite as needed for the desired support of guests.
- b. Provide individualized support within the framework of Intentional Peer Support (IPS).
- c. Provide on-call, in-person, and telephonic support when scheduled or as needed.
- d. Along with the other respite staff, support guests to self-determine and advocate for their needs and desires, including connecting with resources and maintaining existing community connections.
- e. Ferns Peer Partner may be asked to support guests in the community as needed.

Minimum Qualifications

1. Education and/or Experience

- a. Personal experience and identification with the challenges associated with the mental health service system, extreme states, or trauma is required.
- b. Experience or training in supporting individuals with mental health challenges.
- c. A minimum of a high school diploma or GED preferred.
- d. Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) credential preferred.
- e. Must have or complete IPS training within 6 months of hire.
- f. **Background checks and Megan's Law will be performed on all potential hires.

2. Abilities

- a. Must possess a valid driver's license and clean driving record.
- b. Ability to function as an advocate and create an empowering atmosphere for individuals to take leadership in their own healing.
- c. Ability and willingness to use own experiences in an open and intentional manner.
- d. Bilingual/bicultural in English and other languages or ways of communicating and/or cultures is a plus.

JULY IS

MINORITY MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

We raise awareness of the challenges that affect the mental health of people in racial and ethnic minority groups.

Our mission is promoting mental health for everyone.
Contact us today to find out how we can help.



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[Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services](#) will be hosting a Lifesharing Outreach event on Wednesday, October 4th. Our Access Services Lifesharing staff will be participating, so please take the time to come out and learn more about Lifesharing!

LIFESHARING OUTREACH “ANY EVERY DAY LIFE”

Provider agencies available to discuss their programs and answer questions. Families and individuals will also be present to discuss their experiences with Lifesharing.

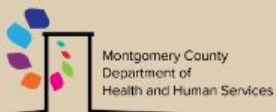
**** Refreshments provided ****

WHEN

Wednesday
October 4, 2023
2:00 – 4:00PM
6:00 – 8:00 PM

WHERE

Montgomery County
Human Services Center
1430 DeKalb Street
Norristown, PA 19404



Please email or call Jackie Grimes to reserve your space.
Jacquelyn.Grimes@montgomerycountypa.gov or 610-278-1452

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAMS



MONTCO CSP IS NOW ON DISCORD!!

**JOIN US ON DISCORD TO KEEP UP WITH ALL
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY SUPPORT
PROGRAMS EVENTS AND INFORMATION**

[HTTPS://DISCORD.GG/W2WHFTQBJM](https://discord.gg/w2whftqbjm)

**ALONGSIDE INFORMATION, USE THIS SPACE TO
MEET PEOPLE, BUILD COMMUNITY, AND FIND
SUPPORT FROM PEOPLE LIKE YOU!**



**Please email pjohnson@hopeworxinc.org or
evillarose@hopeworxinc.org for more information and/or the
direct link.**

FAIR HOUSING WEBINARS

WHEN

July 16, 2025: 10-11:30 a.m.

Fair Housing for Shelters and Non-profit Housing Agencies. Training on Fair Housing Act and Title VI Protections. Pre-registration is required. To register, click [here](#)

WHEN

July 30, 2025: 10-noon

Using Fair Housing to Assist Clients in Navigating a Successful Rental Experience. Training will teach housing locators and others how to use state and federal housing laws to assist clients in successful rental experiences. Pre-registration is required. To register, click [here](#).

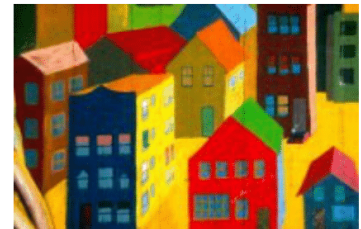
Carolyn Steinhofer (she/her)
Intake, Enforcement, and Compliance Manager
Housing Equality Center of Pennsylvania
equalhousing.org, renters.equalhousing.org, landlords.equalhousing.org

PO Box 558 | Fort Washington, PA 19034
Direct: 267-419-8929
267-419-8918 x2 | steinhofer@equalhousing.org

**FOR SHELTERS,
NON-PROFIT
HOUSING AGENCIES
AND HOUSING
LOCATORS**

WEBINARS BY

**The Housing Equality
Center of PA**



From the Temple University Collaborative Yoga can improve your health

YOGA AND YOUR HEALTH

Yoga can actually help improve symptoms of depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia. Our fact sheet highlights yoga's benefits, guides beginners on developing their practice & suggests affordable classes in their community. Get started on your path to wellness today.

