

# FRONTIERS IN PEER SUPPORT SUPERVISION

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VA Psychology Leadership Conference, May 2014

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# 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

## EMPLOYEE EDUCATION SYSTEM EVALUATION OF DBSA CERTIFICATION TRAINING 2013

- “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.”
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# 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)

## WHAT WAS CONCERNING?

- “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.



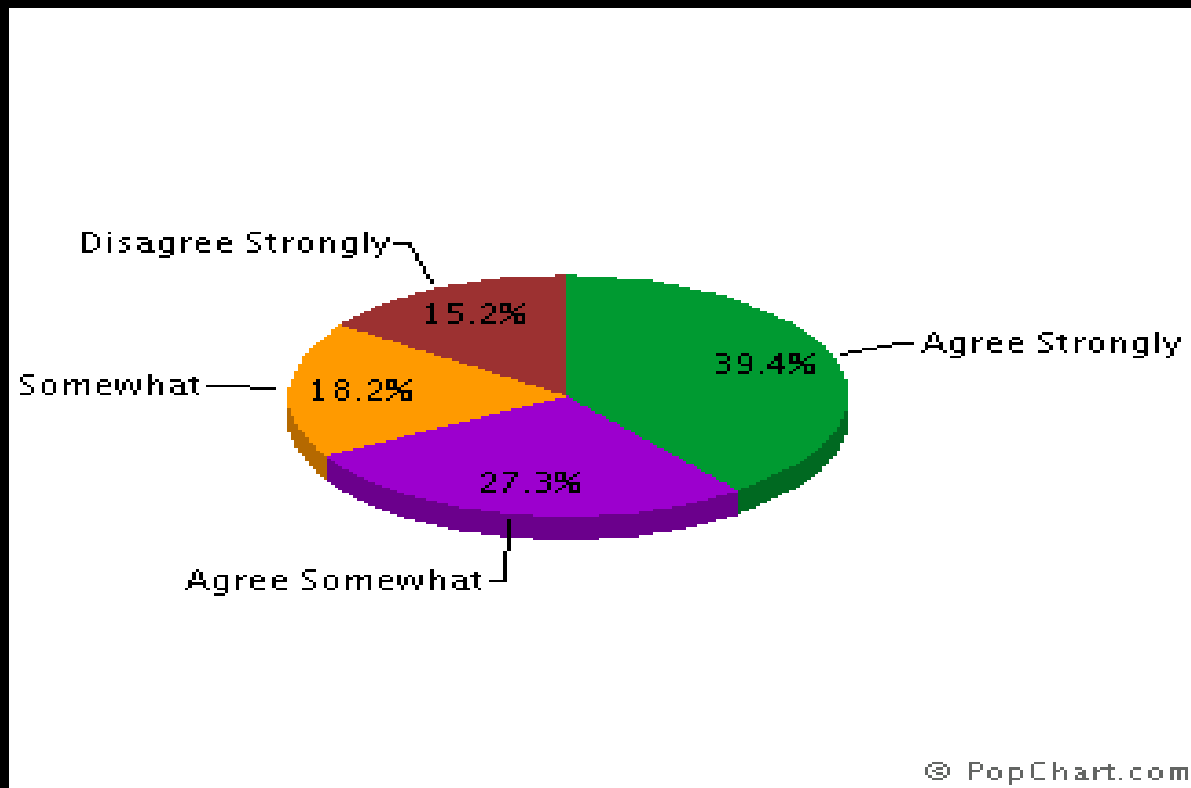
## DOES THAT APPLY TO VHA?

- "...However, challenges remain including hiring delays, **lack of understanding about the PS role,...**"

(National Survey on Implementation of Peer Specialists in the VA: Implications for Training and Facilitation; Matthew Chinman, RAND Corporation, Pittsburgh VA Healthcare System, Mark Salzer, Temple University, Dan O'Brien-Mazza, Director Peer Support Services, Mental Health Services, VHA; Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal © 2012 American Psychological Association, 2012, Vol. 35, No. 6, 470–473.)

