

AUTISM PEER SUPPORT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE HUB

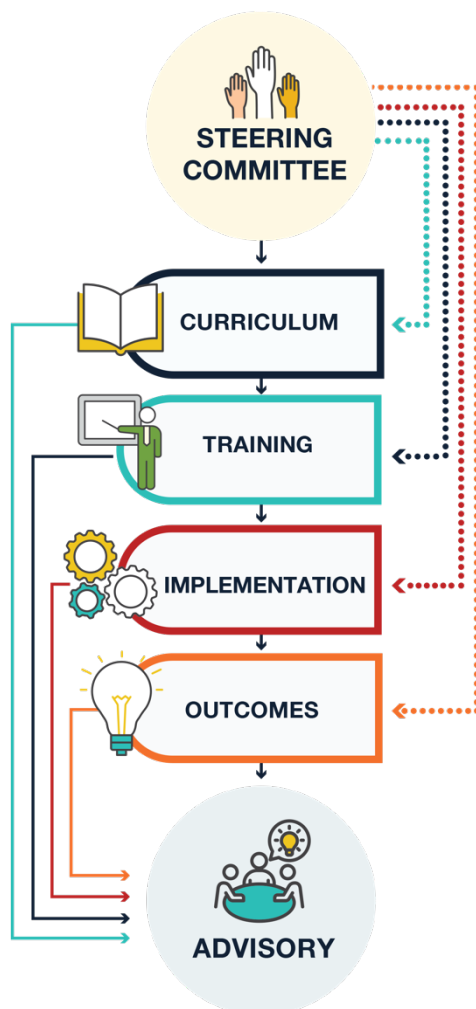


CAPS Program Development: Infrastructure

Purpose of this Resource

This resource highlights how the Community Autism Peer Specialist (CAPS) program in Philadelphia was developed. It shares the timeline of key milestones and the infrastructure that supported the program's growth, with the goal of illustrating both the effort and collaboration required. Organizations can use this overview to understand what it takes to launch and sustain an autism peer support program, and to consider how the lessons learned in Philadelphia might apply locally.

Infrastructure



Steering Committee: Comprised of relevant stakeholders including autistic individuals, parents, peer specialists, managed care organization, and research partners. The Steering Committee provided overall project guidance and recommendations for the development of the Advisory Board and related workgroups.

Workgroups: Workgroups were developed to work on specific program components, including the following:

- **Curriculum:** Youth and Young Adult Curriculum Development was led by consultant Val Paradiz and funded through reinvestment funds.
- **Training** Development: Led by parent and peer specialist who cross-walked the peer specialist in mental health training with the youth and young adult curriculum.
- **Implementation:** Led internally by DBHIDS and CBH, and in partnership with a service agency where CAPS would be implemented through.
- **Outcomes:** Led by CBH and the Policy and Analytics Center, A.J. Drexel Autism Institute.

Advisory Board: Comprised of staff from the Office of Disability Services at a local university, teachers for autistic students at local schools, autistic individuals who have had experience in peer support, mental health and support group facilitation, and parents of autistic adults. The Advisory Board provided executive sign off on the Youth and Young Adult Curriculum, Training Development, and Implementation Plan.

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Things to Consider

Reflect on the key elements needed to develop or adapt an autism peer support program, drawing lessons from Philadelphia's CAPS initiative.

- Who needs to be onboard from the beginning to advocate for funding? For example, state policy makers from BSASP, OMHSAS and Philadelphia MCO were involved. A champion (or multiple) was needed to continue to explain what the CAPS program was, and advocate for sustainable funding.
- Where will the autism peer support program be housed? Will it be embedded within a peer support program, an autism service provider agency, etc.? Is the employer flexible and knowledgeable about working with autistic individuals? Where the program is housed may look very different in terms of the peer specialist that you recruit, the philosophy of the program, the referrals that you receive, and the technical assistance support needed.

Program Overview

Purpose: Provide an overview of the initiative, including goals, values, and target population.

- **Program Name:**
- **Core Values** [ex.: autistic-led, community inclusion, person-centered, etc.]:
- **Target Population** [ex.: Adults / Youth / Transition-age /etc.]:
- **Service Model** [ex. Peer-to-peer support, embedded in mental health, autism services, etc.]:

Infrastructure & Governance

Purpose: Outline leadership and decision-making structures.

- **Steering Committee:**
 - Role: [e.g., provide project guidance, ensure accountability]
 - Membership: [Autistic self-advocates, families, peer specialists, providers, MCO reps, researchers]
- **Advisory Board:**
 - Role: [e.g., executive review of curriculum, training, implementation plan]
 - Membership: [Educators, autistic adults, parents, service providers]
- **Workgroups:**
 - Curriculum Development: [Insert lead + focus]
 - Training Development: [Insert lead + focus]
 - Service Implementation: [Insert lead + focus]
 - Outcomes Measurement: [Insert lead + focus]