

HEALTH TECHNICIAN GS-640-6

(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 Specialist 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 determining the steps he/she needs to take in order to achieve these goals and self-directed recovery.
- Lead as well as teach veterans how to facilitate Recovery Dialogues by utilizing standardized methods.
- Assist veterans in setting up and sustaining self-help (mutual support) groups as well as in 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.
- Utilize and teach problem solving techniques with individuals and groups; role play and ongoing 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, role playing, practice sessions, 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 and practice sessions.
- Assist veterans in building social skills in the community that will enhance job acquisition and tenure using such techniques as role play.

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. This will be an ongoing process that is referred to as recovery.
- 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 consumer-run self-help and mutual support services, 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.
- 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 develop and share recovery materials with others at continuing education seminars and other venues to be developed to support Peer Support Technician; and attend continuing education seminars and other in-service training when offered.

The PST serves as liaison with community-based consumer-run and/or consumer-supportive organizations to develop and/or foster veterans' community integration and development of natural support and self-reliance strategies. As liaison, the PST identifies community-based self-help and mutual support resources and fosters veteran access via sharing these resources with veterans, other mental health providers, and, when necessary, encouraging the organization to expand services sufficient to facilitate veteran access.

Uses 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. Uses the Veterans Health Information & Technology Architecture (Vista).

Factor 1-4: KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED BY THE POSITION

- a. Knowledge of the Recovery process and ability to facilitate Recovery Dialogues using the Focus Conversation and Workshop methods.
- b. Knowledge and skill to teach and engage in problem solving and conflict resolution 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: community-based consumer-run self-help and mutual support services, social security office, Department of Family and Children services, local YMCA, library, restaurants, veterans' service organizations, housing providers, etc. The PSS may accompany veterans to community resources and, as necessary, assist in fostering the development of services expansion to facilitate veteran access to these community 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 2-3: SUPERVISORY CONTROLS

The Peer Support Technician is administratively assigned to the _____ (Program) in the _____ (Department or Service Line) and will receive general supervision from the Coordinator/Team Leader of the program. . The incumbent completes recurring assignments independently without specific instructions and generally establishes own priorities for accomplishing the work. The incumbent will discuss unusual, unclear or difficult problems with the coordinator for additional guidance . Incumbent will follow all legal and medical policies as mandated by the VA and the _____ Service Line. Finished work and documentation is reviewed by the coordinator for accuracy and compliance with established policies and procedures as well as technical correctness.

FACTOR 3-3: GUIDELINES

The incumbent relies on VHA peer and general counseling program policies and procedures, Medical Center policy manuals on patient care; crisis intervention manual; oral and written office procedural manuals, and other technical manuals such as Peer Support Certification standards and requirements. Guidelines are available but don't always cover the situation or do not specifically address the situation. The incumbent selects, studies, and evaluates available reference information and adapts established methods to meet the needs of the assignment.

FACTOR 4-3: COMPLEXITY

The work involves identifying, advocating for, and 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 action plans will always be made in conjunction with the veteran patient and discussed with the veteran's treatment team. Decisions regarding what needs to be done depend upon an analysis of the resources available, problems involved with providing the necessary support and choices from numerous possible courses of action. Actions to be taken or responses to be made, such as advice to the veteran differs depending on the facts of the situation.

FACTOR 5-3: 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 incumbent will promote community socialization, recovery, self-advocacy, self-help, and development of natural supports.

FACTOR 6-2: 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 7-2: 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 and teaching them independent living skills.

FACTOR 8-1: 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 9-1: 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:

HEALTH/SAFETY

Complies with all safety/fire prevention rules/regulations, using protective equipment when required and provided. Promptly reports all accidents and notifies supervisor of unsafe/unhealthful conditions in the workplace. Attends scheduled training sessions and participates in facility or service level safety promotions as directed by supervisor. Knows fire drill and emergency plans for work area, including location of all emergency fire equipment.

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.