

**Title:** Employment After Certification: Research Findings on Burnout, Financial Wellbeing, and Practitioner Shortages

**Presenters:** Laysha Ostrow & Morgan Pelot ([Live & Learn, Inc.](#))

The [Certified Peer Specialist Career Outcomes Study](#) involved nearly 600 Certified Peer Specialists (CPSs) in four states from 2020-2022. In [analyses of baseline data](#) from 2020, we compared the experiences of individuals who work in peer support practice to those who had decided to work in another industry to understand the challenges and advantages of post-certification peer support work. This conference presentation will highlight some important findings related to [workplace burnout](#), the relationship between wages and financial wellbeing, and how CPS are filling gaps in the service system in rural and other provider shortage areas. Overall, the findings point to areas of improvement for peer support jobs, but also some strengths that CPSs are bringing to the behavioral health workforce.

First, we present findings related to burnout, defined by the World Health Organization as feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, feelings of cynicism related to one's job, and reduced professional efficacy stemming from chronic workplace stress. Those in peer support jobs reported significantly lower burnout (lower exhaustion, cynicism, and higher professional efficacy), but rates of burnout varied by conditions of the workplace. The next analysis focused on wages and financial wellbeing, a state of being related to meeting financial obligations and feeling secure in finances to be able to enjoy life. Compared to non-peer support jobs, working in peer support practice was not associated with significantly higher wages, more full-time status, longer tenure, or greater financial wellbeing, and CPS who work in peer support are paid significantly less than other health practitioners. At the same time, as we discuss in the third analysis, CPS who reside in a mental health professional shortage area (as defined by the federal government) were significantly more likely to work in peer support, meaning that rural and shortage areas may provide greater opportunities for work and career development among CPSs, provided we invest in their ability to fill these gaps.

The presentation will conclude with a summary of next steps for study analyses, lessons learned from the project, and suggestions for future research and policy change that will support the growth and sustainability of the peer workforce. Additional information about this study, including publications, is available on the [study website](#).