



CONNECTICUT
Children & Families

Young People Peer
Supports (YPPS)
August 2026

Definitions

For purposes of shared and inclusive language, the following terms may be used interchangeably throughout this presentation and in program materials:

- ***Young person, youth, teen, adolescent*** – used to describe individuals ages 12–17, the target age range for this program.
- ***Peer Support Specialist, Peer Bridger, Recovery Coach*** – titles given to individuals working with and supporting young people in their recovery journey. These individuals are age 18+ and have experience with the addiction recovery process, familiarity with local support services, resources and the recovery community.

What is Young People Peer Support?

Program Overview

- Peer Support is a **voluntary**, non-clinical service that encompasses a range of activities and interactions to support a young person's self-directed goals of recovery and wellbeing.
- Peers **do**:
 - Support recovery from substance use concerns and co-occurring conditions
 - Offer encouragement, practical help, guidance and understanding
 - Model that recovery is achievable
 - Share tools and strategies that promote self-empowerment
 - Enhance, support or serve as an alternative to clinical treatment
 - Build from strengths and consider the whole person
- Peers **do not**:
 - Assess or diagnose
 - Push any particular recovery pathway
 - Provide treatment or case management

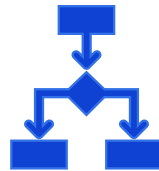
What is Young People Peer Support?

Program Philosophy

Youth Voice



Youth Choice



Young people lead their own recovery, making choices and setting goals to regain control and independence

Young People Peer Supports (YPPS)

Program Funding

- Funding for this program is being supported by the Reinvestment Funds under the CT Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Demonstration Waiver pursuant to section 1115(a) of the Social Security Act.
- Under a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Connecticut Social Services (DSS), Connecticut Children & Families (DCF) agrees to contract with community expert agencies to:
 1. Develop a manualized training curriculum for Peer Support Specialists (PSS) working with young people
 2. Hire and train PSS in the curriculum
 3. Provide peer support to adolescents ages 12-17
 4. Provide ongoing coaching and consultation to the PSS to support implementation and sustainability of the curriculum
 5. Develop a proposed Young Person SUD PSS Certification plan

PHASE ONE

Curriculum Development

- On October 1, 2025, DCF began working in partnership with CHOiCE Recovery Coaching (CRC) to develop a Young Person Peer Support Specialist Training Curriculum.
- CRC reviewed existing CT Peer Support Curriculums as well as best practices for effective engagement of youth with substance use concerns and incorporated applicable content for the target population.
- CRC met with stakeholders, including the convening of a Young Person Advisory Board, for feedback on role definitions, curriculum elements and outcomes tools.
- CRC also conducted a Validation Survey to support and revise the knowledge, skills and abilities for the PSS role.

What are YPPS Peers Trained in?

Peers undergo intensive training and receive ongoing support, supervision and consultation. Training includes, but is not limited to:

