

# #NAMIcon16

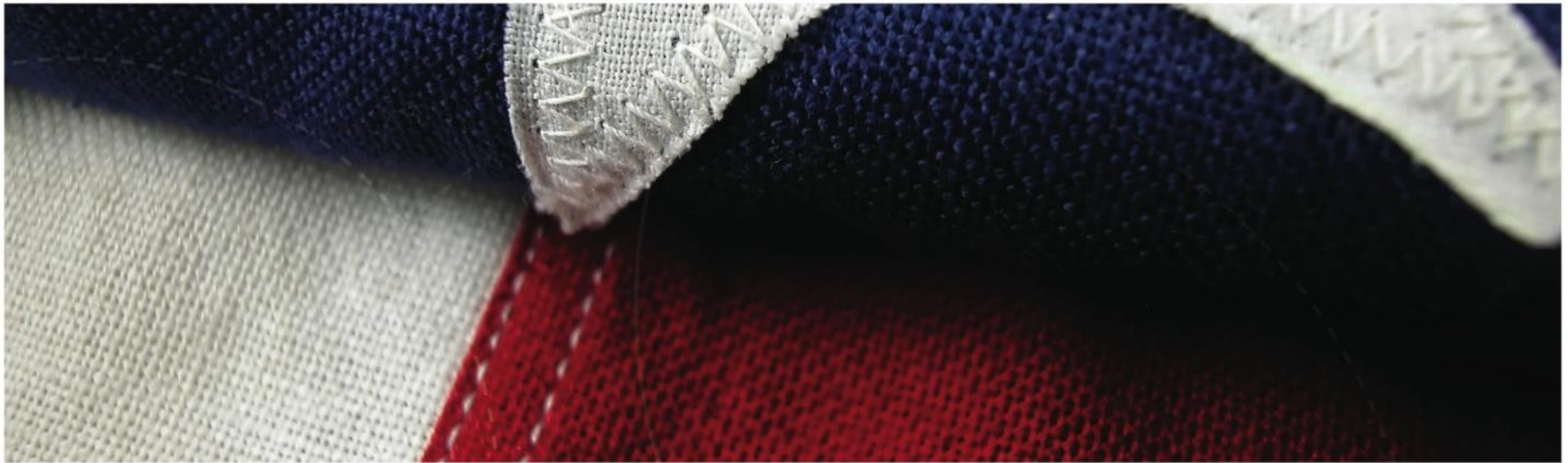
## Battle Buddies After Service: The Significance of Peer Support



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# Battle Buddies After Service: The Significance of Peer Support

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# Why Implement Peer Support?

- President's New Freedom Commission (2003) called for the transformation of mental health services to a patient-centered, recovery-oriented system of care.
- VHA Mental Health (2004) developed a strategic plan to implement the concepts of the New Freedom Commission and developed the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Services section to spearhead the transformation.
- Mental Health developed the Uniform Mental Health Services Handbook (2008), which reaffirmed VHA's commitment to a transformed mental health system of care.
- If recovery is the goal, the most transformative effort is the implementation of peer support. Peers demonstrate on a daily basis that recovery is achievable.

# Effectiveness of Peer Support

- A variety of studies outside VA show that peer support services lead to
  - Less inpatient use
  - Greater satisfaction with life
  - Greater hopefulness
  - Better treatment engagement
  - Improvement in mental health symptoms
  - Reduced costs of care
  - Enhanced self-esteem and social functioning
- Research within VA is in its early phase; findings are similar to non-VA studies.
  - Peers positively influenced Veterans' involvement in their own care and increased their social relationships.
  - Supplements existing treatments and increases access.
  - Emphasizes recovery by focusing on meaningful life roles and community reintegration.

# VHA Peer Specialists – Legislative Assistance

- **Public Law 110-387: Qualifications**
  - Be a Veteran with an Other than Dishonorable Discharge.
  - Be in recovery from a mental health condition for at least a year.
  - Be trained and certified by a VA-approved or State-approved not-for-profit certification organization.
- **Public Law 111-163: Certification**
  - VA must contract with a not-for-profit organization to provide certification training.
  - Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) was awarded the first contract.
  - Recovery Innovations (RI) has been awarded the current contract.
- **White House Executive Order, August 2012**
  - VA must hire and train 800 peer specialists by December 2013.
- **White House Executive Action, August 2015**
  - VA must establish 25 pilot site to provide peer support in Primary Care.

