



Peer recovery support services are delivered by individuals who have common life experiences with the people they serve. Peer support is considered an evidence-based practice by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that helps people in recovery from mental health or substance use challenges.

#### **PEER SUPPORT SERVICES HAVE BEEN SHOWN TO:**

- Reduce expensive inpatient service use. In a DHHS case study of peer services, one location saw a **decrease of 47.9% in inpatient services used**, and the **average number of inpatient days decreased by 62.5%**.<sup>1</sup>
- Reduce recurrent psychiatric hospitalizations for patients at risk of readmission. In the same DHHS case study, another location saw a **32.1% reduction in 30-day readmission rate**.<sup>1</sup>
- Improve individuals' relationships with their health care providers.
- Better engage individuals in care.
- Significantly increase individuals' abilities to manage their symptoms and reduce their reliance on formal services while still achieving positive recovery outcomes (DBSA).<sup>2</sup>

#### **BARRIER CRIMES AND THE IMPACT ON PEER SUPPORT:**

- Peer Recovery Specialists with barrier crimes have more difficulty finding work in the behavioral health field due to barrier crime convictions. "Right now, there are 158 crimes that automatically bar a person from working with state licensed mental health & substance abuse treatment providers and community service boards (ideastations.org)."<sup>3</sup>
- Many of the Peer Recovery Specialists trained in Virginia have barrier crime convictions as a result of their mental health or substance use challenges and are unable to seek employment in their desired profession at their local Community Services Boards or at other state facilities.
- The peer workforce in Virginia is not as effective as it could be due to there currently being no exclusions to barrier crimes in the behavioral health field. Peer services effectively support recovery, improve continuity of care, and reduce recidivism for inmates with behavioral health challenges during the re-entry process. Peers who have been incarcerated due to barrier crimes and have experienced the resulting stigma while they search for viable employment offer a unique perspective to help other peers in similar circumstances. As stated by another peer, "Over and over we hear from people that when they've met someone who's had a similar life experience, they feel an immediate sense of connection."
- Numerous peers could benefit from working with Peer Recovery Specialists who may have a past conviction or were incarcerated for any reason, whether the conviction or incarceration are for that of a barrier crime or lesser infraction.

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. An Assessment of Innovative Models of Peer Support Services in Behavioral Health to Reduce Preventable Acute Hospitalization and Readmissions. Retrieved February 16, 2018, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/report/assessment-innovative-models-peer-support-services-behavioral-health-reduce-preventable-acute-hospitalization-and-readmissions>
2. DBSA. The Evidence for Peer Support. Retrieved February 15, 2018, from [http://www.dbsalliance.org/site/PageServer?pagename=help\\_advocacy\\_peer\\_support\\_services](http://www.dbsalliance.org/site/PageServer?pagename=help_advocacy_peer_support_services)
3. Wintersmith, Saraya. WCVB News. Senate Set to Consider Barrier Crimes Bill. Retrieved February 16, 2018. <http://ideastations.org/radio/news/senate-set-consider-barrier-crimes-bill>