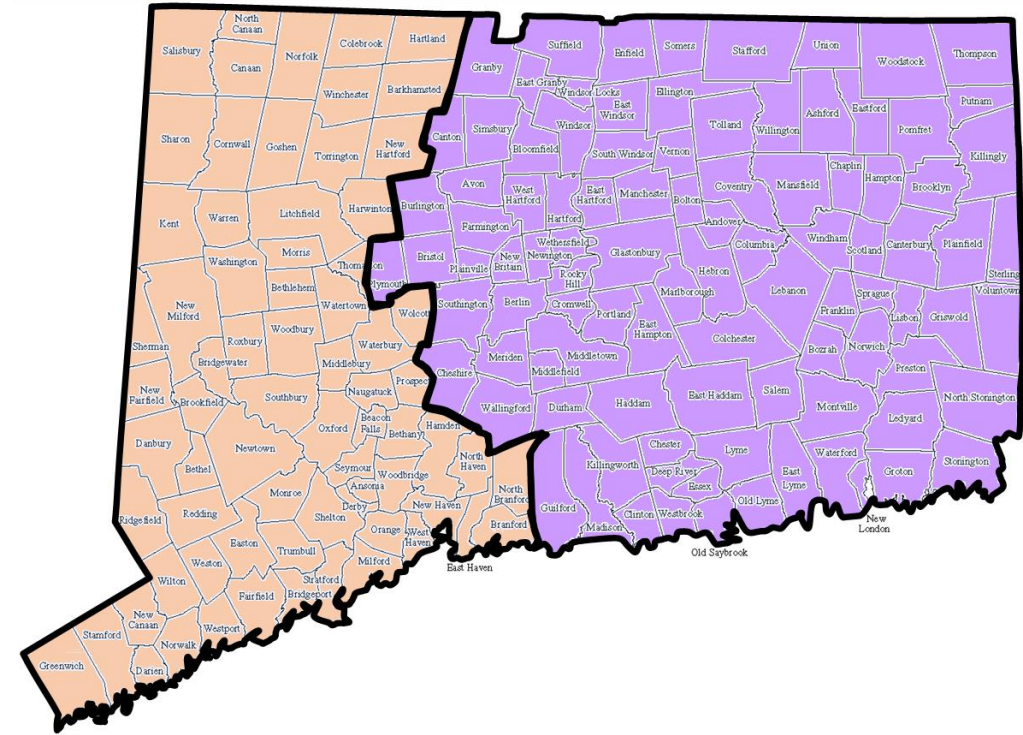
1. Foundations of Peer Support and Recovery
2. Adolescent Development, Motivation & Wellness
3. Cultural Awareness, Identity and Equity
4. Substance Use, Mental Health and Co-Occurring Conditions
5. Relationship Building and Communication Skills
6. Advocacy and Systems Navigation
7. Intervention and Support Strategies
8. Ethics, Boundaries, and Professional Responsibility
9. Collaboration, Teamwork and Professional Practice
10. Personal Wellness and Self-Care

PHASE TWO

Hiring and Training

On January 1 2026, DCF began working in partnership with Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR) & Advocacy Unlimited (AU) to prepare for statewide service provision to young people.

- Each organization will hire six (6) Young People Peer Support Specialists (YPPSS) and one (1) Peer Support Program Manager
- Goal: serve 140 youth annually statewide
- CCAR serves DCF Regions 1, 2 and 5
- AU will serve DCF Regions 3, 4 and 6
- Training began March 2026; phase 2 occurred in May 2026.
- CRC will provide ongoing consultation to both agencies for model fidelity



PHASE THREE

Service Provision

Target Population – Individuals ages 12–17 who struggle with substance use.

- May also have co-occurring mental health and/or physical health concerns
- Formal substance use disorder (SUD) diagnosis/treatment history NOT required
- No exclusionary criteria regarding the young person's substance(s) of choice
- Involvement with CT Children & Families NOT required

Referrals – young people and families may self-refer; referrals shall be accepted from any source including local hospitals, community behavioral health organizations, DCF Area Offices, Youth Diversion Teams (YDT), and the Judicial Branch. Contact within 48 hours; face to face offered within 7 days. Both agencies actively accepting referrals.

Service Frequency – Peers meet with youth face-to-face in the community or at their homes at least weekly. Peers work a flexible schedule that includes some evening and weekend hours to accommodate individual family needs for routine appointments.

Service Duration – individualized – until the young person's desired progress has been made in meeting the goals on their Recovery and Wellness Support Plan.

PHASE THREE

Service Provision

Data and Outcome Reporting shall include but is not limited to:

- Total number of certified Peer Support Specialists employed.
- Number of Peer Support Specialists enrolled in Youth Peer Curriculum.
- Number of Peer Support Specialists who completed Youth Peer Curriculum.
- Number of Youths assigned to each Peer Support Specialist.
- Referral information for Youth referred to program including referral source, geographical location of the youth/family, substance(s) of concern at time of referral, other identified needs for the youth reported in the referral.
- Demographic information for Youth participating in program (e.g. race, ethnicity, language, gender, age).
- Number of visits/sessions conducted by a Peer Support Specialist with each assigned Youth.
- Wellness outcomes from each assigned Youth receiving services from a Peer Support Specialist. Performance Outcome Measures are based on self-reported recovery capital (Recovery Capital Outcomes Tool).



