



# Veterans Health Administration Peer Support Program

Dan O'Brien-Mazza, M.S.

# Program Overview

- Began in 2006 by Implementing a profession, not a program.
- Guided by President's New Freedom Commission and two Public Laws.
  - Advocated involvement of consumers in providing recovery-oriented services and support.
  - Defined “peer” and required certification training.
- “Nobody knows the trouble that I’ve seen...” DD214 is a credential



# Requires Infrastructure

- 1,100 PSs-New Career field
- Created competencies, PDs, training manual, established provider class
- Workload Capture; Documentation
- Established Contracts with trainers
- Connected with external peer programs
- Expanded footprint in VHA

# Success Factors

- Cooperation from recovery oriented practitioners
- Ongoing training and adaptation
- Peer Support is good for everyone
- Pay 'em! VA PSs are highest paid in nation
- VA is Largest employer of peers



# Program Evaluation

FY14		FY15		FY16	
Unique Veterans	Appts	Unique Veterans	Appts	Unique Veterans	Appts
67,471	447,374	90,000	638,493	99,046	721,047

- **Early Stages**
- **Cost**
- **Data collected on new stop codes and procedures**

# Lessons to Share

- Implementation is key factor. Before!
- Get out of your own comfort zone and learn from other SMEs
- It takes a lot of friends to have a paid workforce (VSOs, Congressional and White House support)
- There are nay-sayers everywhere
- Keep moving ahead
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes