

HEALTH TECHNICIAN, GS-640-5

(Peer Support Technician)

MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: The Peer Support Technician (PST) is an active member of the _____ (Program/Team) and provides peer support services to veterans with serious mental illnesses in the _____ (Service Line.) Under supervision of the _____ (supervisor's title) the Peer Support Technician will function as a role model to peers; exhibiting competency in personal recovery and use of coping skills; serve as a consumer advocate, providing consumer information and peer support for veterans in outpatient and inpatient settings. The PST performs a wide range of tasks to assist peers of all ages, from young adult to old age, in regaining independence within the community and mastery over their own recovery process. Recovery resources such as booklets, tapes, pamphlets and other written materials will be utilized by the Peer Support Technician in the provision of services.

Using a formal goal setting process, the PST will:

- Assist veterans in articulating personal goals for recovery through the use of one-to-one and group sessions. During these sessions the PST will support veterans in identifying and creating goals and developing recovery plans with the skills, strengths, supports and resources to aid them in achieving those goals
- Assist veterans in working with their case manager or treatment team in determining the steps he/she needs to take in order to achieve these goals and self-directed recovery.
- Assist veterans in setting up and sustaining self-help (mutual support) groups, as well as means of locating and joining existing groups.
- Utilize tools such as the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) to assist veterans in creating their own individual wellness and recovery plans.
- Independently or with periodic assistance of higher graded treatment team members, utilizes and teaches problem solving techniques with individuals and groups; discussions will be utilized where veterans will share common problems in daily living and methods they have employed to manage and cope with these problems. As one who has availed themselves to mental health services, the PST will share their own experiences and what skills, strengths, supports and resources they use. As much as possible, the PST will share their own recovery story and as the facilitator of these sessions, will demonstrate how they have directed their own recovery.
- Use ongoing individual and group sessions to teach veterans how to identify and combat negative self-talk and how to identify and overcome fears by providing a forum which allows group members and PST to share their experiences. By

using identified literature, tapes, etc. veterans will gain hope, learn to identify their strengths and combat negative self-talk.

- Support veterans' vocational choices and assist them in choosing a job that matches their strengths, overcoming job-related anxiety by reviewing job applications, and providing interview tips.
- Assist veterans in building social skills in the community that will enhance job acquisition and tenure

Utilizing their recovery experience, the PST will:

- Teach and role model the value of every individual's recovery experience.
- Assist the veteran in obtaining decent and affordable housing of his/her choice in the most integrated, independent, and least intrusive or restrictive environment by taking them out to view housing, either driving them or riding with them on public transportation. The PST models effective coping techniques and self-help strategies.
- Serve as a recovery agent by providing and advocating for any effective recovery based services that will aid the veteran in daily living.
- Assist in obtaining services that suit that individual's recovery needs by providing names of staff, community resources and groups that may be useful. Inform veterans about community and natural supports and how to use these in the recovery process. Community resources may include but not limited to: social security office, Department of Family and Children services, local YMCA, Library, restaurants, veterans' service organizations, apartment complexes and other types of housing, etc.
- Assist veterans in developing empowerment skills and combating stigma through self-advocacy. This will be accomplished through regular meetings, individual or group sessions. Through the use of role playing/modeling techniques the PST provides opportunities for others to show/demonstrate how they have handled similar problems, how to present themselves in certain situations, or how to handle problems that may arise in interactions with others.
- With assistance from the Program Coordinator/Team Leader, the Peer Support Technician will work with the veterans and other treatment team staff to develop a treatment/recovery plan based on each veteran's identified goals. Treatment/Recovery Plans will be reviewed and signed by the Coordinator/Team Leader and other participating treatment team staff. The PST will document the following on the client's treatment/recovery plan:
 - a. identified person-centered strengths, needs, abilities, and recovery goals
 - b. interventions to assist the veteran with reaching their goals for recovery
 - c. progress made toward goals

The PST will maintain a working knowledge of current trends and developments in the mental health field by reading books, journals, and other relevant materials. The PST will continue to share recovery materials with others at continuing education seminars and other venues to be developed to support recovery-oriented services; and attend continuing education seminars and other in-service training when offered.

Factor 1: Knowledge Required by the Position

- a. Knowledge of the Recovery process and the ability to facilitate recovery using established standardized mental health processes.
- b. Knowledge and skill to teach and engage in basic problem solving strategies to support individual veterans in self-directed recovery.
- c. Knowledge of the signs and symptoms of mental illness (i.e. auditory and visual hallucinations, aggressive talk and behavior, thoughts of self-harm or harm towards others, isolation) and the ability to assist the veteran to address symptoms using strategies such as positive self-talk.
- d. Knowledge and skill sufficient to use community resources necessary for independent living and ability to teach those skills to other individuals with severe mental illness. Community resources may include but are not limited to: social security office, Department of Family and Children services, local YMCA, Library, restaurants, veterans' service organizations, housing providers, etc. The PST may accompany veterans to community resources to assist them in accessing these resources.
- e. Knowledge of how to establish and sustain self-help (mutual support) and educational groups by soliciting input from the mental health consumers on their strengths and interests.
- f. A valid driver's license is required as some driving and/or transportation may be required to take veterans to medical appointments, job sites, social activities and other community resources.

