



# What is the Community Autism Peer Specialist (CAPS) Program?

## WHAT IS IT?

The Community Autism Peer Specialist (CAPS) Program is a wellness-oriented program. The CAPS program pairs an individual on the autism spectrum who has completed a peer support training program with other individuals on the spectrum to achieve their personal wellness and community integration goals. Through 1:1 mentoring and social activities, peer specialists support participants with building healthy community connections, developing self-advocacy skills and growing their personal relationships.

## WHAT IS THE TRAINING?

If you are interested in helping others who are on the spectrum through your experiences, consider applying for the CAPS Training Program!

Applicants who are accepted will:

- Complete 75 hours of training over the course of several weeks
- Training will mostly take place in a classroom setting, with some hours completed online and in the community
- This training will prepare peer specialists to work with participants in their own communities and help bring their real-world knowledge and experiences as a person on the spectrum to guide program participants in achieving their personal goals

## WHAT IS THE JOB?

Individuals who complete the peer support training program will be eligible to apply for a paid position as a CAPS Peer Specialist. While employment is not guaranteed, more job opportunities may become available as the program grows.

## WHAT IS THE SERVICE?

The CAPS service is being piloted through Mental Health Partnerships (MHP). The service will help participants identify areas of interest, meaningful activities, and personal wellness. Peer specialists will also work with program participants on encouraging community living and participation. If you are interested in referring an individual to receive this service please contact Jim Markey at Mental Health Partnerships in Philadelphia County at [jmarkey@mhphope.org](mailto:jmarkey@mhphope.org) or **(267) 507-3865**.

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For more information about the CAPS program, please visit:  
PhillyAP Website: <https://www.phillyautismproject.org/peer/>  
CBH website: <https://cbhphilly.org/community-autism-peer-specialist-program/>

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# Frequently Asked Questions About the CAPS Training Program

## **DO I HAVE TO LIVE IN PHILADELPHIA COUNTY?**

You do not have to reside in Philadelphia County to participate in the training program. While we will be placing preference on Philadelphia residents, this is not a requirement for the training program.

## **IF I COMPLETE THE TRAINING PROGRAM AND AM HIRED AS A CAPS, WILL I HAVE TO RESIDE IN PHILADELPHIA COUNTY?**

No, peer specialists do not have to reside in Philadelphia county.

## **WILL PEOPLE BE PAID TO ATTEND THE TRAINING?**

No, funds for this training program will cover training costs, materials and sometimes lunch for participants. There will not be any stipend for attending the training. This is a scholarship opportunity for people to have the opportunity to be a part of this training program.

## **DOES THE CAPS PROGRAM ACCEPT HOMESCHOOLED APPLICANTS?**

Yes, as long as they have a degree that meets the position requirements.

## **DO YOU NEED TO HAVE EXPERTISE IN LIFE DOMAINS AS A PEER SPECIALIST?**

No, we do not expect applicants to have expertise in all life areas. All CAPS will have areas of strengths and areas that may be newer to them. That's where a CAPS supervisor and their peers in the training program can help navigate areas that a peer specialist is less familiar with.

## **IS DRIVING REQUIRED?**

While driving is not required, you must be able to travel independently throughout Philadelphia. We ask if you can drive in the CAPS Training Application because you will be responsible for getting to the training and shadowing opportunities yourself. For the CAPS Peer Specialist Job, we ask if you can drive because it is helpful to know when matching you with peers. MHP also uses a car share program so this may be available to you as an option if you are interested.

## **HOW WILL THE MATCHING PROCESS HAPPEN? FOR EXAMPLE, WILL YOU BE PAIRING FEMALES WITH MALES? HOW WILL THESE DECISIONS BE MADE?**

When people are referred to receive the peer service, they will complete an intake evaluation form. MHP reviews this form and matches the peer based on their knowledge of the peer specialists.

## **WILL THE JOB BE FULL TIME, PART TIME, AS NEEDED?**

This past year, 3 full time staff and 2 part time staff were hired. This will vary depending on budget, number of peers that are referred to receive the service and each CAPS' capacity to take on more peers.

## **HOW MUCH WOULD A PEER SPECIALIST BE PAID FOR THE JOB?**

The average range is \$12-\$16/hr, 32k for full time annual salary.

## **WHAT IF I'M NOT SURE ABOUT APPLYING FOR THE CAPS TRAINING PROGRAM?**

If you're not sure, please apply anyway so that you have an opportunity to learn more about the program. Our hope is to pilot this in Philadelphia and extend it statewide. We envision additional opportunities after we're able to pilot the program.

