

AUTISM PEER SUPPORT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE HUB



CAPS Program Development: Timeline and 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.

Timeline

2014 – 2015

Peer support for autism is identified as a top initiative by the Philadelphia Autism Project and supported as a priority by state-level stakeholders for adults.

2017

Philadelphia's Managed Care Organization (CBH) and Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS) launch the Certified Peer Specialist for Autism Initiative and establish a Steering Committee.

2019

First graduating class of CAPS Training Program.

2021

CAPS is approved as a reimbursable Medicaid Supplemental Service.

2017

The Bureau of Supports for Autism and Special Populations (BSASP) funds development of an adult peer support curriculum.

2017 – 2019

The Steering Committee, Advisory Board, and Workgroups design and refine core program components, including:

- Adapting the curriculum for youth and young adults
- Developing and implementing training
- Planning service implementation
- Establishing outcomes measures

2020

Second graduating class.

2022

Third graduating class.

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.

Section 1: Early Vision & Advocacy

Who do we need to bring to the table early on?

- Identify potential policy champions (e.g., state agency staff, city departments, local leaders).
- Determine whether peer support is a recognized priority in our community.
- Plan strategies to build awareness and advocacy for autism peer support.

Section 2: Funding & Infrastructure

How will we fund and structure the program?

- Explore possible funding sources (state funds, Medicaid, grants, foundations).
- Identify partner organizations (MCOs, universities, service providers, advocacy groups).
- Consider what governance structures (e.g., Steering Committee, Advisory Board) are needed.