Funding the Peer Workforce: Billing, Braiding, and Building Sustainability

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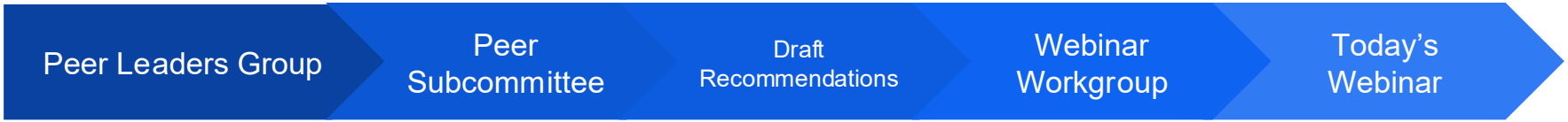


Carolina Ayala
Founder and CEO, The Happier Life Project

Today's Agenda

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Landscape: What Funding Exists Today
3. Funding in Practice: Medi-Cal Certification and Braided Funding
4. County Panel: What It Takes to Scale
5. Q&A
6. Closing & Next Steps

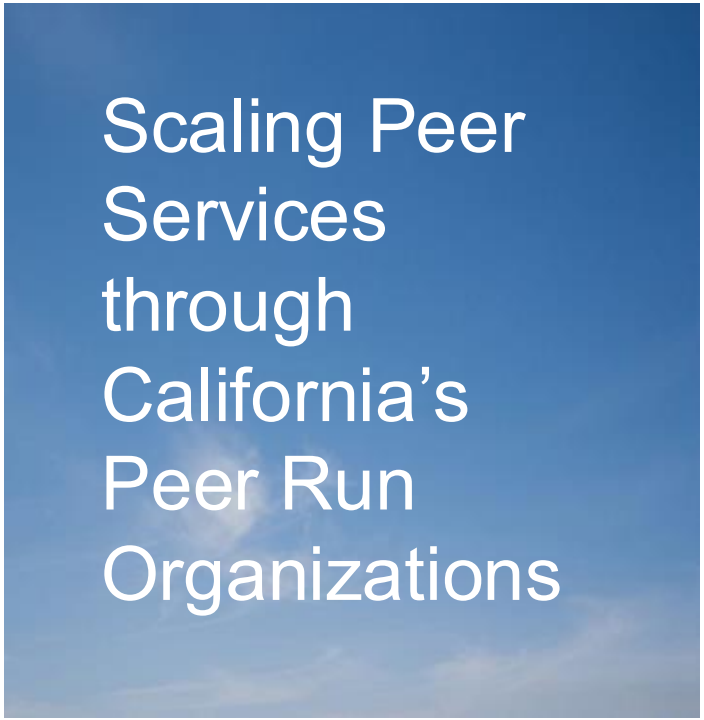
How Did We Get Here?



Recommendation A.3: Support peer-run organizations in leveraging existing billing opportunities.

Landscape: What Funding Exists Today

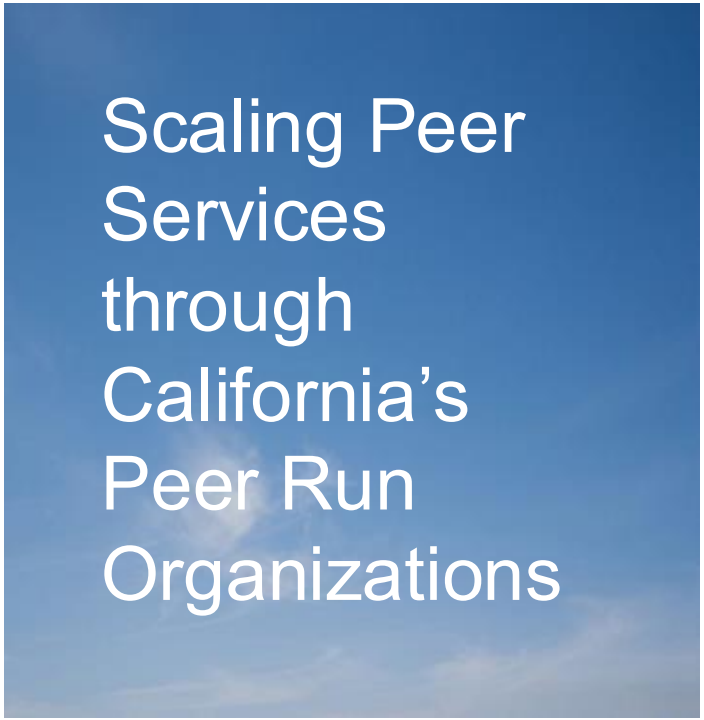
Where We Are



The Why:

