



## **SUPREME COURT OF APPEALS OF WEST VIRGINIA**

### **Peer Recovery Support Specialist Policy for Treatment Courts Division of Probation Services**

#### **1. Scope and Purpose**

- 1.1. This Treatment Court Policy contains an outline of the job duties and other procedures regarding Peer Recovery Support Specialists (“PRSS”) employed by the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia (“the Court”).
- 1.2. The purpose of this policy is to assure a collaborative and strengths-based approach in West Virginia’s treatment courts who may employ PRSSs to assist individuals in achieving sustained recovery from substance use disorder. PRSSs serve in a supportive role within treatment courts by providing recovery resources, assist participants in navigating state and local systems (i.e., mental health and recovery), and help in the implementation of recovery plans. PRSSs are trained and certified in advocacy, mentoring/education, recovery/wellness support, and ethical responsibilities.
- 1.3. The Court may, at any time with or without cause, suspend, modify, or terminate this policy by administrative order.

#### **2. Applicability**

- 2.1. This policy applies to any PRSS hired by the Court.

#### **3. Definitions**

- 3.1. *Certification*- a valid and active PRSS certification from the West Virginia Certification Board of Addiction & Prevention Professionals (WVCBAPP).
- 3.2. *HIPAA*- an acronym for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, which protects the privacy of medical and health information for treatment court participants.
- 3.3. *Participant*- treatment court participants in Adult Drug Court (“ADC”), Family Treatment Court (“FTC”), and Veteran’s Treatment Court (“VTC”).
- 3.4. *Peer Recovery Support Specialist*- acronym (“PRSS”), is an employee of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia who is certified by the WVCBAPP.
- 3.5. *Recertification*- a process employed by the WVCBAPP to ensure PRSSs remain in compliance with continuing education and certification requirements as set forth in the [WVCBAPP’s Peer Recovery Support Specialist \(PRSS\) Manual](#).
- 3.6. *Treatment Court*- for the purposes of this policy, a treatment court is an ADC, FTC, and VTC under the direction of the Court’s Division of Probation Services (“DPS”).
- 3.7. *Treatment Court Staff*- a person who is employed by the Court as a Case Coordinator or Probation Officer for a treatment court of the DPS.

#### 4. **Practice Guidelines and Ethics**

- 4.1. The Court recognizes practice guidelines contained in the [\*National Practice Guidelines for Peer Specialists and Supervisors\*](#).
- 4.2. All PRSSs hired by the Court shall follow the [\*National Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist \(NCPRSS\) Code of Ethics\*](#).

#### 5. **PRSS Certification**

- 5.1. A copy of a valid WV PRSS certification shall be submitted to the Director of the DPS during the hiring process and proof of recertification shall be submitted to the Director of the DPS or his/her designee every two years during employment.
- 5.2. The PRSS agrees to document their valid certification with the WVCBAPP and remain in good standing with continuing education and certification requirements.

#### 6. **PRSS Responsibilities**

- 6.1. Follow the Court's treatment court policies and procedures, in which the PRSS serves (e.g., FTC), including local treatment court rules, ethics, and training requirements,
- 6.2. Understand and follow all confidentiality matters related to participants and the treatment court,
- 6.3. Participate in continuing education when available to develop an understanding of the values, goals, and operating procedures of both the treatment court and justice system,
- 6.4. Attend all treatment team meetings and court hearings and provide a written and/or verbal summary of participants' activities,
- 6.5. Advocate for effective incentives and responses for treatment court participants,
- 6.6. Conduct at least one home visit every two months at each participant's residence and follow the field visit procedure as dictated in Section 8 of this policy,
- 6.7. Work directly with participants to support them in creating social support systems and linking them to appropriate recovery supports in the community, including aiding participants in identifying appropriate peer support groups,
- 6.8. Assist participants with setting and achieving recovery goals and mentor their progress with such goals, providing opportunities for the participants to direct their own recovery process (i.e., self-determination),
- 6.9. Coordinate with treatment court staff to help address any barriers for participants in achieving their goals and the treatment court requirements,
- 6.10. Lead by example (i.e., personal responsibility, self-advocacy, and hopefulness) and support participants with their coping strategies by developing rapport and mutual peer-to-peer relationships,
- 6.11. Help create linkages to address participants' needs in the areas of housing, educational and/or vocational skills training, and employment,

- 6.12. Interact with community resources on the participants' behalf, as necessary, to establish linkages with services, especially services that can be utilized after treatment court completion,
- 6.13. Accompany participants, when requested, to support access and the use of community resources,
- 6.14. Assist with transportation needs of the participants as directed and only when approved by the treatment court Judge,
  - a) PRSSs shall not transport any person other than participants of their treatment court, including all minors/children.
- 6.15. Maintain strong working relationships with the probation office, members of the treatment team, the Bureau of Social Services, Jobs & Hope, Veterans' Administration, the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, the Public Defender Corporation, Guardian(s) *Ad Litem* and/or defense attorneys, treatment providers, the public, and any other agencies that could be potential resources for treatment court participants,
- 6.16. Attend and participate in meetings with the PRSS Supervisor,
- 6.17. Complete necessary data entry and reports if required by the DPS,
- 6.18. Develop and oversee community services and volunteer projects for treatment court participants, if applicable,
- 6.19. Follow up with graduates of treatment court to assess performance measures (e.g., reoffending, relapse, new CPS involvement, etc.),
- 6.20. Perform other duties as assigned, and
- 6.21. Due to the nature of the duties, non-traditional work hours may be required.

