

# Code of Ethics of the Kentucky Youth Peer Support Specialists

## Preamble

This **Code of Ethics** will provide the foundation for Kentucky to establish a family-driven and youth-guided System of Care. The purpose of this code is to define acceptable behaviors, promote high standards of practice and accountability, to establish clear expectations and to recognize the dual role of a Kentucky Youth Peer Support Specialist (KYPSS). A Kentucky Youth Peer Support Specialist is a professional who has specific tasks because they are a transition-age youth or young adult with lived experience who is at least 18 years of age and not older than 35 years of age, who has an emotional, social, behavioral, and/or substance use disability. This process aspires to select, prepare and sustain identified transition-age youth or young adults in becoming a KYPSS. KYPSS will provide peer support to other youth or young adults as well as work to build a youth network within their local and state communities.

*(Ethics policies of community mental health centers will supersede anything in this document. Intent is not to replace but to complement community mental health centers' policies.)*

## Purpose and Values

### Mission Statement

The KYPSS's will serve to assist communities in the development of Kentucky's Family-Driven and Youth-Guided System of Care by providing a youth voice, establishing youth networks, empowering youth in care, and creating a Family-Driven and Youth-Guided infrastructure that is a critical component in a System of Care.

### Statement of Values and Beliefs

Young people have the right to be empowered, educated, and given a decision-making role in the care of their own lives, as well as the policies governing care for all youth with emotional and behavioral challenges. KYPSS's believe that positive outcomes for youth and their families will occur in a Family-Driven and Youth-Guided System of Care, which includes youth and family voice at all levels: individual treatment, program level, and systems level.

We also believe that:

- Youth need to be empowered,
- Interventions and plans must include input from the youth,
- The opinions of youth should matter, their perspective should be valued,
- Youth need access to other young people who have experienced difficulties similar to their own, and to be given opportunities to develop their leadership skills.

## Code of Conduct

### Section One: Ethical Responsibilities to Families and Youth

KYPSS's shall:

- 1.01 Follow policies and practice codes of their employer in regard to responsibilities to families and youth
- 1.02 Speak and act in ways that honor the dignity and value of every individual
- 1.03 Demonstrate respect for the cultural, values and beliefs of families and refrain from imposing their own values and beliefs
- 1.04 Respect the rights and responsibilities of parents/guardians for their children and work to establish a truly collaborative relationship with families
- 1.05 Be mindful of the imbalance of power in the relationship and refrain from exploiting that imbalance
- 1.06 Provide the meaning and limits of confidentiality to families and youth and ensure that families and youth understand the obligation to report any suspected abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities
- 1.07 Seek supervision regarding dual relationships. By the nature of the roles and responsibilities of the KYPSS's, dual relationships can be difficult to avoid. The KYPSS shall refer to employer's policy regarding dual relationships and provide documentation with such situations. The KYPSS shall take steps to protect youth and families and are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries
- 1.08 Refrain from any form of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment in relationships with clients and families
- 1.09 Maintain and secure all information as required by laws, regulations, agency procedures and confidentiality guidelines
- 1.10 Use accurate and respectful language in all communication to and about families and youth
- 1.11 Follow employer and Medicaid guidelines in billing for services
- 1.12 Provide information about services and/or opportunities and the family's and youth's right to refuse them
- 1.13 Provide services and represent themselves within the boundaries of KYPSS duties
- 1.14 Inform families and youth regarding any extended absence or departure from current employment setting and provide options for continuation of services for the families and youth.

### Section Two: Ethical Responsibilities to Employer

KYPSS's shall:

- 2.1 Abide by the policies and practice codes of their employer
- 2.2 Be a diligent steward of the resources of the employing agency
- 2.3 Assist in developing improved policies and procedures of the employing agency for the efficiency and effectiveness of their services as requested by the agency
- 2.4 Not directly or by implication claim professional qualifications that exceed actual qualifications or misrepresent an affiliation with any institution.

### **Section Three: Ethical Responsibilities to Other Kentucky Youth Peer Support Specialist**

KYPSS's shall:

- 3.1 Respect one another and support the integrity and well being of peers
- 3.2 Honor all communication with other KYPSS's with the highest professional regard and confidentiality
- 3.3 Exercise extreme caution when communicating via the internet or other electronic means
- 3.4 Be aware that their personal and professional choices affect the image of **ALL** KYPSS's, and therefore, must hold themselves to a high ethical standard in order to sustain the infrastructure of a family-driven and youth-guided System of Care

### **Section Four: Ethical Responsibilities to Professional and Community Partners**

KYPSS's shall:

- 4.1 Work with an interdisciplinary team, participate in and contribute to decisions that affect the well-being of families and youth using family-driven and youth-guided principles and perspective
- 4.2 Seek to establish collaborative relationships with professional and community partners
- 4.3 Treat partners with respect, courtesy and fairness
- 4.4 Exercise good stewardship of resources in decision-making and activities
- 4.5 Respect and value the opinions, beliefs, strengths and professional roles and responsibilities of professional and community partners
- 4.6 Maintain professional relationship with professional co-workers who have previously provided mental health and/or substance use services to you

### **Section Five: Ethical Responsibilities Related to Supervisors / Coaches**

- 5.1 KYPSS's shall seek educational, consultation and training experience to improve awareness, knowledge, skills and effectiveness in working with diverse populations
- 5.2 Coaches of specialists are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries, and providing coaching only within their areas of knowledge and competence
- 5.3 Coaches of specialists shall perform coaching duties in a manner that is fair, respectful and in partnership with the employing agency supervisor
- 5.4 KYPSS's shall proactively utilize supervision and coaching opportunities in an efficient and responsible manner that includes aspects of his/her personal development plan and agency evaluation goals

### **Section Six: Ethical Responsibilities to Self**

KYPSS's shall:

- 6.1 Maintain personal and professional accountability as well as accept responsibility for the consequences of his/her actions
- 6.2 Monitor the well-being of themselves and their family by making self-care a top priority. Good self-care will decrease the likelihood of personal family needs negatively impacting their job performance
- 6.3 Be honest and realistic about their needs when working in difficult situations and recognize when, how and who to ask for help

- 6.4 Maintain professional competence and recognize that professional and personal growth is ongoing
- 6.5 Expand and develop awareness of personal attitudes and beliefs affecting cultural values and biases and strive to attain cultural confidence.

### **Implementation of the Code**

Since the Kentucky Youth Peer Support Specialist will be hired through Kentucky's community mental health centers, the employing agency supervisor can utilize this Code of Ethics in regular supervision and in the ongoing, employee evaluation process. Coaches will also be able to provide consultation to the KYPSS on ethical issues as well as share those concerns with the employing agency supervisor. With the help of the supervisor and coach, the Kentucky Youth Peer Support Specialist will create a corrective action plan to address the specific concerns. If the issue/s persists, then the employing agency supervisor shall follow the agency's personnel disciplinary action protocol.