- People want to experience peer run services in community and people want to experience community
- Peer Run Organizations have higher efficacy in practices and values
- Peer Run Organizations are better able to recruit, hire, train and supervise within Scope of Work

Where We Are



The What:

- Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA)– an emphasis on maximizing Medi-Cal billing
- The transition from MHSA to BHSA – maximizing Medi-Cal revenue
- Specialty Mental Health and Cal-Aim

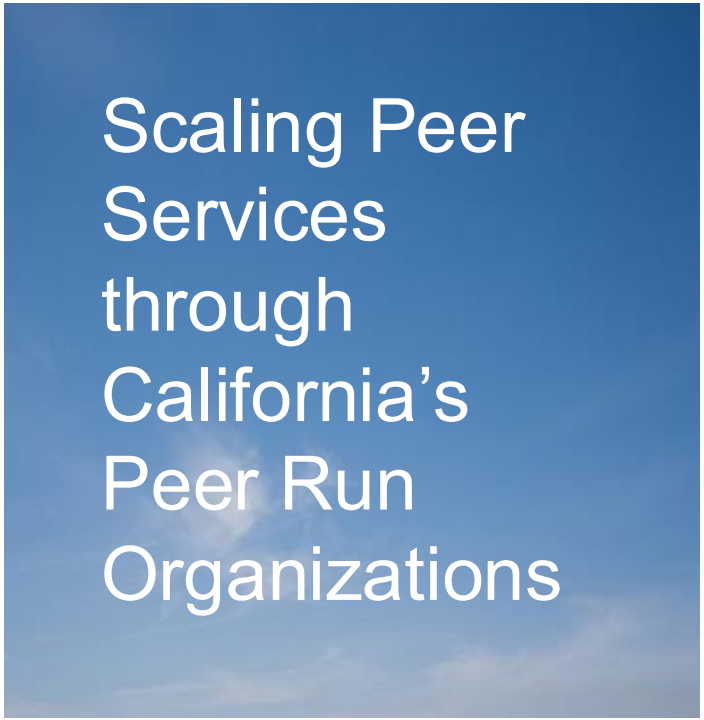
Where We Are

Scaling Peer Services through California's Peer Run Organizations

The How: Implementing Peer Services through available funding sources

- Medi-Cal Reimbursement through County contracts and the County stakeholder process; SROQs, Master Services Agreements
- Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) and CalAIM
- Housing, Health, Substance Use, Re-entry, Child and Family Services
- Federal dollars – SAMHSA block grants, Great American Recover Initiative (GARI)

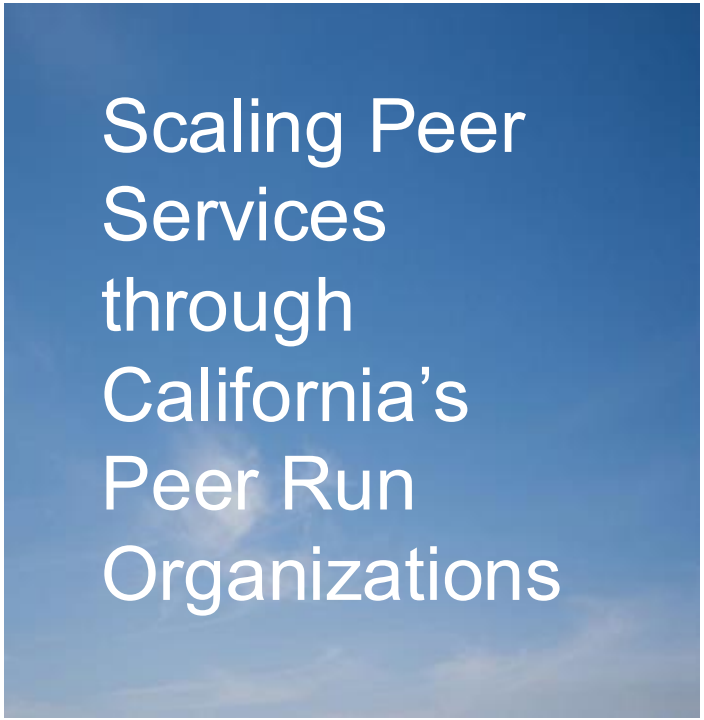
Where We Are



The How:

- Peer Specialization– Unhoused, Justice Involved, Crisis, Family
- Scaling these services across multiple systems takes collective advocacy

