FRONTIERS IN PEER SUPPORT SUPERVISION

VA Psychology Leadership Conference, May 2014

Dan O’Brien-Mazza, M.S.

Jennifer Boyd PhD CPRP
HILL?
VALLEY?
SAME SIDEWALK FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE.
WHAT IS YOUR PERSPECTIVE?

Brian Wilson  
(Beach Boys)  
Audio Hallucinations –  
DX—Schizoaffective Disorder

Patti Duke  
Depression-Mood Swings  
-DX—Bi-Polar Disorder
“Some respondents indicated they their mental health colleagues were less clear of the peer role, which made working within a team more difficult.”

“Respondents did not encounter too many barriers to implementing what they learned, but one that they did encounter was a lack of opportunity to function as a peer specialist at their sites.”
MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS’ PERSPECTIVE ON INDIVIDUALS WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

• Compared with the American public, mental health professionals had significantly more positive attitudes toward people with mental health problems. However, some providers’ conceptions about the dangerousness of people with schizophrenia and provider desire for social distance from clients in work and personal situations WERE CONCERNING. (Conceptions of Mental Illness: Attitudes of Mental Health Professionals and the General Public, Jennifer P. Stuber, Ph.D., Anita Rocha, Ann Christian, Bruce G. Link, Ph.D.; PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES ' ps.psychiatryonline.org ' April 2014 Vol. 65 No. 4)
“Many mental health professionals also responded that vignette characters with symptoms of schizophrenia were likely to do something violent to others.

...in employment situations a sizeable proportion of the surveyed mental health professionals desired social distance from vignette characters described as having schizophrenia symptoms.”

Therefore, distancing may occur by mental health professionals who may not be as comfortable working with peer specialists who have certain diagnoses.
DOES THAT APPLY TO VHA?

• “...However, challenges remain including hiring delays, lack of understanding about the PS role,...”

In a survey conducted by DBSA in fall of 2010, about 39% of supervisors contacted, agreed strongly with this statement: “I received needed information and training information before beginning my role as a supervisor of a peer support service provider.”
OTHER STATEMENTS AND RESPONSES ON DBSA SURVEY BY SUPERVISORS & PEER RESPONSES:

• I do a good job of supervising peer support service provider(s).
  Supervisor: 58% Strongly Agree  Peer Specialist: 59% Strongly Agree

• The peer(s) I supervise observe appropriate boundaries with the Veterans they serve.
  Supervisor: 46% Strongly Agree  Peer Specialist: 84% Strongly Agree

• The peer(s) I supervise are treated the same as any other VA employee/volunteer.
  Supervisor: 27% Strongly Agree  Peer Specialist: 39% Strongly Agree

(A Report on Peer Support Supervision in VA Mental Health Services, Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) October 2010)
TRADITIONAL ORIENTED PROFESSIONAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (PRIOR TO 2006)
RECOVERY ORIENTED PROFESSIONAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (BEGINNING IN 2006)
## PEER SPECIALISTS-SERIES 102

**SOCIAL SCIENCE AID AND TECH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>EXPERIENCE</th>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GS-5</strong></td>
<td>Veteran With other than Dishonorable D/C MH Condition</td>
<td>OR 4-year course of study above high school leading to a bachelor’s degree with courses related to the occupation, if required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 year equivalent to at least GS-4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GS-6 and above</strong></td>
<td>Veteran With other than Dishonorable D/C MH Condition Certified PS</td>
<td>See the <a href="#">NOTE</a> under the Education section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 year equivalent to at least next lower grade level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CAREER LADDER AND A REAL LIVING WAGE*

*BASED ON GENERAL SCHEDULE, ATLANTA, GA GEOGRAPHICAL LOCALITY PAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
<th>Step 4</th>
<th>Step 5</th>
<th>Step 6</th>
<th>Step 7</th>
<th>Step 8</th>
<th>Step 9</th>
<th>Step 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>32722</td>
<td>33813</td>
<td>34903</td>
<td>35993</td>
<td>37084</td>
<td>38174</td>
<td>39264</td>
<td>40355</td>
<td>41445</td>
<td>42535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>36475</td>
<td>37691</td>
<td>38906</td>
<td>40122</td>
<td>41338</td>
<td>42553</td>
<td>43769</td>
<td>44984</td>
<td>46200</td>
<td>47415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>40534</td>
<td>41885</td>
<td>43237</td>
<td>44588</td>
<td>45940</td>
<td>47291</td>
<td>48643</td>
<td>49994</td>
<td>51346</td>
<td>52698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>44890</td>
<td>46386</td>
<td>47882</td>
<td>49378</td>
<td>50874</td>
<td>52370</td>
<td>53865</td>
<td>55361</td>
<td>56857</td>
<td>58353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>49581</td>
<td>51233</td>
<td>52885</td>
<td>54537</td>
<td>56189</td>
<td>57841</td>
<td>59494</td>
<td>61146</td>
<td>62798</td>
<td>64450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Payscale.com, median salary for CPS in Atlanta, GA is $27,682
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISN</th>
<th>Required</th>
<th>Existing Peers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V9</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V10</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V15</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V16</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V17</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V20</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V21</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V22</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V23</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>953*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAJOR GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