# Development of VHA Peer Support Workforce

- **2006:** Approximately 128 Peer Support Technicians first hired in VA.
- **2008:** First Director of Peer Support hired.
- **2009:** Process of developing new classification for Peer Specialists initiated.
- **2012:** Approximately 150 more Peer Support Technicians Hired in VA.
- **2012:** New classification standards for Peer Support Apprentices and Peer Support Specialists finalized.
- **2012:** Executive Order to hire 800 Peer Specialists.
- **2013:** 956 Peer Specialists on board.
- **2015:** 1,095 Peer Specialists on board.
- Each VAMC and Very Large CBOC must have at least 2 Peer Specialists.
- In addition to the minimum of two per facility, each VISN has been allocated a quota of Peer Specialists based on the total number of Veterans in a catchment area that have mental health conditions.

# What Do Peer Specialists Do?

- They serve as role models by sharing their personal recovery stories, showing that recovery from mental illness is possible.
- They teach goal setting, problem solving, symptom management skills, and a variety of recovery tools.
- They empower by helping Veterans identify their strengths, supports, resources, and skills.
- They advocate by working to eliminate the stigma of mental illness within and outside the walls of VA.
- They act as community liaisons by identifying social supports in the community.
- Promote wellness and act as navigators between mental health and primary care.



# Where Are Peer Specialists Working?

<b>Program</b>	<b>Number of Peers</b>
Homeless/HUD-VASH	246
OPT	204
Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center	133
MH Residential Rehab Treatment Program	81
Substance Use Disorder	80
MH Intensive Care Manage	63
PTSD	52

# Where We Are Going

- Primary Care pilots
- Community outreach (Clay Hunt Act Sec. 5)
- Collaborations with DoD
- Research and program evaluation efforts
- Quality improvement
- Ongoing training for Peer Specialists and supervisors
- Federal Interagency Task Force Peer Workforce Collaboration
- Collaborations with Congress and White House as warranted

# Questions



# Dana Niemela, MSW

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## Peer Support for Outreach and Engagement

