



Hiring Peers: Advertising & Interviewing

Please note that a “peer” is an individual who has lived experience of mental health issues.



Can I legally ask that the applicant identify as a peer?

If a position must be filled by a person with lived experience of mental health issues, you may indicate this in your job posting. It is NOT an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) violation to favor, or even require, that specified positions be filled by individuals with disabilities.



What language can I use when I advertise?

Common language used to describe the lived experience requirement when advertising for peer positions include: “individuals with lived experience of mental health issues”; “should identify as someone with personal lived experience of mental health and/or co-occurring mental health and addiction recovery”; “must possess personal history of having mental health issues”. If you have positions where identifying as a peer is not required, it is still a good idea to add language like, “individuals with personal experience of mental health issues are encouraged to apply”. This sends a clear message to all applicants about the welcoming culture of your organization or company.



What can I ask in the interview about the applicant’s mental health history?

You may restate the language you used in the job posting, followed by a simple, “Do you meet this requirement?” It is a good idea to frame the question around the scope of work: what the person would be doing and who he or she would likely be working with. For instance, “telling our story is an important component of peer support”. What you are looking for here is an applicant who can relay his or her story in a meaningful way, relevant to the position. Another strategy you can use is to ask, “How would you share your recovery story with a peer you were supporting who is experiencing ____?” Keep in mind that employers may NOT ask for an applicant’s diagnosis or if the applicant needs to request any accommodations. Also, the same core questions must be asked of all applicants for the open position, only varying with clarifying questions.