

## Frequently Asked Questions:

**Q: Will my Pension and Benefits be affected in any way by enrolling in this program, or if I decide to quit?**

**A:** No, your VA benefits and pension are in no way affected by enrolling in this program, and you may stop going to groups at any time.

**Q: Will my health information and the things I talk about in a Peer Support Provider be kept confidential?**

**A:** Yes, Peer Support Providers are provided the same orientation as non-peer staff and are held accountable to the same policies and procedures to manage and control the disclosure of information.

## Veteran's Reactions to Peer Support Providers

*"I feel this group meeting is highly beneficial to me."*

*"He respects our statements and leads us in a constructive way."*

*"I wish I didn't have to wait for over forty years to be in a group like this."*



If you are interested in participating or would like more information, please speak with your provider for a referral to the Peer Support Program.

You can also contact the program directly by calling William L. Boddie at (209) 405-2667.

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# Peer Support Program

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**Dealing with substance abuse, depression, or PTSD?**

**Connect with a Peer Support Provider today and learn from fellow Veterans who have been there too, and came out the other side successfully.**

**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

## What is Peer Support?

Peer support is a system of giving and receiving help founded on key principles of respect, shared responsibility, and mutual agreement of what is helpful; it is a process dedicated to promoting empowerment and self-determination in the service of recovery.

## What is a Peer Support Provider in a mental health setting?

A person with a mental health and/or co-occurring disorder, who has been trained to help others with these disorders identify and achieve specific life and recovery goals. A peer support provider is a person who is actively engaged in his/her own recovery. A peer support provider is a person who volunteers or is hired to provide peer support services to others engaged in mental health treatment.

## What is the purpose of a Peer Support Program?

### What do trained Peer Support Providers do?

They serve as role models by sharing their personal recovery stories, showing that recovery from mental illness is possible. They teach goal setting, problem solving, symptom management skills and a variety of recovery tools. They empower by helping others identify their strengths, supports, resources and skills. They advocate by working to eliminate the stigma of mental illness. They act as community liaisons by identifying social supports in the community and encouraging the expansion of local community resources.

## Advantages to Peer Support

Studies have demonstrated the positive impact peer support makes to the recovery of people with serious mental health conditions:

- Improves social functioning and quality of life
- Improves communication with providers
- Lessens the sense of loneliness, rejection and discrimination
- Improves employment outcomes
- Fosters independence
- Provides comfort and support
- Improves ability to deal with mental illness
- Fewer hospitalizations
- Increases access to resources beyond the VA
- Use fewer crisis services
- Improves skills necessary to recovery
- Improves the effectiveness of the mental health delivery system.

## Myths and Misperceptions of Peer Support

*“The Peer Support Provider would have difficulty with all the paperwork and not able to handle the stress and demands of the job.”*

Stress is a very individual response to specific situations. It is not true that people with mental illness cannot handle stress. Stigma persists among many mental health providers who continue to believe that recovery is not possible for consumers.

*“Since Peer Support Providers are not licensed independent professionals, who will be responsible when something bad happens?”*

Peer Support Providers must complete VACO approved training and pass a rigorous competency assessment to perform their peer support role, including crisis management. Peer Support Providers are similar to addiction therapists or other non-licensed providers. In our program, Peer Support Providers are also supervised by a Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

*“The Peer Support Provider is not aware of professional boundaries.”*

Peer Support Providers are provided formal guidelines and supervision governing client/ staff boundaries and explicit policies and practices that determines how information is shared.