

ECHW vs. PSS

In California, both Enhanced Community Health Workers (CHWs) and Peer Support Specialists play vital roles in the healthcare system, particularly within the Medi-Cal program. While their functions may overlap in some areas, they have distinct responsibilities, training requirements, and scopes of practice.

Overview	Enhanced Community Health Worker (E-CHW)	Peer Support Specialist (PSS)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Description</u>: Community based workers provide services aimed at preventing disease, disability, and other health conditions and promoting physical / mental health and well-being via connection to health and wellness resources and address barriers to meeting health or health-related social needs. <u>Role</u>: Identify clients' needs and connect them back to client's behavioral health and/or substance abuse issues. <u>Duration</u>: Limited, short-term. Limits to maximum units of service per day per member/per year; additional units require additional authorization. <u>Focus</u>: System navigation, care coordination, addressing social determinants of health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Description</u>: Peers leverage their lived experiences with mental health and/or substance use challenges to offer support, guidance, and advocacy to others facing similar issues. <u>Role</u>: Help the client develop/ utilize skills, build trust/emotional connection and stay engaged in treatment. <u>Duration</u>: No limit, throughout the length of treatment <u>Focus</u>: Recovery, empowerment, and connection through shared lived experience.
Training & Certification	Enhanced Community Health Worker (E-CHW)	Peer Support Specialist (PSS)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Statewide Certification Pending</i> : DHCS does not currently require a standardized statewide certification for this role. Certification may be obtained through various providers, supervising providers are responsible for determining if certificate of completion fulfills Med-Cal CHW requirements. <i>Please note</i>: Some managed care plans or employers may have their own training requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Statewide Certification</i>: Peer Support Specialists must complete a state-approved training program and obtain certification through the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalM's) .

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Additional Functionalities		
	Enhanced Community Health Worker (E-CHW)	Peer Support Specialist (PSS)
Navigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>System navigation:</i> Help clients access services such as counseling, primary care, housing, food or other supports. • <i>i.e. CHW help support the “foundation” of treatment such as showing the client where to find the Provider Handbook to locate a PCP.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Care navigation-</i> Assist clients in building skills to help them participate in treatment programs, crisis services, housing, employment, and legal aid. • <i>i.e. PSS help clients apply skills and such as accompanying a client to a PCP appointment to mitigate the client’s anxiety and communicate with the provider in an appropriate way.</i>
Education & Treatment Adherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide health education about mental health, substance use and treatment options. • Help clients overcome barriers to care such as scheduling appointments or assisting with transportation. • <i>Please note:</i> Provision of transportation is not a billable service but educating and assisting client to access transportation services available through their MCP benefit or other transportation arrangements would be billable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate the client about mental health and substance abuse issues via their own lived experience. • Help client’s problem solve barriers via discussion and application of learned skills.
Lived Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although CHW may have lived experience with mental health or substance use, it is not a requirement nor a distinction of the position. • CHWs must have lived experience that aligns with and provides a connection between the CHW and the community or population being served. This may 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openly share personal experiences with recovery (Mental health/SUD) while modeling resilience and recovery to inspire hope and build trust.

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	<p>include, but is not limited to, lived experience related to incarceration, military service, pregnancy and birth, disability, foster system placement, homelessness, mental health conditions or substance use, or being a survivor of domestic or intimate partner violence or abuse and exploitation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lived experience may also include shared race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, or cultural background of one or more linguistic, cultural, or other groups in the community for which the CHW is providing services 	
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showing clients where to find various resources in their community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support self-advocacy, goal-setting, and coping strategies. Help individuals build trust, hope and motivation for recovery
Relapse Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate client locating resources for SUD treatment. Connecting client to resources, such as housing, that will reduce the likelihood of relapse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support goal setting, efficacy and action planning in recovery. Identify early signs of crisis or relapse and help peers access appropriate services.
Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May provide educational groups Although CHW provide emotional support, it is an important distinction that they do not provide clinical therapy or longer term support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead or co-facilitate support groups, skill-building workshops, or wellness activities Offer one-on-one peer mentoring
Procedure Codes And Claiming for Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 98960- Education and training for patient self-management by a qualified, nonphysician health care professional using a standardized curriculum, face-to-face with the patient; each 30 minutes; individual 8961- Education and training for patient self-management by a qualified, nonphysician health care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> H0025- Behavior health prevention education service (delivery of services with target population to affect knowledge, attitude and/or behavior) [Peer Support group session], 15 minutes

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	<p>professional using a standardized curriculum, face-to-face with the patient ... 2-4 patients</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 98962 - Education and training for patient self-management by a qualified, nonphysician health care professional using a standardized curriculum, face-to-face with the patient ... 5-8 patients • *G0019 – Community Health Integration Services (60min per calendar month) • *G0022 – Community Health Integration Services (each additional 30min per calendar month) • *G0019 and G0022 are intended for individual E-CHW services focused on addressing social determinants of health in lieu of 98960 • E-CHW Services must be recommended by a physician or other licensed practitioner of the healing arts (LPHA) acting within their scope of practice under state law. The recommending provider must ensure that the member meets eligibility criteria for E-CHW Services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHCS has issued a statewide standing recommendation that all Medi-Cal members who meet defined eligibility criteria for receiving E-CHW services would benefit from receiving up to 6 hours annually of Medi-Cal-covered CHW Services for optional use. • Written plan of care required for ECHW services if continued after 12 units (6 hours). Programs must establish a process for documenting a standing recommendation for E-CHW Services when exceeding 12 units of care per member/per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H0035- Self-help/peer services (individual) 15 minutes • Peer Services must be recommended by a physician or other licensed practitioner of the healing arts (LPHA) acting within their scope of practice under state law. The recommending provider must ensure that the member meets eligibility criteria for Peer Services. • Peer Services require written care planning be documented within member's clinical record, care plan must be signed by LPHA
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DHCS prohibits billing both ECM and standalone E-CHW Services for the same member during the same treatment period. Providers may not double bill under both benefits.	
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