# DBSA SURVEY ON VHA PEER SUPPORT

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.

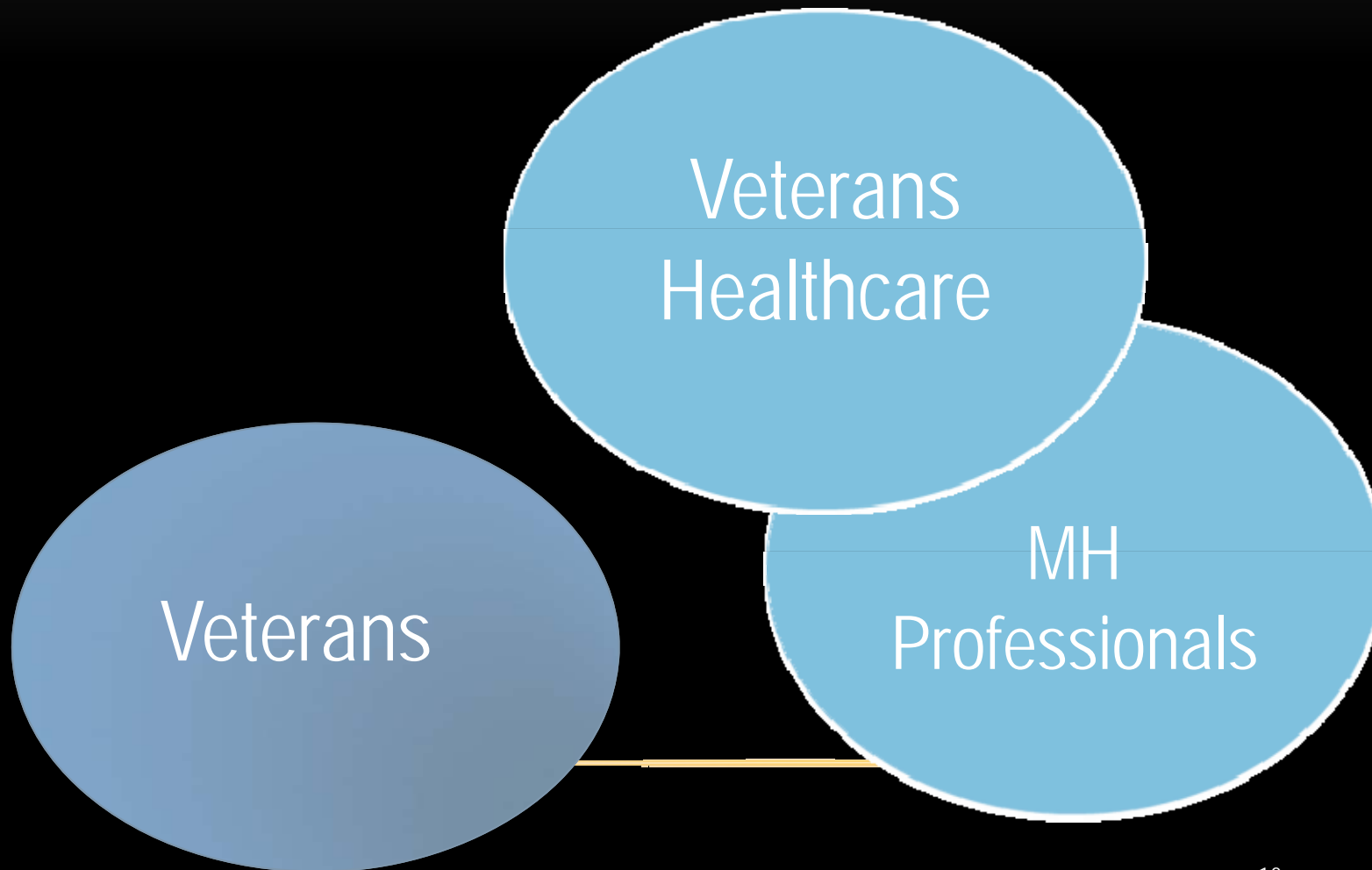
Supervisor: 46% Strongly Agree Peer Specialist: 84% Strongly Agree

- The peer(s) I supervise are treated the same as any other VA employee/volunteer.

