

Proposal: Recovery Support Specialist Certificate

January 12, 2022

Program Narrative and Justification

Need for the Program

Lindsay Sheehan and Patrick Corrigan have received funding from the state of Illinois for the creation of program to help increase the number of Certified Recovery Support Specialists (CRSS) and Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS) in the state. These CRSS/CPRS are vital members of mental health teams who use their lived experience with mental illness to help others along the recovery journey.

As of last year, Illinois only had 224 active individuals with the CRSS/CPRS credential, which is significantly beneath the number needed to successfully run the numerous mental health programs operated throughout the state. Therefore, Illinois has opened up this funding opportunity to higher educational institutions to create programs that will help facilitate an accelerated training process.

The funding will provide Illinois Tech over \$2 million in the next 2.5 years to provide programming specific to creating CRSS/CPRS training programs. The certificate program will help to remove barriers to entry to the mental health field and becoming a CRSS/CPRS by providing the necessary course work, full wrap around support services, financial stipends for internships, and assistance with preparing to enter the career field.

Currently, gaining the CRSS/CPRS designation is a challenging process. CRSS/CPRS candidates often must wade through a significant amount of decentralized information in order to ascertain the types of courses they need to qualify for certification. In addition to coursework, candidates must also complete a full year of work as a recovery support specialist to obtain their certification. In our program, students will become eligible for the certification exam in as little as one semester. Students who complete this certificate are eligible for a reduced internship length (3-month internship for our program versus 12-month internship for those not graduating from an approved program).

We propose to serve the greater Chicagoland area, including Cook, DuPage, Kankakee, Lake, McHenry and Will Counties. This geographic region includes over 7 million adults from a wide range of racial and ethnic backgrounds. While there is significant variability between counties, there is an overall need for CRSS/CPRS staff who can serve communities of color, particularly those from Black and Latinx backgrounds. Our program will explicitly recruit candidates from these communities.

Market Analysis

Because of the pandemic, many service providers in the Chicago area have experienced staffing shortages; these shortages have been particularly profound in community mental health settings such as Thresholds and Trilogy. The creation of a nationwide 988 number for mental health emergencies has been accompanied by state funding for mobile crisis response agencies who were chosen for the 590 Crisis Care System. Four agencies in our chosen service area, including Leyden Family Services, are currently scaling up to hire 10 individuals

with the CRSS credential by July 2022. Our program will help mental health agencies with meeting their staffing needs.

We worked closely with several local partner organizations such as Leyden Family Services, Thresholds, and Trilogy to help identify needs and gaps in the employment field for CRSS/CPRS and develop the proposed program. An advisory board will lead efforts toward curriculum development, evaluation, and career opportunities. To further explore the needs of potential students in our service area, we conducted interviews with five individuals either who have obtained or who are working towards their CRSS/CPRS credential, and with two clinical staff who supervise CRSS individuals in mental health agencies. These interviews revealed numerous student needs that will be addressed through our programming.

Wage Analysis. O*Net, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Indeed.com were all examined to provide information regarding earnings potential for CRSS/CPRS. As the field is new, there was not specific information regarding this designation. However, after assessing current job openings and listings for Mental Health Professionals, it is estimated that a CRSS/CPRS has the potential to make from \$15 - \$20 per hour or more, dependent up job responsibilities, educational level, and hiring organization. As becoming a CRSS/CPRS allows healthcare organizations to bill health insurance companies for time, it is possible that wage earnings may increase in the future.

Enrollment Estimates. We project enrolling at least 10 students per year in the program during the 2.5 years of the grant.

Academic Information

Advising. Advising and mentorship will play a key role in the program and its outcomes. Formalized one-on-one meetings will be conducted with each student at the beginning of the each semester with Training Coordinator Karyn Stovall. These meetings will help students discuss their needs and interests in the program and provide an opportunity to discuss with students the types of wrap-around services needed. The Training Coordinator will also conduct monthly calls, emails, or virtual meetings with students to determine needs and acclimation to the program and internship. The Training Coordinator will host weekly office hours for students and facilitate internship placements. All students enrolled in the internship course will receive weekly supervision from program faculty. The program will also work with student career services to provide workshops related to resume writing, cover letter writing, and preparing for an interview.