Yoga and Your Health. Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion. Philadelphia, PA.



Find out more:

<https://tucollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/Yoga-and-your-health.pdf>

How to get started: First, explore what kind of yoga you enjoy the most. There are countless styles of yoga, from Vinyasa yoga (which is fast-paced and involves a lot of movements) to Iyengar yoga (which takes time to focus on aligning the body into specific shapes). Each yoga studio will typically have their own style of yoga – for example, a Bikram yoga studio will teach scripted classes in a very hot environment. The only way to know what kind you like is to try a variety of classes! Even within a studio, each yoga teacher will have their own manner of teaching, so try at least 3 different classes with different teachers before deciding what is best for





Pennsylvania Health Access Network

Stronger Voices for Better Health

Hi CSP Community,

Despite all of our efforts, the House of Representatives voted last week for final passage of the bill that will take away healthcare from 600,000+ Pennsylvanians, including people fighting serious illnesses like cancer and diabetes, hardworking families, seniors in nursing homes, children, veterans, and people with disabilities. It will also put 1 in 4 PA hospitals at risk and throw our state budget into crisis, all to pay for tax cuts for wealthy Americans and corporations.

Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick was one of only two Representatives nationwide to cross party lines and vote against this bill, stating that the cuts to Medicaid would hurt his constituents. If you live in his district, please make sure to thank him for his "no" vote, using our tool below or by calling his office at (202) 225-4276.

It's critically important that our representatives know we're paying attention to their vote to take our healthcare away. Can you send a message to your Representative and Senators using our digital tool below? It's pre-loaded with how they all voted.

Thanks for taking action!

Best,
Robin Stelly
PA Health Access Network

PA Health Access Network
1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102
877-570-3642
info@pahealthaccess.org



Creating Increased Connections
A program of Resources for Human Development

CREATING INCREASED CONNECTIONS (CIC) GROUPS



TAKING BACK OUR POWER

Taking Back Our Power is a peer support group for individuals with lived experience of sensory phenomena (like hearing things others don't hear) and unusual beliefs

MONDAYS
2:00PM-3:00PM

Hopeworx

1210 Stanbridge St #600,
Norristown, PA 19401

TUESDAYS
2:30PM-4:00PM

Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church

625 Montgomery Ave
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010

THURSDAYS
1:00PM-2:00PM

Trinity Reformed Church

60 N. Hanover St
Pottstown, PA 19464

CIRCLE OF HOPE

Circle of Hope is peer-to-peer led discussion group. Join us for lively conversation about how we are feeling, our successes and challenges, our recovery, and how we maintain our wellness. Everyone is welcome.

WEDNESDAYS
1:00PM-2:00PM

Hopeworx

1210 Stanbridge St #600,
Norristown, PA 19401

THURSDAYS
10:30AM-12:00PM

Hopeworx

1210 Stanbridge St #600,
Norristown, PA 19401

LIVE ANOTHER DAY

TUESDAYS
12:30PM-1:45PM

Lansdale Library

301 Vine St
Lansdale, PA 19446

Alternatives to Suicide groups are intended as non-judgmental spaces where people can share some of their darkest thoughts without being assumed to have an illness or being assessed for involuntary interventions. Openly exploring these thoughts - and the feelings and experiences underneath them - is often the key to moving toward something different.

WALK AND TALK

Every 1st and 3rd Friday
11:00AM-12:30PM

King of Prussia Mall

Meet at Food Court on 1st Floor

Join us for a time to work on our wellness, and enjoy each other's company as we exercise together.

Enter between KPOT and Bonefish Grill

160 N Gulph Rd

King of Prussia, PA 19406

WOMENS IDENTITY AND EXPERIENCES GROUP

This group was created for women as a safe environment to voice & openly share our life stories as women & to empower ourselves to find greater meaning & purpose in life.

