

## WHAT IS PEER SUPPORT?

Peer support has existed in the behavioral health field for decades; however, its rapid growth in recent years is due to the increasing evidence supporting its effectiveness. A Peer Support Specialist is a person who uses his or her lived experience of recovery from mental illness and/or addiction, plus skills learned in formal training, to deliver services in behavioral health settings to promote mind-body recovery and resiliency.

The growing evidence base for the effectiveness of peer support services—both in terms of quality of life, outcomes for individuals and in terms of cost savings to counties and states due to reductions in rates of hospitalization—these efforts have the potential to make significant improvements to the system.

Peer support certification has potential to address Human Services Research Institute Behavioral Health System Study recommendations #3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

# PEER SUPPORT SERVICES



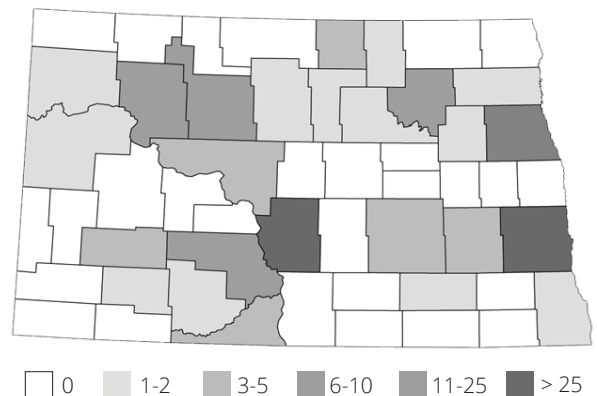
## NORTH DAKOTA EFFORTS

In early 2018, North Dakota was selected to participate in the SAMHSA program, 'Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale Technical Assistance Center Strategy' (BRSS TACS) to advance effective recovery supports and services for people with behavioral health disorders and their families. One of the goals developed by this team from North Dakota was to develop peer support services in the highest risk/pivotal points (prisons, emergency departments, community outreach, public health, etc.) in the system.

The Division:

- ⊕ Hosted seven peer support specialist trainings in 2018 and trained **189 individuals**.
- ⊕ Reimburses peer support services through the Free Through Recovery and Substance Use Disorder Voucher programs.
- ⊕ Is supporting the development of a statewide rural, faith-based peer support network through collaboration with Lutheran Social Services.
- ⊕ Is posting an RFP to integrate peer support specialist services into high risk/pivotal points for individuals with a behavioral health disorder.

**North Dakota 2018 Trained Peer Support Specialist by County**



**81% of trained peer support specialists are located in a rural community.**

# PEER SUPPORT IN **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

Peer support specialists bring hope by sharing their experiences and promoting a sense of belonging.

## PEER SUPPORT IS **EFFECTIVE**

- + Improves quality of life.
- + Improves whole health, including conditions like diabetes.
- + Improves engagement and satisfaction with services and supports.
- + Decreases hospitalizations and inpatient stays.
- + Reduces health care costs.

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## WHAT ARE PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS?

Peer support specialists use their experience to:

- + Establish positive rapport.
- + Serve as a pro-social model.
- + Offer insight to the individual's care team.
- + Provide support focused on advocacy, coaching, and mentoring.

**Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential.**

### **Health**

Choices that support one's overall well-being.

### **Home**

A safe and stable place to live.

### **Purpose**

Meaningful daily activities, such as a job, school, or volunteering.

### **Community**

Relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship and love.