

**Post Traumatic Stress:
PTS Disorder
to
PTS Growth**

Auburn University
Center for Governmental Services

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**Vet-to-Vet
Peer Support Program:
Veteran-Provider Partnership**

Faculty

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Vet-to-Vet Peer Support Program

Objectives

- Describe the evolution of CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet Program
- Describe the structure of CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet Program
- Review the training and supervision process for CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet Peer Facilitators

Objectives

- Highlight some of the “Key Successes” of CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet Program

Vet-to-Vet Program

- A recovery-oriented, group based, veteran-clinical staff partnership that provides veterans, with a history of psychiatric diagnosis, an opportunity to use their personal experiences (under supervision) to encourage, support, and educate other program participants as a continuum of their psychosocial rehabilitation and/or mental health

CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet History

- Mutual Learning: A VA Peer Support and Education Conference (2005), Nashville, TN
 - Two Veteran Volunteers and one PCT Staff MSW
- Moe Armstrong accepted the invitation to visit CAVHCS to promote initiative

CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet History

- Long-term CAVHCS Support Group transitioned to Peer Support Model
 - National Center for PTSD

Key CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet Program Partners

- CAVHCS Senior Management
- MH Service
- Veteran Volunteers
- Volunteer Service
- Social Work Service

Key CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet Program Partners

- Recreation Service
- Vet-to-Vet Founder, Moe Armstrong
- Psychology Service

Role of Key CAVHCS Partners



Key Features

- Program created by decorated Vietnam vet, recipient of VA mental health services
- Based on consumer-provider partnership
 - Administrative and clinical support
- Groups held on site with VA mental health services-max access

Key Features

- Potential peer facilitators nominated by current peer facilitators
- Groups are peer lead
- Groups designed to meet 45 minutes, 1 time each week

Key Features

- Each group has a designated educational focus, follows a read and discuss format
 - Potential topics
 - Wellness
 - Recovery Workshop
 - Writers' Workshop
 - Disability Awareness/Pride

Key Features

- Meetings based on process of mutual and reciprocal education and support (facilitators & members)

– Barber, J., Rosenheck, R.A., Armstrong, M. & Resnick, S. (2008). Monitoring the Dissemination of Peer Support in VA Healthcare System. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 44:433-441.

Structure of CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet Peer Support Program

- Volunteer peer facilitators/co-leaders
- MH clinician-provider endorsement form required
- Peer facilitator contract
- Position description
 - Peer facilitator folders
 - Psychology service

Structure of CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet Peer Support Program

- Weekly peer facilitator training
 - Staff provider
- Monthly staff-lead peer facilitator process group
 - Mandatory for all

Peer Facilitator Eligibility Criteria

- **Successful completion of three months group-based treatment/rehabilitation program**
- **Six months of satisfactory progress in active recovery program**
- **Attendance at previous Vet-to-Vet Peer Support Meetings**

Peer Facilitator Eligibility Criteria

- **Nomination from current Vet-to-Vet Peer Facilitator**
- **CAVHCS Mental Health Provider/Clinician Endorsement**
- **Official CAVHCS Volunteer in good standing with Voluntary Services**

Peer Facilitator Eligibility Criteria

- **Signed CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet Peer Facilitator Contract**
- **Commitment to participate in weekly educational Peer Facilitator Educational training meetings**
- **Commitment to participate in monthly provider staff lead Peer Facilitator Process group**

Peer Facilitator Responsibilities

- **Attend training sessions, meetings, and activities**
- **Complete co-leader assignments**
- **Receive peer/staff feedback**
- **Respectful of peer support group participants**

Peer Facilitator Responsibilities

- **Prepare/effectively manage group discussions**
 - **Covering materials**
- **Facilitate “hand-off” veteran(s) presenting with crisis/concern**
- **Complete debriefings**
 - **Written/orally**

Peer Facilitator Responsibilities

- **Start/end groups on time**
- **Respect CAVHCS/VISN/VHA Directives/policies**

CAVHCS Psychology Staff Vet-to-Vet Responsibilities

- Screen peer facilitator referrals
- Peer facilitator responsibilities (PD)
- Peer facilitator contract
- Clinical endorsement (annually)
- Co-leader training sessions
- Monthly peer support group

CAVHCS Psychology Staff Vet-to-Vet Responsibilities

- Attend weekly peer facilitator training sessions
- Document group attendance
- Group debriefings
- Clinical consultations

CAVHCS Psychology Staff Vet-to-Vet Responsibilities

- Peer leader critique
 - Referrals, suspensions, etc.
- Problem solving

Peer Facilitator Contract

- Volunteers not “staff”
- Group augments MH treatment, not substitution
- Use of personal experiences
- Weekly peer facilitator training, outreach, speaking engagements
 - Use only approved recovery resources

Peer Facilitator Contract

- Have personal recovery plan
- Notify Chief Psychology/Designee of any/all conflicts with veterans, staff, guests
- Never leave veteran in crisis alone
- Report all known violations of confidentiality

Peer Facilitator Contract

- Agree to comply with Chief, Psychology/Designee recommendations
 - i.e., suspension, clinical consultation, etc.
- Abide by CAVHCS, Federal laws, directives, policies
- Drug free workplace guidelines