WEDNESDAYS
3:00PM-4:30PM

Teams Link

<https://teams.microsoft.com/Womensgroup>

For More Information Contact Sheila.HallPrioleau@RHD.org 215-906-0453
www.ciconnections.org

2025 Pottstown National Night Out Block Party



Join us in Promoting Neighborhood
Spirit and Community Partnerships

Free Info, Games & Music!
Free Food & Family Fun!

Tuesday - August 5th @ 6:00 PM

(Rain date: Tuesday, August 12th @ 6 PM)

Washington & Chestnut St. Park

*Organized by Genesis Housing, Victory CLC
and Pottstown Community Action*

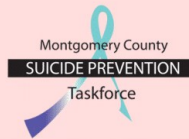
Thanks to the Pottstown Neighborhood Partnership

KeyBank & PA DCED

*For More Info: Victory CLC 484-941-0693 or
Genesis Housing – 610-275-4357, info@genesishousing.org*



PROUDLY IN
PARTNERSHIP:



QPR GATEKEEPER TRAINING

ASK A QUESTION, SAVE A LIFE

QUESTION. PERSUADE. REFER.

3 SIMPLE STEPS.

**A TRAINING AROUND SUICIDE WARNING
SIGNS AND PREVENTION.**

**WITHIN 2 HOURS, BECOME EQUIPPED TO
PREVENT BY WAY OF A PRODUCTIVE,
NON-JUDGMENTAL CONVERSATION.**

TRAININGS AVAILABLE!

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO SCHEDULE A TRAINING:

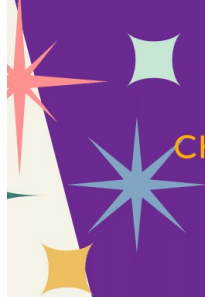
CHEVAUGHN SATCHELL:

(610) 278 - 5117 EXT 1288

CHEVAUGHN.SATCHELL@MONTGOMERYCOUNTYPA.GOV

LINDSAY MEEHAN MAYO

LMEEHANMAYO@ACCESSSERVICES.ORG



Take a Minute: 4-7-8 Breathing Exercise

Feeling anxious, stressed, or overwhelmed?

Try this grounding technique to help calm your body and mind in just one minute:

- Sit comfortably or lie down. Close your eyes if you'd like.
- Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds
- Hold your breath for 7 seconds
- Exhale slowly through your mouth for 8 seconds
- Repeat this cycle 4 times (or more if you need)

This technique activates your parasympathetic nervous system — which helps calm your body's stress response.

Teen Support

Montgomery County
1:00pm-9:00pm Daily
Call 866-825-5856
Text 267-225-7785

Adult Support

Montgomery County
1:00pm-9:00pm Daily
Call 855-715-8255
Text 267-225-7785

Peer Support Talk Line

& teent@lklines

Subcommittee Reports from May 2025

Advocacy Subcommittee: Christine Stutman, Executive Director of NAMI Montgomery County, said the committee discussed Medicaid cuts and how to get involve discussions with legislators and others. Suggested bringing in PHAN to talk with larger CSP and how to be most effective in advocating to legislators. She's on BuckMonts Collaborative and they are going up to Harrisburg on June 4th to discuss housing and mental health. She'll share info. Buses are scheduled and it's organized for meetings with legislators. Will send info to Penny. NAMI Smarts is a longer-term project. PHAN is more about being most effective. We don't want to flood legislators with calls at the same time. Morgan said she talked at Regional CSP in March. How to strategize. Sue said some of the things they advocated for in the past. For example, getting clubhouses on the county radar. Years ago, we advocated for crisis services. Every 2 or 3 years we do a needs assessment in collaboration with the county. We did discuss transitional housing and the unhoused community. The naval base might be used for housing.

Community Outreach Subcommittee – Erin said Art Contest winners were announced. Getting magnets printed and distributed at conference. CSP Discord is set up and ready. Look out for that link. Contact Erin if you have questions. evillarose@hopeworxinc.org. We're looking for another co-chair. Also discussed different events to attend. June 6th – we will attend the Lansdale First Friday. Garden Party theme. To be in community and see what's going locally. Might apply for Lansdale Farmers Market. 9 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. Lansdale is centrally located in the county. Penny suggested attending church events.

