

Community Autism Peer Specialist Program

Q: What is CAPS?

Based on the Certified Peer Specialist model in mental health, a Community Autism Peer Specialist (CAPS) is an individual on the Spectrum (or with an ASD Dx) who is professionally trained to provide peer support services, which can cover areas like personal wellness and community integration. Activities are chosen by the participants to build skills in education, leadership, daily living, self-determination, socialization, self-advocacy, and in general, improving one's quality of life.

Q: Who is CAPS designed to support?

Community Autism Peer Specialists are trained to support both adults (18+) and youth (14 to 18) 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 began in September 2019 as part of a pilot program. The service is available and accepting referrals in Philadelphia. We hope to expand to other counties soon.

Q: How can I refer an individual to CAPS?

For more information, please contact Mental Health Partnerships in Philadelphia County at (267) 507-3865. Their referral form is also on their [WEBPAGE](#).