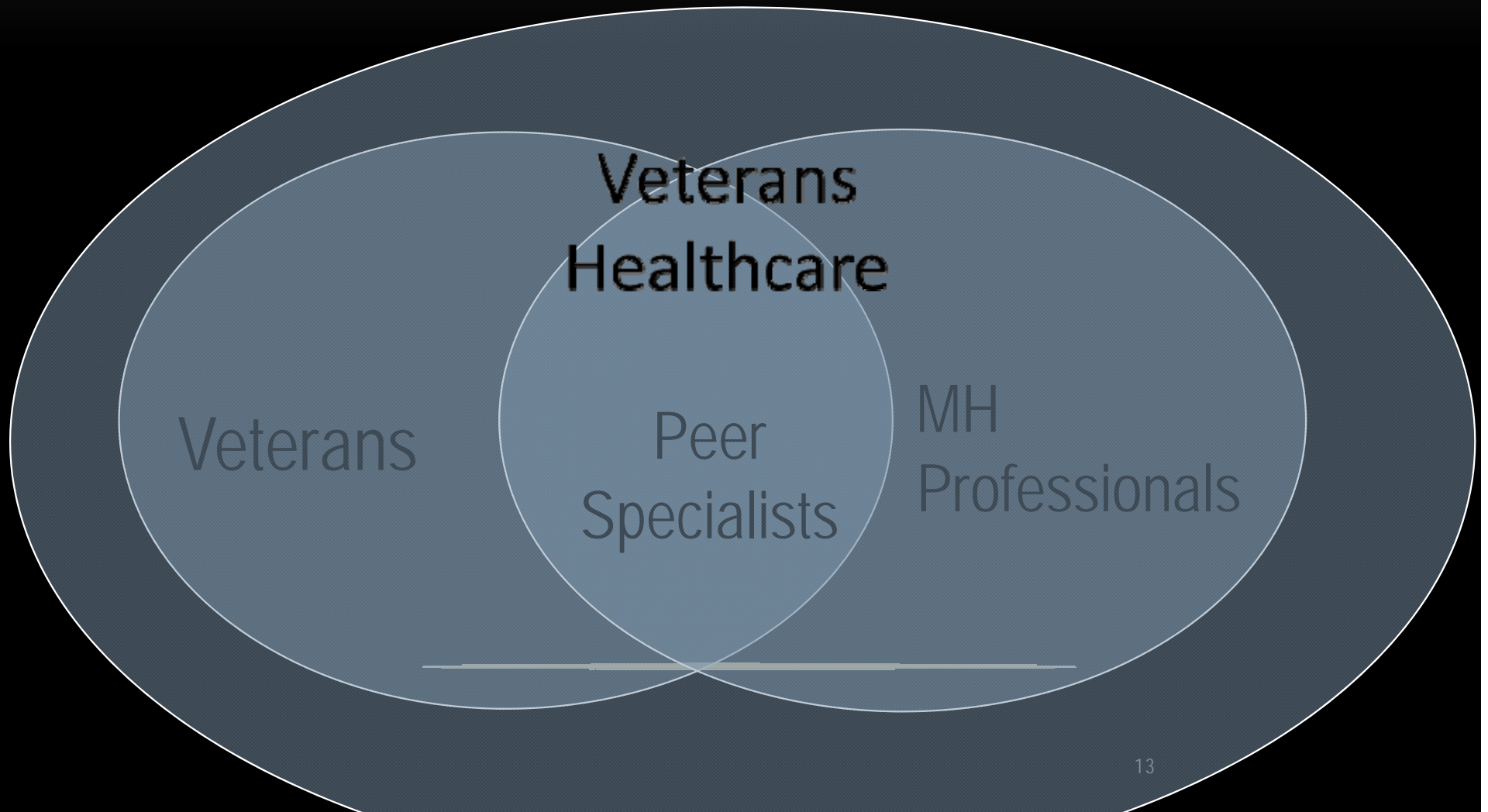
Supervisor: 27% Strongly Agree Peer Specialist: 39% Strongly Agree

