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HEALTH CARE
AUTHORITY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NM becomes among 1st states to train peer support workers in prisons *Nine incarcerated individuals to take certification exam August 13*

SANTA FE — In a new cross-agency partnership, nine incarcerated individuals are poised to become certified peer support workers trained inside correctional facilities, when they take their certification exam on Aug. 13.

A Certified Peer Support Worker (CPSW) is someone who has experienced long-term recovery from mental health and/or substance use conditions and is trained to help others in their recovery. The nine individuals completed the inaugural Certified Support Worker training program in July at the Western New Mexico Correctional Facility in Grants and will be overseen by New Mexico Credentialing Board of Behavioral Health Professionals for certification.

“No one can guide recovery like someone who’s lived it,” said **Nick Boukas**, director of the Behavioral Health Services Division at the New Mexico Health Care Authority. “Training certified peer support workers in New Mexico’s prisons and jails transforms lived experience into a lifeline for others going through the same struggles.”

The training is a partnership between Health Care Authority’s Office of Peer Recovery & Engagement and the New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD), making New Mexico among the few states offering CPSW training and certification inside correctional facilities.

“This partnership is a powerful example of what can happen when behavioral health and corrections come together,” said **Byron Brown**, director of the New Mexico Corrections Department Reentry Division. “We’re proud to support a model that centers recovery, dignity, and opportunity.”

The program integrates recovery support into correctional facilities while expanding New Mexico’s behavioral health workforce. Additional trainings are planned in prisons and jails across the state in the coming months to prepare more incarcerated individuals to serve as peer support workers.

The Health Care Authority and NMCD have partnered through an intergovernmental service agreement to offer these trainings, modeled after the state’s existing CPSW curriculum.

To learn more about the state’s CPSW training program, visit nmrecovery.org.

Generic NMCD classroom b-roll (Password: NMCDbroll):

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/nskv2yiavnd5ots3tytet/AJGKwmvcgaWXOOgqy8Kk8_o?rlkey=1dwjskn575qkowf3szdx13vij&st=0m84ldrj&dl=0

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About the New Mexico Health Care Authority

At the New Mexico Health Care Authority, we connect New Mexicans with the care and support they need to lead healthy, fulfilling lives. We oversee a range of health care and social safety net programs, including Medicaid, SNAP food benefits, LIHEAP for heating and cooling assistance, child support services, cash assistance, and behavioral health care across the state. In addition, we support state employees through the State Health Benefits program and manage the Health Care Affordability Fund, which helps make coverage more affordable for working families. We also oversee services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities while ensuring the health, safety, and rights of New Mexicans by licensing healthcare facilities, investigating complaints, and ensuring the delivery of safe, high-quality care.

About the New Mexico Correctional Department

The New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD) is one of the largest state departments in New Mexico. The department staff and volunteers are fully committed to integrating programs in its facilities for rehabilitation. It is through programs and services the department aims to improve outcomes for offenders and enhance public safety in communities. For more information, visit cd.nm.gov or follow NMCD on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [X](#) at @NMCDPIO.