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Global Peer Support Celebration Day

Global Peer Support Celebration Day (GPSCD) honors and celebrates peer supporters across the globe who have inspired hope and offered support to those struggling with the impact of mental health concerns, addiction issues and trauma related challenges. We thank you and celebrate you today and every day!

Today, The Office of Mental Health recognizes GPSCD as a day to reflect on, appreciate, and celebrate the hard work, dedication, and important role peers play in helping people move along the recovery continuum, embrace their strengths, continue to heal from trauma, and find inclusion in the community of their choosing.

Additionally, today is a day to appreciate how peers impact the lives of countless seniors, adults, children, adolescents, and families within the behavioral health system. Their dedication, commitment, compassion, and empathy is created from the power of shared lived experience, and it is with connection that people can truly heal and move forward with their lives as they desire.

Peer Supporters are individuals with lived experience. Some are young adults, using their own expertise and knowledge of what helps and what does not to support others in their own journeys to recovery and collaborate on a meaningful pathway to thriving in resilience. Some are family members, who artfully tap into their own struggles, pain, and successes to reach out and assist other families who are navigating systems, to find comfort and hope in what is possible for their children.

Some peers are adults, moving through the lifespan, tapping into their own wisdom, experiences, and shared decision making to encourage others to find their path, acquire resources and skills that are helpful, engage in informed decision making, and provide inspiration around possibilities. No matter what the role, peer supporters above all strive to help others heal from trauma in all its forms. Peer Supporters understand what it is like to move through the stigma and discrimination that is often associated with having a mental health diagnosis, addiction struggle, or trauma related challenge, and use their first-hand experience and unique perspective to highlight opportunities for others to empower themselves and reach their goals. Peer Supporters seek to engage others in life, using the available resources and tools around them, including treatment, self-help, and community inclusion.

Research shows that peer supporters have a transformative effect on the peers they serve, other mental health providers, and the mental health systems that employ them. According to Mental Health America and Peers for Progress, peer support is a “critical and effective strategy” for ongoing physical, mental, and addiction healthcare, and a proven approach for sustained behavior change for persons with these concerns, and for people with chronic diseases and other conditions. Furthermore, the benefits of peer support extend beyond individuals with these challenges by creating change, increasing awareness, and reducing stigma in neighborhoods, communities, organizations, systems, social groups, and other public gatherings and forums.

Here at OMH, we strive to include peer supporters in all of our programs, and strongly encourage and welcome individuals with lived experience to apply for roles in any discipline. Additionally, we recognize Peer Support as its own discipline, with standards, a scope of practice, and ethical guidelines much like nurses, social workers, and psychiatrists. We recognize all of the hard work and meaningful contributions Peer Supporters provide to our agency and the system overall, and we thank you.

And again, we celebrate you not just today, but every day!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ann Marie T. Sullivan, M.D.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ann Marie T. Sullivan, M.D.
Commissioner