



Providing Empathetic and Effective Recovery (PEER) Support Act Led by Senators Tim Kaine and Mike Braun

Why do we need the *PEER Support Act*?

[Nearly 20 percent](#) of adults in the U.S. experience a mental illness each year, with 5 percent experiencing a severe mental illness. In addition, [over 15 percent](#) of adults report having a substance use disorder. With more than [106,000 overdose deaths](#) and [one suicide death every 11 minutes](#) in 2021 alone, it is imperative that we support the treatment and recovery of individuals with mental illness and substance use disorders.

Research shows that peer support specialists significantly [decrease substance use](#) for individuals with substance use disorder [and reduce re-hospitalization](#) for individuals with mental illnesses. Peer support specialists are qualified peer support providers with lived experience of mental illness or substance use who, as a result of their recovery, training, and certification, are able to help others with their recovery. These experts support individuals with their recovery, wellness, self-direction, and community integration through a defined scope of activities. These activities may include advocacy, facilitating access to resources, relationship building using their personal story, community building, group facilitation, skill building, mentoring, goal setting, and more. Family peer support, delivered by primary parents or caregivers of children, youth or adults receiving services from mental health, substance use, and related service systems, provide similar activities to families of individuals with mental health and substance use conditions. While peer support specialists have become an important part of treatment and recovery teams, peer support specialists face significant barriers to entering or staying in the profession.

What will the *PEER Support Act* do?

The *PEER Support Act* will address barriers to practice and support the peer support specialist field by:

- Directing the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to revise the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system to create a distinct classification for peer support specialists to ensure accurate data reporting on the peer support specialist profession.
- Codifying the Office of Recovery in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to:
 - Provide leadership in the identification of new and emerging issues related to recovery support services;
 - Research and publish best practice recommendations to States and entities that employ peer specialists for training, certification, and supervision of peer support specialists;
 - Support ongoing professional development of peer support specialists; and
 - Issue recommendations on the creation of career pathways for peer support specialists.
- Instructing the Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with the Department of Justice, to research states' criminal background screening processes that may pose barriers to the certification or practice of peer support specialists, and to provide evidence-based recommendations for overcoming those barriers.

Supporting organizations:

1. American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
2. American Association on Health and Disability (AAHD)
3. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)
4. American Mental Health Counselors Association
5. American Psychological Association Services (APA Services)
6. Anxiety & Depression Association of America
7. Ballard Health
8. Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC)
9. Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
10. Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
11. Face and Voices of Recovery
12. Fountain House
13. International Society for Psychiatric Mental Health Nurses
14. Lakeshore Foundation
15. Mental Health America (MHA)
16. Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance (MMHLA)
17. NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
18. National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
19. National Association for Peer Supporters (NAPS)
20. National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)
21. National Council for Mental Wellbeing
22. National Federation of Families
23. Overdose Prevention Initiative
24. Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health
25. Psychotherapy Action Network
26. RI International
27. SMART Recovery
28. Trust for America's Health (TFAH)