## 7. **PRSS Supervisor Responsibilities**

- 7.1. For PRSSs employed by the DPS, at least one PRSS shall be designated as the PRSS Supervisor. Aside from the duties and responsibilities of PRSSs for treatment courts as stated above, the Supervisor shall also have the following responsibilities:
  - a) Conduct orientation for every PRSS hired, which includes:
    - i. Review the PRSS job description,
    - ii. Provide an overview of the treatment court,
    - iii. Provide a copy of the treatment court's policy manual, best practice standards, and participant handbook for which the PRSS serves,
    - iv. Ensure PRSSs receive local treatment court procedures for the treatment court(s) in which they serve,
    - v. Review the Court's organizational chart,

- vi. Discuss the roles of each treatment team member for the treatment court in which the PRSS serves,
  - vii. Provide the PRSS an opportunity to observe another PRSS,
  - viii. Ensure a tour of the probation office and other community locations essential to the PRSS's role are conducted by treatment court staff,
  - ix. Review standard terminology used by treatment court staff,
  - x. Discuss communication and information sharing protocols in place,
  - xi. Discuss relevant databases, data entry, and documentation procedures,
  - xii. Discuss the dress code (if applicable) and proper courtroom behavior,
  - xiii. Discuss protocols for treatment team meetings and review hearings,
  - xiv. Review work hours, crisis response protocols, transportation, and visits with participants,
  - xv. Review the confidentiality and statement of ethics form for the treatment court in which the PRSS serves, and
  - xvi. Discuss any reports that may be required to be completed by the PRSS.
- b) Meet with the PRSSs at least once a month by video conferences or in-person for both individual and group sessions.
- i. During these sessions, the Supervisor shall evaluate the recovery well-being of the PRSSs, share recovery resources and PRSS training resources, provide relevant updates about policy and/or certification change, and identify strengths and/or barriers in recovery supports for participants within each treatment court. Additionally, the Supervisor shall ask the PRSSs about any issues or concerns about their own personal recovery, the local treatment court, and any other relevant issue concerning the treatment court.
  - ii. The Supervisor shall document these sessions in writing, either in a Word document or an information sharing/note taking software (e.g., OneNote).
- c) Shall provide a report to the Director of the DPS or designee every month detailing shortages in recovery support resources, identified personnel concerns regarding PRSSs or other treatment court staff, and a summary of individual/group sessions.
- d) Shall ensure each PRSS has an active certification with the WVCBAPP and remain in compliance with continuing education and certification requirements.
- e) Shall ensure PRSS recertifications for each PRSS are submitted to the Director of the DPS or his/her designee every two years during employment.

## 8. **Field Visit Procedure**

- 8.1. During field and home visits, it is recommended the PRSS be accompanied by treatment court staff or a member of law enforcement. PRSSs shall follow the DPS [Use of Force Policy](#) concerning office and field visit safety. All PRSSs shall read the Use of Force Policy in its entirety.
- 8.2. To ensure participants are receiving appropriate recovery resources and well-being support, it is important for PRSSs to meet with participants in the participants' homes and in the community. PRSSs shall conduct at least one home visit every two months at each participant's residence.
- 8.3. Due to PRSSs not being duly sworn officers of the Court, during interactions with participants in the office or field, the PRSS **SHALL NOT** conduct searches of the participant's person, property, residence, or possessions as PRSSs do not have the authority to search.

## 9. **Data Entry**

- 9.1. All PRSSs shall maintain and update appropriate databases with participant information. For every face-to-face contact, electronic contact (e.g., text, phone call, email, etc.), or other communication with participants or about the participant, the PRSS shall enter the communication/contact in the appropriate database within two working days of the communication/contact occurring.

## 10. **Court Systems and Equipment**

- 10.1. All PRSSs hired by the Court shall be provided with the following Court's Computer Systems and Equipment: cell phone, laptop, court email, participant database user login and password, and state employee ID.
- 10.2. Shall read requested Court policies regarding usage of court systems and equipment, including but not limited to the [Acceptable Use of Information Systems and Resources Policy](#), [Removeable Media Policy](#), and [User Password Policy](#).

## 11. **Substance-Free Work Environment**

- 11.1. The Court follows a No Tolerance Policy when it comes to employee possession, use, distribution, and similar handling of substances while at work and/or on Court premises.
- 11.2. Judicial employees represent the Court when both off and on duty. Should an off-duty employee be under the influence of substance(s) at the workplace, or in a public forum, and which negatively impact the employee's performance, public safety, or the stature and/or image of the Court in any way, it should be reported to the employee's selecting authority and processed in accordance with the procedures outlined in Section 7 of the Court's [Employee Handbook](#) (i.e., Performance Management and Corrective Action).

- 11.3. The Court recognizes that substance use affects many people and is considered a medical condition. In these situations, the Court strives to work with the impaired employee to ensure that the employee is getting the treatment needed and that the employee is treated fairly in all employment situations. The Court encourages the employee to seek medical and treatment assistance, if appropriate. For further information, please see the materials provided on this and other topics under the Court's [Employee Assistance Program](#) on the Court's Intranet.
- 11.4. The Court encourages PRSSs to do the following if they are concerned that they may be at risk for relapse, are experiencing a relapse trigger (e.g., stress), or compassion fatigue:
- a) Seek assistance from your sponsor, mentor, or supervisor,
  - b) Notify the PRSS Supervisor and schedule a one-on-one meeting,
  - c) Utilize the services of qualified professionals in the community to assess your situation and identify appropriate sources of help,
  - d) Conduct appropriate research through credible sources such as the [WV Employee Referral Program](#) for appropriate treatment, support, and counseling services, and
  - e) Talk confidentially with the Director of Human Resources concerning these items, and the Director will follow-up as appropriate.
- 11.5. Please refer to the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia's [Employee Handbook](#) and [Drug Testing and Substance Abuse Policy](#) for more details about employee substance use.