

Using Peers in Recovery

A Recovery focused Peer to Peer program could provide stability in a transitional period (e.g., a return to active duty status, or reintegration into the civilian community). Our program services overlap into these three areas,

1. Treatment Team

The VA hires veterans as Peer Support Technicians and uses volunteers to be a part of the case management team and or recovery process for veterans with psychological health and or drug and alcohol issues.

2. Education

The Consumer Council along with the Vet 2 Vet Program are consumer provider partnerships developed to allow trained Veterans to lead educational group sessions at facilities that offer VA mental health services.

3. Social Support

The Pacific Islands Consumer Council is designed to advocate by interfacing with mental health leadership to help create better services for veterans who use the VA mental health system. They also work with the Hawaii Vet 2 Vet program as well as DBSA Honolulu in order to create opportunities for Peer Support Technicians to develop social support groups for our veterans.

Key Components for Peer Support

As a result of reviewing existing peer to peer programs (inside and outside of the military) we have outlined potential options for how the military community could continue to offer peer support.

Adequate Training

Adequate training must be provided to peer supporters so they are able to:

1. Identify and be aware of signs of stress.
2. Know when to reach out to others for assistance.
3. Facilitate referrals to additional resources.

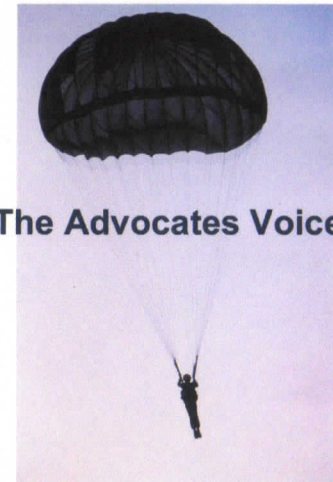
A program must also be able to follow through with individuals to monitor improvements and continue to offer opportunities for growth. Individuals also must feel safe to use the program, and strong confidentiality agreements must be in place.

The Same Language

Peer Supporters also speak the same language as those that they are helping as a result of shared experiences which fosters an environment of trust and credibility.

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Pacific Islands Consumer Council



The Advocates Voice

What is Peer Support ?

Peer support is assistance provided by a person who shares a common experience with someone else.

Benefits of Peer Support

The benefits of Peer Support are numerous from Improving the quality of life and fostering social networking to promoting wellness and improving coping skills. Peer Support can also increase acceptance of an illness which in turn improves compliance to medication and treatment.

Thirty Three Critical Competencies for VA Peer Support

Addressing Stigma

Managing internalized stigma

Managing environmental stigma

Communication Skills

Effective listening and asking questions

Communication styles and verbal and nonverbal communication

Conflict resolution

Cultural Competence

Understand how ethnicity, race, spirituality, gender, sexual orientation, local community and other sub-cultures may influence recovery.

Group Facilitation Skills

Understanding group dynamics and interactions.

Knowing how to use support groups

Managing Crisis and Emergency Situations

Early warning signs of illness' symptoms worsening.

Crisis prevention, using resources early.

Crisis interventions.

An understanding of suicide prevention

Ability to work through challenging situations with veterans who are under the influence of substances, angry, in psychosis or a non-verbal state.

Personal safety issues.

Peer Support Principles

Being a role model

Instilling hope

Being an advocate

Knowing principal duties of peer support staff

Professional Development and Workplace Skills

Ethics

Boundary issues and dual relationships

Ability to work effectively with professionals on an interdisciplinary team

Recovery Tools

Solving problems using solution focused strategies

Telling your personal recovery story, being mindful of who you are addressing.

Participating in self-help groups

Teaching others how to manage self-help and combat negative self talk

Recovery Principles

Overview of psycho-social rehabilitation

Components of recovery

Stages of recovery

Peer support role in psycho-social rehabilitation

Understanding Different Illnesses

Major psychiatric conditions in DSM IV

Addictive disorders

Co-occurring disorders

Medications and side effects

Our Final Words

These 33 competencies have been developed and adopted by the VA ensuring consistency in the training received by future peer supporters. Content-based, Topic-based, and Skills-based training are combined with mock group scenarios enabling the future peer supporter to learn how to respond to challenging peer interactions.

our source www.dcoe.health.mil