FACTOR 2. SUPERVISORY CONTROLS:

The Peer Support Technician is administratively assigned to the _____ (Program) in the _____ (Department or Service Line) and will receive supervision from the Coordinator/Team Leader of the program. The supervisor provides continuing assignments and indicates generally what is to be done, i.e., setting up group or individual meetings, reviewing job applications, etc The incumbent is expected to handle routine duties independently and is expected to establish common priorities for his/her assignments. Group teaching and facilitation work may be performed with the assistance of the supervisor or other mental health treatment team members. Work is reviewed by supervisor to ensure that it is technically correct and that it conforms to established policies and previously given instructions. Assignments that are routine and repetitive are not reviewed by the supervisor unless there are problems. Work that is new or requires deviations from previous assignments is discussed with the supervisor who provides detailed instructions

on how work is to be accomplished, or assigns another team member to assist. The incumbent will follow all legal and medical policies as mandated by the VA and the _____ Service Line.

FACTOR 3. GUIDELINES:

Established procedures and specific guidelines are available to the incumbent to cover the work assignment. Guidelines are applicable and specific to most situations. Incumbent will use judgment in determining the appropriate guide or instruction to fit the circumstances and in determining what information is required. In situations where the guidelines are not applicable; do not exist or are unclear the incumbent refers the problem to the coordinator. The National Office has provided and will continue to update a Bibliography of Recovery literature and the program will select appropriate literature that focuses on Recovery and how to teach veterans in their recovery process.

FACTOR 4. COMPLEXITY:

The work involves providing support services for the veteran patient that requires assisting them in establishing goals and mechanisms to reach those goals. Decisions on establishing goals and formal action plans will always be made in conjunction with the veteran patient and case manager/treatment team and reviewed with the supervisor. Decisions regarding what needs to be done involve choices that require a simple analysis such as organizing facts in narrative or logical order and comparing them to past solutions in similar cases or to applicable criteria. Actions to be taken or responses to be made, such as advice to the veteran differs depending on the facts of the situation.

FACTOR 5. SCOPE AND EFFECT:

The Peer Support Technician assists and guides veterans toward the identification and achievement of specific goals defined by the veteran and specified in the Individual Treatment Plan (ITP). The work involves a variety of routine, standardized tasks that facilitate work performed by higher level providers. Work performed by the incumbent will promote community socialization, recovery, self-advocacy, self-help, and development of natural supports.

FACTOR 6. PERSONAL CONTACTS:

Personal contacts include veterans, family members and significant others, and assigned VA facility, and other VHA employees from all services, service lines and disciplines. In addition, contacts may be with private citizens, community leaders, and staff of community, federal and state agencies. Contacts may be in person, by telephone, or by written communication.

FACTOR 7. PURPOSE OF CONTACTS:

Personal contacts are made to give or exchange information, resolve issues, provide services; and to motivate, influence and advocate on behalf of the veteran. Contacts with veterans are for the purpose of assisting them in managing their emotional and behavioral symptoms teaching them independent living skills, and identifying and achieving their individual recovery goals.

FACTOR 8. PHYSICAL DEMANDS:

The work is primarily sedentary. Typically, the employee will sit to do the work. However, there may be some walking; standing; bending; carrying of light items such as books, papers, etc; accessing transportation and driving a government car or van.

FACTOR 9. WORK ENVIRONMENT:

Work will be performed in a wide range of settings, including the medical center; in client, group or family homes; in community-based outpatient settings, community agencies; or in transport vehicles (public or government). Work areas are often noisy, irregular and unpredictable and can be stressful at times. Clients demonstrate varying levels of recovery and symptoms.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT FACTS:

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Meets the needs of customers while supporting the Medical Center and Service missions. Consistently communicates and treats customers (patients, visitors, volunteers, and all Medical Center staff) in a courteous, tactful, and respectful manner. Provides the customer with consistent information according to established policies and procedures. Handles conflict and problems in dealing with the customer constructively and appropriately.

ADP SECURITY

Protects printed and electronic files containing sensitive data in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974 and other applicable laws, federal regulations, VA statutes and policy, and VHS&RA policy. Protects the data from unauthorized release or from loss, alteration, or unauthorized deletion. Follows applicable regulations and instructions regarding access to computerized files, release of access codes, etc., as set out in the computer access agreement that the employee signs.

AGE-RELATED COMPETENCY STATEMENT

Provides care and/or services appropriate to the age of the patients being served. Assesses data reflective of the patient's status and interpret the information needed to identify each patient's requirements relative to their age-specific needs and to provide care needed as described in the services' policies and procedures.

COMPUTER KNOWLEDGE - WORD PROCESSING (MS-WORD)

Uses MS Word or comparable word processing software to execute several office automation functions such as storing and retrieving electronic documents and files; activating printers; inserting and deleting text; formatting letters, reports and memoranda; and transmitting and receiving e-mail.

COMPUTER KNOWLEDGE - VISTA

Uses the Veterans Health Information & Technology Architecture (VistA) to access information in the Medical Center Computer System.