

Community Autism Peer Specialist Program

Q: What is CAPS?

Based on the Certified Peer Specialist model in mental health, the Community Autism Peer Specialist program 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.

Q: Who is CAPS designed to support?

Community Autism Peer Specialists are trained to support both young adults (ages 14-17) and adults with autism who can benefit from support to achieve goals related to independent living and community participation.

Q: How are CAPS trained?

The CAPS training course was designed to align with the existing state approved Certified Peer Specialist Course in mental health. CAPS use their lived experiences with autism and skills learned from the 75 hour CAPS training course to: provide support to young adults and adults with autism, promote self-knowledge and self-advocacy, and increase community participation. CAPS are trained to support peers' generation of goals, identify corresponding activities, and help them navigate challenges to achieving their goals.

Q: Why would I want to participate in CAPS?

When compared to other individuals with disabilities, individuals with autism have lower rates of employment, are more likely to be living at home with their parents, and are less engaged in the community. The CAPS program is designed to fill a much needed gap in supports that are essential for living a life in the community. The program is person-centered and tailored to the specific wellness and community integrated goals defined by the individuals receiving the service.

Q: Where can I access the CAPS program?

The CAPS service is being piloted through Mental Health Partnerships (MHP). Founded as an advocacy organization in 1951, MHP has been a leader in peer-delivered services. The Policy and Analytics Center, based at the A.J. Drexel Autism Institute, will be providing training and technical assistance to MHP to enhance their capacity to serve individuals with autism.

Q: When will the CAPS program be available?

The CAPS service will begin in September 2019 as part of a pilot program.

Q: How can I refer an individual to CAPS?

Contact Jim Markey at Mental Health Partnerships in Philadelphia County at (267) 507-3865.