Conference Subcommittee – Harry said our event is next Tuesday. Finetuning last minute details. We're sold out now but still getting requests for tickets. We're expecting about 150 more people than last year. Looking for volunteers to help clean up when the conference is over. Lindsay – what time should we set up tables? 8-8:30 a.m.

Editor's Note: CSP did not meet in June.

CSP MEETING CALENDER 2025

*Meetings are held every third
Thursday, monthly from
12: 00-2:30pm*

The next meetings will be:

July	17
August	21
September	18
October	16

*Meetings are held in person
and via Zoom.*

Montgomery County CSP Executive Committee

2024/2025 Tri-Chairs

Provider Member: Jim Markey

Person in Recovery: Morgan Killian-Mosley

Family Member: Vacant

County Liaison -
Tracey Riper-Thomas



2024/2025 Sub-Committee Chairs

Community Outreach: Julie Whitmore, Erin Villarose

Advocacy: Anise Robinson

Conference: Harry Bowles

Fiduciary - HopeWorx, Inc.

1210 Stanbridge Street,
Suite 600
Norristown, PA 19401
610-270-3685

2024/2025 Treasurer

Justin Chamrin

CSP Principles

- * Person Centered/
Person Empowered
- * Culturally competent
- * Designed to Meet
Special Needs
- * Community Based
with Natural Supports
- * Flexible
- * Coordinated
- * Accountable
- * Strengths-Based

CSP Mission Statement:

Montgomery County's Community Support Program (CSP) brings together individuals that receive mental health services, their family members, providers and the Department of Behavioral Health in an equal partnership to promote recovery and excellence in the delivery of community-based mental health services.

The committee strives to include a balance of people who use services, people who provide services, family members, and interested members of the community at large. The CSP initiatives continue to grow state, regionally and county wide. As the involvement increases CSP has become a place that feedback can truly be given to the county from individuals that receive services and information can be given that suits the needs and requests of those that attend.

Organizations who regularly send representatives to CSP:

Central Behavioral Health,
AdvocacyWorx, Community
Satisfaction Team of Montgomery
County, Magellan Health Services,
Montgomery Co. Department of
Behavioral Health, Montgomery
County Emergency Services (MCES),
NAMI Montgomery County,
Norristown Vet Center, Resources for
Human Development, Salisbury
Behavioral Health

CSP Subcommittees:

- * **Advocacy Subcommittee**—Works on legislative, policy, communication, budget, voter education and other issues related to mental health services in the county, statewide and at the federal level when relevant. At the direction of the CSP Committee, the Advocacy Subcommittee gathers information on issues, plans advocacy events and creates a monthly newsletter to provide information to the stakeholder network as well as the community at large about the work of CSP. The newsletter also provides updates on new and changing mental health services provided in Montgomery County. The newsletter editor can be contacted at: kathiemitchell8221@gmail.com.
- * **Community Outreach Subcommittee**—Works on facilitating opportunities for people in the CSP community to be more involved in the Montgomery County community. This includes implementing the Community Connections grants, which provide funding for people to participate in a variety of activities. The committee also implements transportation grants that provide gas cards and SEPTA day passes to CSP community members. The annual CSP Poster Art contest is also organized by this committee.
- * **Conference Subcommittee** – The conference subcommittee will plan and fundraise for the annual Montgomery County CSP Conference.

Meetings:

12:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

3rd Thursday of each
month

Montgomery County
Community College
Blue Bell, PA

In person & Zoom

Kathie Mitchell, Newsletter Editor

Join our Mailing list!

We have an email list as
well as a regular mailing,
to join:

Send an e-mail to:

pjohnson@hopeworxinc.org

Or send your contact info
to this mailing address:

**We invite all peers, family members and
providers/professionals to attend.**

Website: www.montcopacsp.org

[https://www.facebook.com/
montcopacsp/](https://www.facebook.com/montcopacsp/)