(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

GRADE	EXPERIENCE		EDUCATION
	Basic Qualifications	SPECIALIZED	
GS-5	Veteran With other than Dishonorable D/C MH Condition	1 year equivalent to at least GS-4	OR 4-year course of study above high school leading to a bachelor's degree with courses related to the occupation, if required
GS-6 and above	Veteran With other than Dishonorable D/C MH Condition Certified PS	1 year equivalent to at least next lower grade level	See the <u>NOTE</u> under the Education section

# CAREER LADDER AND A REAL LIVING WAGE\*

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

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

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According to Payscale.com, median salary for CPS in Atlanta, GA is \$27,682

## Number of Peer Specialists by VISN

VISN	Required	Existing Peers
V1	32	56
V2	16	21
V3	25	27
V4	36	38
V5	19	27
V6	48	50
V7	57	70
V8	74	86
V9	40	40
V10	32	34
V11	34	44
V12	32	36
V15	31	30
V16	68	72
V17	44	56
V18	36	38
V19	26	39
V20	36	44
V21	34	39
V22	47	71
V23	33	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>953*</b>

# MAJOR GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

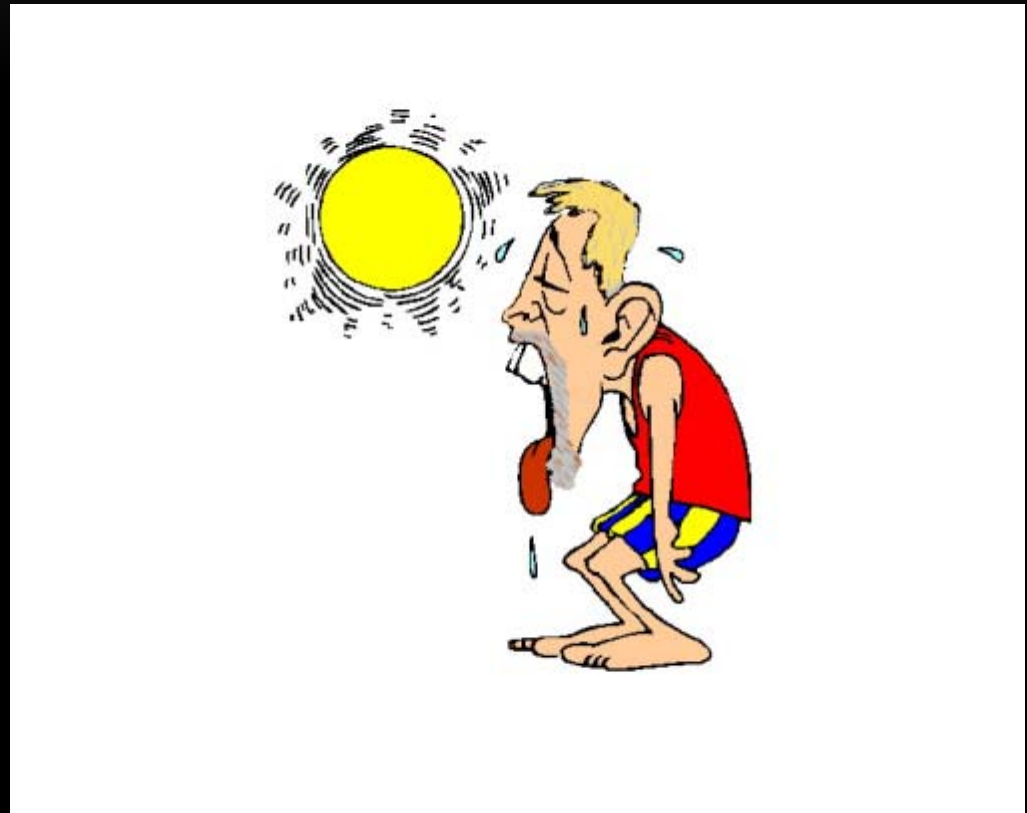
- PL 110-387
- PL 111-163
- VHA Handbook 1160.01
- VHA Handbook 1163.01
- VHA Handbook 1163.05
- VHA Directive 2010-30
- Peer Specialist Toolkit  
Implementing: Peer Support  
Services in VHA

