

Human Services Interim Committee
March 9th, 2016

Good morning Chairwoman Hogan and members of the Human Services Interim Committee.

My name is Siobhan Deppa and I am a consumer of behavioral health services in North Dakota. I am here today to ask you to please include a formal one-on-one peer support program in your recommendations. The formal one-on-one peer support program was a huge success four years ago when I successfully completed the program. The program changed my life in recovery tremendously.

The support I had from my Peer Support Specialist was beyond any other service I have ever had available. The personal experience of my Peer Specialist with their own recovery gave me inspiration, strength and hope. The rapport we shared and the confidence built was of mutual benefit beyond description. This is the way peer support works, both the consumer and peer specialist work together setting goals in one's personal wellness plan. I learned new coping skills, healthy habits and healing techniques replacing coping with alcohol and unhealthy thinking I had fallen in to. I began caring for others again. I no longer felt an isolation so many with a mental health diagnosis feel, felt like a human being again worth more than I began accustomed to feel. I felt a lot better about my illness and addiction understanding there are others whom also feel like I do at points in their life. It was ok not to feel ok sometimes but trusting another peer to help me, help myself to feel better about myself was a game changer. We built a wellness plan centered around the me I wanted to be, not the me then, but the me I have become today. I. My advocacy and participation in my own recovery is thanks to peer support. Just being listened to, encouraged, understood by another peer on a one-on-one level has the power to transform lives. Please include formal one-on-one peer support in your recommendations. According to the Schulte Report, a formal one-on-one peer support program is what fellow behavioral health consumer's want and need the most in their recovery service choices around the state.

Thank you for your time, Sincerely, Siobhan Deppa

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