



STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES
OFFICE OF STATEWIDE SYSTEMS OF CARE
Andrew Jackson Building, 5th Floor
500 Deaderick Street
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1) What is a Certified Family Support Specialist?

A Certified Family Support Specialist (CFSS) is a person who has self-identified as the *caregiver* of a child or youth with a *mental, emotional, behavioral or co-occurring disorder* and who has successfully navigated the child-serving systems to access treatment and resources necessary to build *resiliency* and foster success in the home, school, and community. This individual has successfully completed training recognized by TDMHSAS on how to assist other *caregivers* in fostering *resiliency* in their child based on the principles of *resiliency* and *recovery*.

2) Why are direct “caregiver-to-caregiver” services important?

Caregiver-to-caregiver services are used to assist other *caregivers* of children or youth diagnosed with *mental, emotional, behavioral, or co-occurring disorders* to enhance *resiliency* in youth by providing support, modeling effective advocacy skills, assisting with system navigation, and by offering hope as a *caregiver* who has overcome barriers to parenting a child with an *emotional, behavioral or co-occurring disorder*. By providing positive images of *caregivers* of children or youth diagnosed with such disorders, Family Support Specialists can also have a positive impact on the negative attitudes sometimes found among mental health service providers.

3) What is the purpose of the TDMHSAS Family Support Specialist Certification Program?

The purpose of the Certification Program is to ensure that individuals who provide direct *caregiver-to-caregiver* support services meet acceptable minimum standards.

4) Who oversees the TDMHSAS Family Support Specialist Certification Program?

The OSSOC develops and administers the policies and procedures within TDMHSAS guidelines to grant certification and to ensure that acceptable professional standards are established.

5) Where can a Certified Family Support Specialist work?

Programs in which Certified Family Support Specialist can be utilized include, but are not limited to, community mental health centers, educational settings, family support centers, juvenile justice settings, crisis stabilization units, case management, psychosocial rehabilitation, advocacy organizations and inpatient hospital settings.

6) What types of services can a Certified Family Support Specialist provide?

Certified Family Support Specialists may provide, but are not limited to, assistance in the development of formal and informal supports, of *strengths-based* family and individual goals, services as an *advocate, mentor, or facilitator* for resolution of issues that a *caregiver* is unable to resolve on his or her own, or education on system navigation and skills necessary to maintain a child with a *mental, emotional, behavioral, or co-occurring disorder* in their home environment.

7) Does TDMHSAS provide employment or job placement?

No. TDMHSAS does not offer or guarantee employment or job placement.

8) Who will supervise the Certified Family Support Specialist and how?

Each Certified Family Support Specialist must be under the supervision of a mental health professional as defined in the CFSS Employment Guidelines.

9) Where are Family Support Specialist trainings offered and is a fee involved?

For information on recognized trainings, please contact the Office of Statewide Systems of Care or Melissa McGee at 615-253-4160 or Melissa.McGee@tn.gov.

10) How can provider agencies ensure that Certified Family Support Specialist employees maintain confidentiality?

Maintaining confidentiality and privacy of all individuals receiving services is a legitimate concern and major issue to emphasize with all employees, not just Certified Family Support Specialist employees.

All employees should receive Title 33 training, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) training and education on their duty to uphold confidentiality. Every employee should be aware that all information regarding a person's *recovery* and treatment status is confidential.

11) What is the salary range for Certified Family Support Specialist?

Many CFSS may work part time, while others work full time. The salary range is determined by the provider agency and program.

12) I have a post-secondary degree. May I submit a copy of that diploma for my application packet?

Yes. While a post-secondary degree is not required for certification, you may submit a copy of a post-secondary diploma (verification upon request) in place of a high-school diploma or GED.