- PL 110-387
- PL 111-163
- VHA Handbook 1160.01
- VHA Handbook 1163.01
- VHA Handbook 1163.05
- VHA Directive 2010-30
- Peer Specialist Toolkit
  Implementing: Peer Support Services in VHA

*All documents found on Peer Support SharePoint site*
WORK IS NOT OVER

• Still Working!
  About 1000 PSs
  Over 500 Supervisors
  Over 220 Facilities
  Contracts for Training
  Conference Training
  Webinar Planning
  DoD Memorandum
  More...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & DISCLAIMER

• Thanks to San Francisco VA peers and supervisors for input.

• No conflict of interest to disclose.

• The views expressed here are not “official”, and are provided to facilitate discussion.
Question: Where would stereotypes put peers in this diagram?
HIRING ISSUES

• Candidate’s therapist may be colleague you know

• Need to be clear on roles

• Can’t assess candidate’s psychological “readiness”
  (e.g., look in CPRS, discuss with therapist)

• Leap of faith based on interview, resume, references
  (Same as when hiring anybody for any job)

• Question: How do we hire people who are job-ready?
HEALTHY WORKPLACE

- Secondary trauma = occupational hazard
- Especially for peers with PTSD working with PTSD?
- Now we warn all applicants and train all staff.

- Question: How do we promote wellness for peers?
- Question: What are some good accommodations for PTSD?
DUAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Of course, applies to all Vets on staff, not just peers
- Strongly prefer applicants outside of our facility and CBOCs
- Difficult in rural areas or if need specialty PTSD care
- List of alternatives if need MH care
- Can’t forbid (Veteran-centered care) but can re-assign programs

**Question:** What to do with Vets in tx who want to give back?
POSITION DESCRIPTION

• Everything they do = Peer Support by definition
• Can they use all their skills?
• Even skills learned in therapy? (e.g., mindfulness)
• Can they attend professional trainings (e.g., MI) and use skills?

• Question: “What must I not do?”
• Question: How to keep being a peer and grow professionally?
THE PEER ROLE

- Tendency to professionalize over time
- Psychologists are good at making more psychologists
- Coach/mentor rather than treat like a student
- Promote autonomy increasingly as peer develops
- Soon will be able to sign own notes

Question: How can we prevent role drift? Do we even want to?
CAREER TRAJECTORY

• Peers reach the pay ceiling relatively soon
• Would a senior peer supervisor still be a peer? (currently no option for this by VA policy)
• Workaround = supervisor with lived experience (what if not “out”?)
• Soon will be able to serve as mentor to other peers
• Peer as Mental Health Treatment Coordinator
• Question: How to support career development?
MEASURING EXCELLENCE

• Peer support has its own procedure code.

• What would be an expected workload for peers? (guidance forthcoming)

• How to include peer support in program evaluation?

• Question: What is a fair metric for peer excellence?
RESOURCES

• Peer Share Point
  (https://vaww.cmopnational.va.gov/CR/MentalHealth/Peer%20Support%20Services/Forms/AllItems.aspx)

• New VISN communication leads (one peer, one supervisor)

• Question: What other resources have been helpful?
FUTURE DIRECTIONS

• What are some desired future directions for peer supervision?

• Anything we haven’t discussed yet?
QUESTIONS?
CONTACT INFORMATION

Dan O'Brien-Mazza, M.S.
National Director, Peer Support Services
Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Services, Mental Health Services
Washington, D.C.

Mailing Address:
VA Community Care Center
1031 E. Fayette St.
Syracuse, NY 13210

E-Mail: daniel.o'brien-mazza@va.gov
Phone: (315) 425-4407
Fax: (315) 425-4406

Jennifer Boyd, PhD CPRP
Associate Chief of Mental Health for Psychosocial Recovery Services
Associate Adjunct Professor of Psychiatry, UCSF

Mailing Address:
San Francisco VAMC (116A)
4150 Clement St.
San Francisco, CA 94121-1545

E-mail: jennifer.boyd@va.gov
Phone: (415) 221-4810, ext 3421

Peer Support Share Point Site:
https://vaww.cmpopnational.va.gov/CR/MentalHealth/Peer%20Support%20Services/Forms/AllItems.aspx
THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING PEER SUPPORT!