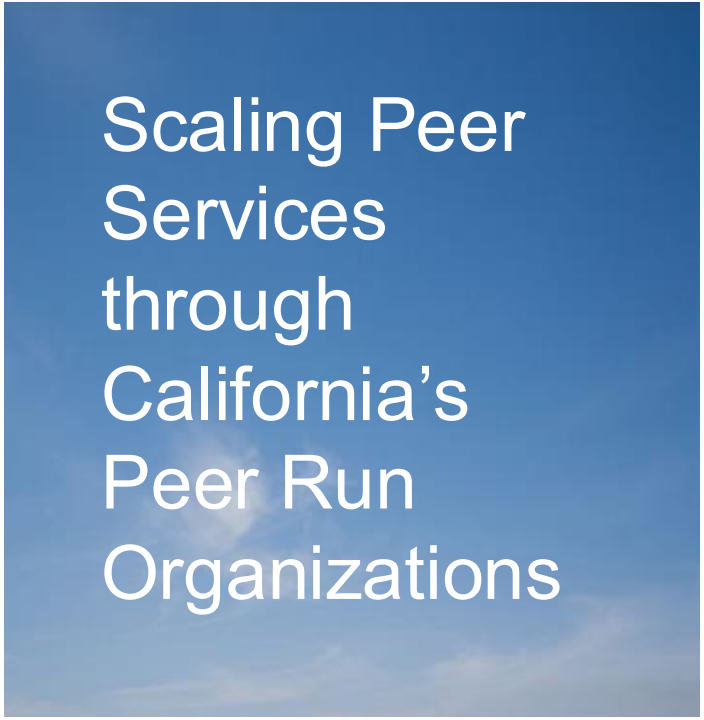
Where We Are



The How:

- Billing within scope of work
- CMS guidance v. County implementation
  Cash flow under cost-reimbursement
- Capacity support through community foundations

Where We Are



County Spotlight

Peer Services leads

- Alameda County Office of Peer Support
- Los Angeles County Chief of Allied Health and Peer Services

County Advisory Committees

- Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Peer Advisory Committee

Funding in Practice: Medi-Cal Certification and Braided Funding

Funding in Practice



Four Pieces Must Work Together:

- Billing pathway
- Administrative capacity
- Cash-flow strategy
- Flexible gap funding

Billing Is More Than Certification



Before the First Claim:

- Confirm the billing and contracting pathway
- Build documentation and billing workflows
- Fund dedicated administrative support
- Plan for approval and payment delays

Braiding Funds Around the Person



Different Dollars, Different Jobs:

- Build capacity and workforce
- Reach, engage, and prevent
- Provide housing and warm handoffs
- Create lasting infrastructure

What Peer-Led Organizations Need



To Make Funding Usable:

- Accessible contracting pathways
- Start-up and billing support
- Timely or advance payments
- Flexible funds for non-billable work

County Panel: What It Takes to Scale

County Panelists

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF
MENTAL HEALTH
hope. recovery. wellbeing.

Toni Robinson, DBH
Chief of Peer Services

Riverside University
HEALTH SYSTEM

Shannon McCleerey-Hooper
Deputy Director of Peer Support Services

County Panel

How can peer run organizations utilize and maximize funding opportunities, including Medi-Cal, to expand the delivery of Peer Services across the behavioral health continuum?

County Panel

How have you approached service delivery differently to better meet community needs, and what role have partnerships within the broader behavioral health ecosystem played in that work?

County Panel

What does an equitable and reciprocal partnership between counties and peer-run organizations look like in practice, and what strategies or standards can help ensure meaningful collaboration, particularly in contracting and decision-making?

County Panel

How can peer-run organizations strengthen their collective voice and advocate for meaningful change at the county and state levels, while also building collaborative relationships with counties to advance shared goals?

Closing and Next Steps

Resources

Behavioral Health Services Act:
https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/behavioral-health-transformation/behavioral-health-services-act/
Medi-Cal Specialty Mental Health Services:
https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal-specialty-mental-health-services/
CalAIM: https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/calaim-transforming-medi-cal/
Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS):
https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/providers-partners/drug-medi-cal-organized-delivery-system/
SAMHSA Community Mental Health Services Block Grant:
https://www.samhsa.gov/grants/block-grants/mhbg
SAMHSA Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services Block Grant:
https://www.samhsa.gov/grants/block-grants/subg
Great American Recovery:
https://www.hhs.gov/recovery/index.html
Opioid Settlement Funds:
https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/providers-partners/allowable-expenditures/
Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification:
https://www.capeercertification.org/specialization-training/

Thank You!

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