YOUTH RECOVERY COACH PROGRAM

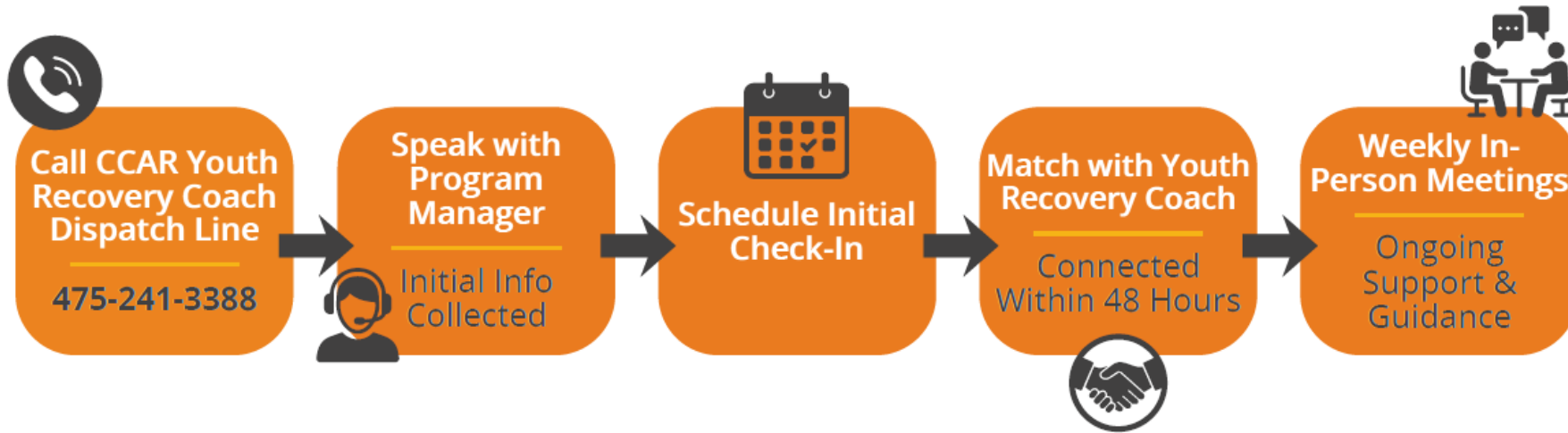
Supporting youth on their path to recovery and wellness.



REFERRAL AND SERVICE PROCESS

CCAR Youth Recovery Coach Dispatch Line: 475-241-3388

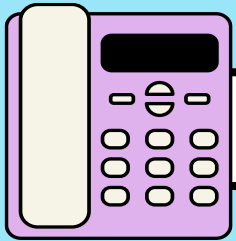
Referrals are accepted by phone. A Program Manager gathers initial information, schedules an initial check-in, and connects the youth with a Recovery Coach. All services are provided at no cost.



Youth Recovery Coach Program Manager
Amanda Flick
aflick@ccar.us



GENERAL PROGRAM CONTACT INFO



860 - 996 - 9667



youthbridger@advocacyunlimited.org



TEXT "INSPIRE" TO 51555



scan QR code for website

PROGRAM MANAGER

Tracey Smith



PHASE FOUR

Certification Plan

CRC will develop a Youth SUD Peer Support Specialist Certification Plan. This work will:

- Occur in partnership with DCF, Community Expert Agencies and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)
- Include initial and ongoing training hour requirements, minimum direct practice experience, and the passing of an examination administered by the Connecticut Certification Board (CCB).

To the degree that it makes sense to do so, CRC will assess opportunities for overlap with existing CT Peer Support Specialist Certification criteria to minimize barriers to career development opportunities by Peer Support Specialists.



We'd love to hear from you!

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Program Contact