\*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....



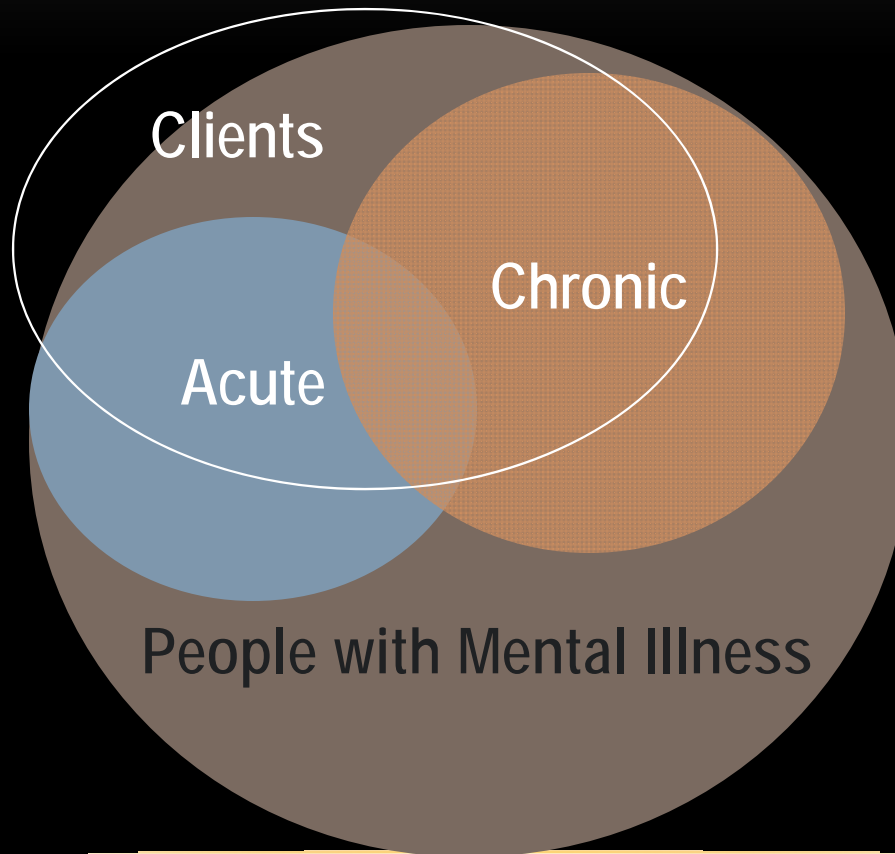


# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & DISCLAIMER

- 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.
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# THE CLINICIAN'S ILLUSION (COHEN & COHEN, 1984)

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?
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# 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?
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# 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?
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# 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?**
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## 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?
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## 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?
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# FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- What are some desired future directions for peer supervision?
  - Anything we haven't discussed yet?
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QUESTIONS?

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Peer Support Share Point Site:

<https://vaww.cmopnational.va.gov/CR/MentalHealth/Peer%20Support%20Services/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

**THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING  
PEER SUPPORT!**

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