



DIRECTOR'S OFFICE
Equity and Inclusion Division

Tina Kotek, Governor

Oregon
Health
Authority

February 10, 2023
Representative Rob Nosse, Chair
House Committee on Behavioral Health
and Health Care
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Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

Oregon Health Authority's Equity and Inclusion Division is writing to provide information for HB 2445 about the Traditional Health Worker program and application process for peers.

Traditional Worker Program Operations

The Traditional Health Worker (THW) Program is charged with:

- a) Providing oversight of the approval of training programs that provide training to the THW workforce in Oregon,
- b) Helping create THW administrative rules for the Traditional Health Worker Workforce,
- c) administer the processing of THW applications and maintain an online registry of approved training programs and certified THWs in Oregon, and
- d) Monitoring and implementation of Coordinated Care Organizations regarding THWs and Oregon's Health system delivery.

The THW Program also provides support and technical assistance to stakeholders, community partners, community-based organizations, and health systems both locally, state-wide, and nationally.

Application Processing

Processing applications, initiating background checks, and adding Traditional Health Workers, including Peers, to the State Registry is provided free of charge through OHA. On average, it takes less than one week to process an application from the time it is received to when the background check is initiated. The Background Check Unit (BCU), a shared service between DHS and OHA, takes on average of two weeks to one month to process a background check. On occasions, fingerprints are requested by the BCU, which can lengthen the process. This timeline has been consistent for two years. It is important to note that applicants can and have requested expediting of their application and those applications are prioritized, per request.

MHACBO Collaboration

An agreement between the Oregon Health Authority and MHACBO allows for MHACBO to send a monthly import of Peer Support Specialists – Adult Addictions or, as CRMs, who have met the [requirements](#) outlined in the Oregon Administrative Rules, to the Traditional Health Worker program to be added to the State THW Registry. The frequency of data sharing is of mutual agreement. The process has improved tremendously since the partnership and the Traditional Health Worker program is

currently processing applications supplied by MHACBO within two weeks, sometimes less. Timely processing of these applications is dependent on having an applicant's complete, and necessary information. Deficiencies in received data is communicated to MHACBO for correction.

Additional information

Applicants have the choice of submitting applications directly to the state or let MHACBO transmit their applications on applicants' behalf. Applications submitted directly to the THW Program, bypassing MHACBO, are processed when received and eliminates any waiting period for the THW program to receive data.

OHA is in the final stages of implementing an online application portal to further expedite the application and registry process. This process will increase transparency and accountability for all parties. Peer Support Specialists will continue to be able to use an Authority approved entity to conduct a background check, with potential to additionally speed up the certification process. The THW Program and Oregon Information Systems project this pathway could result in applicants receiving certification with a couple days after submitting a completed application. The first rollout of the new registry will occur in March 2023, and a complete roll-out Summer of 2024.