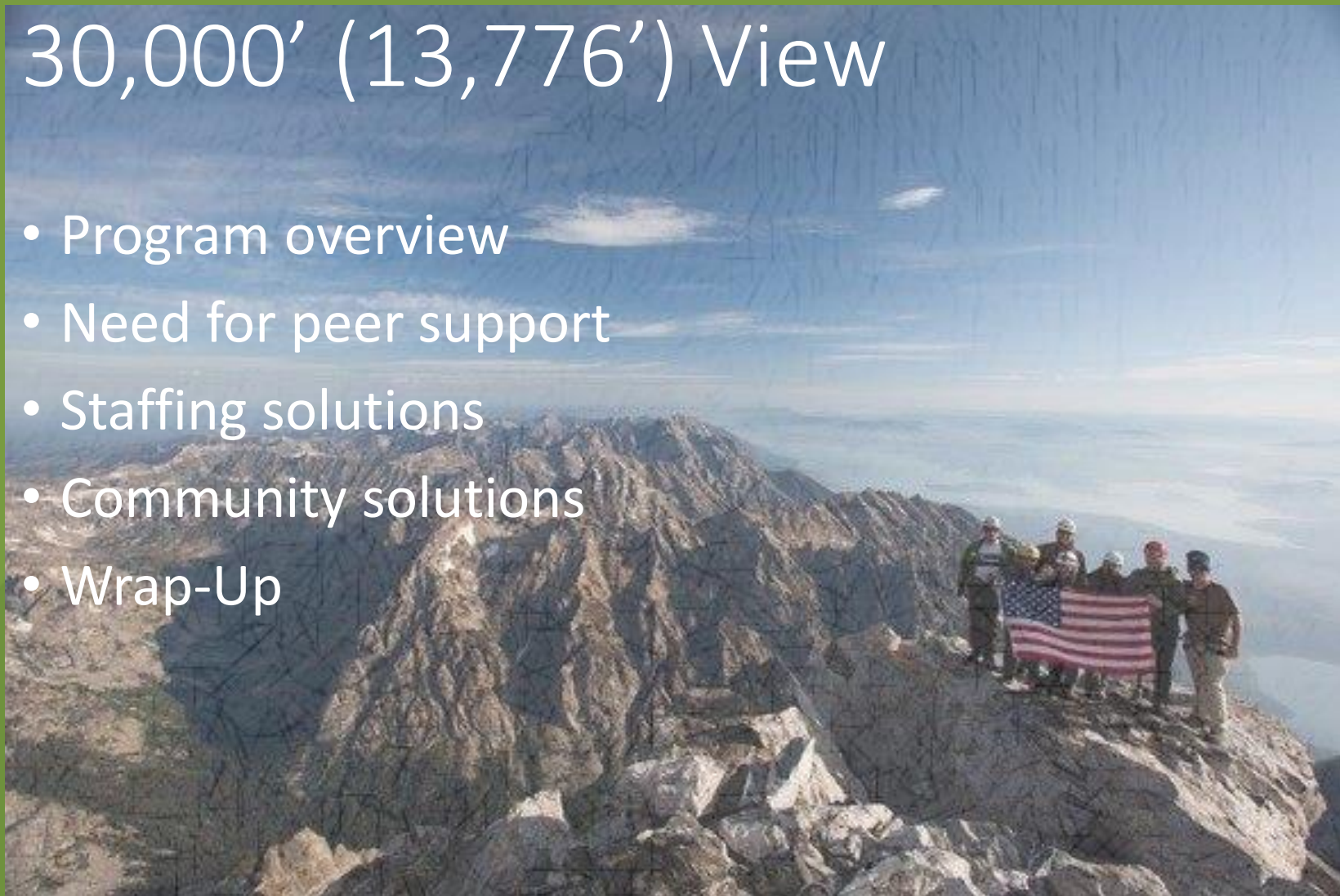
Dana L Niemela, MSW

Director of Community Outreach & Engagement



# 30,000' (13,776') View

- Program overview
- Need for peer support
- Staffing solutions
- Community solutions
- Wrap-Up



# Program Overview



- Denver County Veteran Services
  - Prioritizing homeless and at-risk services
    - Community Resource Navigation
    - Benefits Acquisition
    - Employment Case Management
  - Rely strongly on community partnerships



# Need for Peer Support

- John's Story





# Staffing solutions

- Office of Behavioral Health
- Position Development with HR
- Challenges
- Alternatives



# Community Solutions

- PARTNERSHIPS

- Who does it?
- Who does it well?
- Who's willing to collaborate?



- Support your partners

- What is their mission?
- What are their needs?
- How can you support them to achieve their goals?



# Wrap Up

- It works!
- Funding doesn't have to limit you
- Get creative... get out of the box



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## Questions?

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# Battle Buddies After Service: The Significance of Peer Support



By Daniel Williams  
VA Peer Support Specialist  
NAMI National Veterans and Military  
Council Chair

# What is PEER Support?

## Who is it For?

- A Peer Specialist is a fellow Veteran who has Had similar experiences with mental illness and/or addiction and who helps and encourages other Veterans through assistance, guidance, and understanding to aid in recovery.

This is for-

- The “Tribe”/ ID issues
- The Family's
- The Co workers
- The Process
- The Peer Support



# The Tribe

- The Tribe is what we as veterans need and want and look for. Something to belong to or be apart of.
- The Tribe make up has been around for 200,000 years and we as people have lived in different ones to make us stronger as a population.

## The Tribe make up

- Hunting
- Warfare
- Law Enforcement
- Fire Fighters
- Sports
- Gyms
- Family





# Identity Crisis Stages

1. Worry/ Apprehension
2. Excitement
3. Apathetic
  - Indifferent
  - Detached
  - Unmotivated
  - Angry
  - Bitter
4. Depression
5. Sink or Swim/ Fight or Flight
6. Putting in the work



# Peer Support Role

- To help with each stage
- Find a tribe that works for you
- Help with the stages of the Identity Crisis
- Support your path to recovery
- Stand beside you and help get back on track and have that sense of purpose again.

# The Peer Specialist's Creed

**“I am a Peer Specialist. I will use lived experience with emotional and psychological pain to assist others with similar difficulties. I will support those whom I serve by helping them regain their lives by promoting recovery and inspiring hope for a change. I will promote self-determination, personal responsibility, and self empowerment through education, commitment, and follow through. I will leave no one behind. I will assist others in regaining control of their own lives and encourage Veterans to see themselves through their capabilities, not their limitations. I will support any Veteran, of any era, to the best of my abilities with honor, courage, and commitment.”**

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