Ancillary Supports. Students may require mental health and other recovery services during the program if they choose these in addition to their existing services. As a student, they have access to no-cost counseling sessions and medical care through the Student Health and Wellness Center. The SHWC has a network of referrals to more robust (inpatient or intensive outpatient services) levels of care. We may also utilize our network of affiliated organization to assist students (e.g., referrals for housing support, domestic violence, visa/citizenship concerns, etc.). Students can

avail all student clubs and activities, including the IL Tech chapter of Active Minds, a support organization for students with mental health challenges.

Program Resources. Initially, no additional resources are needed to begin the program as all resources are funded through the state grant for the next 2.5 years. Teaching faculty will be hired as adjuncts and funded through the grant. All admitted students receive 100% tuition coverage through the grant. Program staff and faculty will begin ongoing discussions with the advisory board regarding sustainability after the grant end date.

Proposed Bulletin Entry

This certificate is designed for individuals who want to obtain the Certified Recovery Support Specialist (CRSS) or Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS) credential in Illinois. This 9-credit certificate program includes four courses and a 300-hour supervised internship experience.

Admission Requirements

- High school diploma or GED/ Transcripts from all post-secondary institutions
 - Professional written statement detailing career goals
 - Personal interview
 - Two letters of recommendation
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Program Outcomes and Assessment Process

Learning Goal (LG)	Courses/student work used to assess achievement of this goal
Students will be able to describe key concepts, principles, roles and functions of recovery support specialists.	PSYC 102 Introduction to Recovery Support PSYC 103 Ethical and Professional Issues in Recovery Support
Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of professional and ethical issues in recovery support.	PSYC 103 Ethical and Professional Issues in Recovery Support
Students will be able to describe evidence-based practices in mental health and substance use treatment.	PSYC 104 Evidence-Based Practices in Recovery Support
Students will demonstrate understanding of multicultural issues in mental health and substance use across the lifespan.	PSYC 105 Special Topics and Populations in Recovery Support
Students will appropriately demonstrate recovery support skills.	PSYC 102 Introduction to Recovery Support PSYC 106 Recovery Support Internship

Learning Goal	Rubric	Measure	Target
Students will be able to describe key concepts, principles, roles and functions of recovery support specialists.	Final Exam Rubric (PSYC 102) Final Exam Rubric (PSYC 103)	% of students with a score of at least 70%	80% of students achieving 70% or better
Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of professional and ethical issues in recovery support.	Ethical Dilemma Presentation Rubric (PSYC 103); Midterm Exam Rubric (PSYC 103)	% of students with a score of at least 70%	80% of students achieving 70% or better
Students will be able to describe evidence-based practices in mental health and substance use treatment.	Midterm Exam Rubric (PSYC 104) Final Exam Rubric (PSYC 104)	% of students with a score of at least 70%	80% of students achieving 70% or better
Students will demonstrate understanding of special subpopulations in mental health and substance use across the lifespan.	Final Exam Rubric (PSYC 105)	% of students with a score of at least 70%	80% of students achieving 70% or better
Students will appropriately demonstrate recovery support skills.	Basic Recovery Support Skills Rubric (PSYC 102) Documentation Practice Rubric (PSYC 102) Final Evaluation Rubric (PSYC 106)	% of students with a score of at least 70%	80% of students achieving 70% or better

Course Requirements

- PSYC 102 Introduction to Recovery Support
- PSYC 103 Ethical and Professional Issues in Recovery Support
- PSYC 104 Evidence-Based Practices in Recovery Support
- PSYC 105 Special Topics and Populations in Recovery Support
- PSYC 106 Recovery Support Internship