



Bringing Hope: The Impact of Peer Support in Houseless Communities

Christina Carney, MA, MHPS

Hannah Durrance, MHPS

Dr. Sandra Smith, PRSS, RPS





Introductions

- Dr. Sandra Smith, PRSS, RPS
 - Via Hope Peer Programs Manager
 - HRSA Peer Specialist Training Program Director
- Christina Carney, MA, MHPS
 - Via Hope HRSA Peer Specialist Training Program Coordinator
- Hannah Durrance, MHPS
 - H.O.M.E. Center Founder & Director



Flow

- What is Peer Support?
- Peer Specialists: Who they are and what they do
- About Via Hope
- About Via Hope's HRSA Peer Specialist Training Program
- About H.O.M.E Center
- How Peer Support=Success
- Questions



What is Peer Support?

- Activity
- Reflect on a time you received or sought out peer support
 - What was that like?
 - What were the benefits?
 - How was it different from other types of support you received?



Peer Support Specialists

- Have lived experience/Recovery with mental health challenges, substance use, incarceration, trauma and being unhoused
- Where they work traditionally
 - Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHA's)
 - State Hospitals
 - Insurance Companies
 - Peer-Run Organizations



Peer Support Specialists...

- inspire hope that people can and do recover and heal;
- walk with people on their recovery journeys;
- build mutual relationships and share lived experience of recovery;
- dispel myths about mental health challenges, substance use, incarceration, and being unhoused;
- provide self-help education and link people to tools and resources;
- advocate with and for individuals;
- work on multidisciplinary teams;
- support and accompany individuals on appointments; and
- support people in identifying their goals, hopes, and dreams, and creating a roadmap for getting there.



Peer Support Specialists

How you become a Peer Specialist

- Initial Certification
 - Attend Core training and pass assessment
 - Attend Supplemental training (MHPS, RSPS, RPS) and pass assessment
 - Pass FBI background check – MHPS & RSPS only
 - Show proof of HS diploma or equivalent
 - Pay certification fee
- Full Certification
 - Complete 250 supervised field hours within 6 months of receiving initial certification
- 20 CEUs every two years required to maintain certification



Via Hope

Mental Health Resource of Texas, dba **Via Hope**, is a Texas based 501c3 nonprofit organization that provides training and consultation to individuals in recovery from mental health challenges.

We facilitate certification training for Mental Health Peer Specialists, Peer Support Supervisors and Reentry Peer Specialists along with Continuing Education Unit (CEU) trainings.

We also provide organizational change work for providers of mental health services to help them become more recovery oriented in their culture and practices.



Via Hope

Changing the way we all think about behavioral health.

Invest. Re-Envision. Respond.

- We will invest in trauma-responsive people and organizations who want to re-envision systems of care. We will respond to the needs of our partners and colleagues to build environments of learning, compassion and healing.
- We will passionately promote the power and wisdom of people with lived experience as necessary leaders in all of our work.



HRSA Peer Specialist Training Program

- Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) Grant
- The purpose of the BHWET Program for Paraprofessionals is to develop and expand community-based experiential training such as field placements and internships to increase the supply of students preparing to become peer support specialists and other behavioral health-related paraprofessionals while also improving distribution of a quality behavioral health workforce.



HRSA Peer Specialist Training Program

- Level I
 - Certification trainings (MHPS, RSPS, or RPS)
 - Covers costs for background check and certification fees
 - Placement for 250 supervised field hours
 - Supervision from a certified Peer Specialist Supervisor
 - 5 skill-building trainings
 - \$5,000 stipend



HRSA Peer Specialist Training Program

- Level II Apprenticeship
 - One-year program
 - 2,000 hours
 - Mentorship and Leadership Development
 - Supervision from a certified Peer Specialist Supervisor
 - Continuing Education Trainings
 - Wages & \$7,000 stipend



HRSA Peer Specialist Training Program

- Apprenticeship – Industry driven, high quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce. Individuals obtain paid work experience, classroom instruction, and portable nationally recognized credential.
- Via Hope is a TWC (Texas Workforce Commission) and DOL (Department of Labor) approved Registered Apprenticeship Intermediary Program



