

# Best Practices for Supervising Consumer Workers

As a supervisor of consumer workers, you have the opportunity to develop employees who will provide a unique and valuable set of supports to your clients. Here are some strategies for supervising to maximize the benefits to your program, your clients, and the peer employees themselves.

**Create regular, frequent opportunities for supervision.** This should include opportunities to review current tasks, offer opportunities for goal setting and development, and discuss the consumer worker's experiences and challenges, including emotional challenges, with the work.

**Offer guidance and support to Peer Employees during the AIDS Institute (AI) Certification process.** The Peer Certification process has numerous elements, and consumer workers benefit from having some consistent support as they progress.

- Familiarize yourself with the requirements for AI Peer Certification. Review the FAQs and other documents posted on <https://www.hivtrainingny.org/Home/PeerCertification>.
- Consider establishing check-ins on your peer's progress toward certification as a regular part of your supervision, including reviewing the courses your peer has taken and what future courses will most benefit them (and your program).
- The Supervisor Evaluation, which reviews general and track-specific competencies, can also be used to set and support professional goals for the peer employee.
- Permit peer employees to attend certification trainings during their work hours when possible. Not all peer employees have access to computers or Internet at home.

**Recognize that peer employees may not have had the opportunity to gain much formal work experience.** They may benefit from additional clarity and support with understanding and applying elements of patient-centered care, department procedures, and/or computer programs. Create a safe space for employees to share what they know and what they are still learning. Be flexible and patient.

**Be clear and direct with consumer workers about your expectations regarding job roles and tasks, and equally clear and direct with your feedback.** Particularly if a task is new, ensure the peer has ample opportunity to request clarification and assistance before, during, and after a task, and offer feedback.

**Assist consumer workers in understanding and managing their dual roles.** Peer employees who have received, or currently receive services at your agency, or who live in the community, must frequently navigate their roles as both employees and as clients/community members. Have regular, open conversations with your consumer workers about boundaries, and agency policies. The [AI Peer Certification Code of Ethics](#) can help you with these discussions.

**Solicit the input and perspective of your peer employees.** Peers have unique insights into services and client experiences. Encourage them to share their perspective to help the team improve services.

**Be aware that peers may find that their public assistance benefits are affected by their employment.** Peers' public assistance benefits may be decreased or eliminated when they accept any paid employment. This can cause enormous stress, and in some cases peers may leave their jobs. The [Benefits Pilot Program](#) can assist peers in knowing what to expect in advance or manage an unexpected situation.

**Support your peer employee's growth and development.** Learn their strengths and skills and help them leverage these; identify areas for growth and offer support where possible. Find out more about their professional goals, and encourage them to stretch. Advocate for them to take on new responsibilities in your agency or program, or support them in moving into a new professional role.

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