

RCW 18.420.005 Finding—Intent. (1) The legislature finds that peers play a critical role along the behavioral health continuum of care, from outreach to treatment to recovery support. Peers deal in the currency of hope and motivation and are incredibly adept at supporting people with behavioral health challenges on their recovery journeys. Peers represent the only segment of the behavioral health workforce where there is not a shortage, but a surplus of willing workers. Peers, however, are presently limited to serving only medicaid recipients and working only in community behavioral health agencies. As a result, youth and adults with commercial insurance have no access to peer services. Furthermore, peers who work in other settings, such as emergency departments and behavioral health urgent care, cannot bill insurance for their services.

(2) Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature to address the behavioral health workforce crisis, expand access to peer services, eliminate financial barriers to professional licensing, and honor the contributions of the peer profession by creating the profession of certified peer specialists. [2023 c 469 § 1.]