HRSA Peer Specialist Training Program

- Placement Sites

- Crescent Regional Hospital (Lancaster)
- Travis County Mental Health Public Defender's Office (Austin)
- Capital Area Public Defender System (Austin)
- Travis County Sheriff's Office (Jail and Correctional Complex)
- Building Promise USA (Austin, ReEntry services)
- The Other Ones Foundation (Austin, services for unhoused)
- Where We Thrive (Lockhart, community organization)
- Texas Homeless Network
 - H.O.M.E. Center (San Marcos)
 - Open Door (Lubbock)



HRSA Peer Specialist Training Program

- Libraries for Health Initiative
 - Partnership with St. David's Foundation & RAND Corporation
- Peer Specialists placed in the following public libraries:
 - Georgetown
 - Jarrell
 - Buda
 - San Marcos
 - Martindale
 - Smithville
 - Elgin



HRSA Peer Specialist Training Program

Benefits of being a Partner Site

- Opportunity to bring Peer Support to your organization; this promotes Recovery and brings Hope to those you serve. HRSA specifically aims to bring Peer Support to non-traditional settings.
- As an Apprenticeship Placement Site, you qualify for:
 - WIOA (Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act) funds
 - OJP (Office of Justice Apprenticeship) funds
 - State tax breaks



Data Collection

- Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health (TIEMH)
 - Surveys
 - People served
 - Peer Specialists
 - Supervision Sites
 - Partner Sites
 - Overall published program evaluation (end of 4yrs)



HRSA Progress

- The Other Ones Foundation (TOOF), Austin
 - Advocating for people in recovery
 - Sharing resources and building skills
 - Building community and relationships
 - Leading recovery groups
 - Mentoring and setting goals
- Some of our clients are sharing their experiences:
 - "Having a peer specialist helped me to see the light."
 - "I feel good when I talked to them"
 - "I feel included and I know that I am not alone."
- "This program is literally changing lives every day." – Iris Martinez, TOOF



Let's Check In!

- What do you see as the benefits of Peer Support
 - For individuals?
 - For organizations?

H.O.M.E CENTER:

How Peer support is making the difference

With Hannah Durrance

THE STORY OF H.O.M.E



My story is the story of
HOME

Who am I?

THE STORY OF H.O.M.E



Who am I?

Mother

Unhoused

Student

Graduate

Extraordinary Woman Award Winner



**“ THE GREATNESS OF A COMMUNITY IS
MOST ACCURATELY MEASURED BY THE
COMPASSIONATE ACTIONS OF ITS
MEMBERS ”**

Coretta Scott King

WHAT IS H.O.M.E.?

HOMELESSNESS...



OUTREACH

- Community Outreach
- Education
- Community Partnerships



MITIGATION

- Case Management
- Assistance with resources
- Advocacy
- Peers



EMERGENCY

- Freezing conditions
- Fire
- Flooding
- Evictions



"A house is made of walls and beams;
 a **HOME** is built with love and dreams"

H.O.M.E. Center

Follow Us!
 Facebook: HOME Center of Central Texas
 Insta & Twitter: @HOMEcenterTX

Homeless Outreach Mitigation Emergency

Participate!
 Contact/Volunteer/Donate
 Email: homecenter.tx@gmail.com
 Phone: (512) 270-8433



WHAT ELSE DOES H.O.M.E. DO?

**ACTIVE IN THE
FIGHT FOR POLICY
REFORM &
PROJECT
DEVELOPMENT**

**ASSISTS THE
HOMELESS
COALITION OF HAYS
COUNTY WITH THE
ANNUAL PIT COUNT**

**MOTEL SHELTER
PLACEMENT &
CASE
MANAGEMENT
USING HMIS**

OUR PATH TO SUCCESS

SHELTER



CASE MANAGEMENT



RESOURCES



PEER SUPPORT





HOW IS PEER SUPPORT MAKING THE DIFFERENCE?



A stylized tree graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a grey trunk and branches, with various shades of green and yellow leaves. The tree is partially obscured by a light blue diagonal band.

Questions?

Contact

- Christina.Carney@viahope.org
- Sandra.Smith@viahope.org
- homecentertx@gmail.com



THANK
YOU