Peer Facilitator Contract

- Apply/maintain VA official volunteer status
- Respect confidentiality, privacy of veterans
- No sexual harassment of any peer, staff, or other persons

Peer Facilitator Supervision Groups

- Weekly facilitator meeting
 - Mandatory for peer facilitators
 - Co-lead peer/staff clinician
 - Review weekly group self-help materials
 - Ensure group coverage
 - Two facilitators per group

Peer Facilitator Supervision Groups

- Follow-up on old or new issues
- Special community recovery events of interest to veterans
- Consider new peer facilitators
- CAVHCS issues/events
- Report cases of concern to staff

Peer Facilitator Supervision Groups

- Monthly facilitator support group
 - Mandatory for peer facilitators
 - Staff/clinician lead
 - Personal SUDS (subjective units of distress) scale: 1-10
 - Self-care recovery plan

Peer Facilitator Supervision Groups

- Peer facilitator partnership interpersonal dynamics
- Constructive feedback
- Request for special support

Vet-to-Vet Group Contract

- Standard self-help
 - “Mutual-help” group
- Confidentiality
- Drop-in voluntary attendance
- Informed consent, no clinical staff required
- Treatment augmentation

Vet-to-Vet Group Contract

- Recovery oriented
- Attendance documentation process
- Process to access clinical staff
 - 100% on-site availability
- Voluntary sharing

CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet Groups

- Tuskegee Campus
 - Monday – 10:00 am
 - Tuesday – 10:00 am
 - Wednesday – 9:00 am and 1:00 pm
 - Women’s group
 - 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month – 12:00 pm

CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet Groups

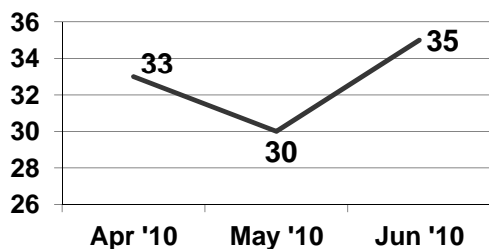
- Montgomery Campus
 - Thursday – 12:30 pm
 - Women’s Group
 - 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month – 12:00 pm

CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet Groups

- Columbus CBOC Campus
 - Monday – 3:00 pm
 - Friday – 11:00 pm
- Dothan CBOC (TBA)
- Ft. Rucker CBOC (TBA)

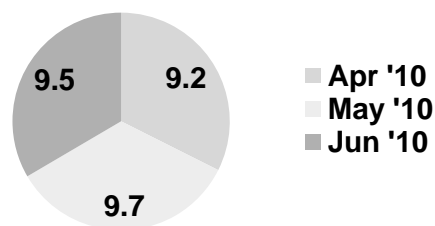
CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet Peer Group Data Points

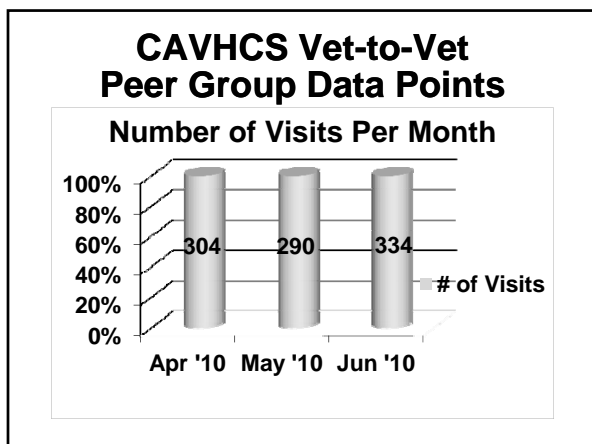
Number of Groups Per Month



CAVHCS Vet-to-Vet Peer Group Data Points

Average Group Attendance





- ### Vet-to-Vet Program Successes
- 2007 grew from 1-6 volunteers facilitators to 17, and 7 meetings a week
 - Expanded to Montgomery, Columbus
 - Dothan pending
 - 2007, Veterans Day Parade, Vet-to-Vet Birmingham VAMC (liaison)

- ### Vet-to-Vet Program Successes
- VA Senior Olympics
 - Champions Challenge Walk
 - Women’s Day Celebration for female veterans
 - Women’s Vet Group Tuskegee, activated at Montgomery

- ### Vet-to-Vet Program Successes
- 2010
 - 4th Anniversary
 - Moe Armstrong Returned
 - 2010
 - 1st Vet-to-Vet Peer Facilitator Retreat, Tuskegee

Why Vet-to-Vet Peer Facilitators Volunteer

“I can do something for my brother and sister veterans. I can utilize the things I’ve learned through the years to help others navigate the same tough terrain.”

Why Vet-to-Vet Peer Facilitators Volunteer

“...to assist other vets and give something back to the community...to meet and to assist others like myself.”

“I like helping people...”

What Vet-to-Vet Peer Facilitators Enjoy About Their Role

***“...seeing how we impact veterans’
lives by sharing and presenting
new concepts to help them in
their illness management.”***

***“...I can in some small way assist in
the recovery of fellow veterans.”***

References

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- **Resnick, S.G., Armstrong, M., Sperrazza, M., Harkness, L., & Rosenheck, R.A., (2004a). A model of consumer-provider partnership: Vet-to-Vet. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, 28(2), 185-187**
- **Shepherd, M.D., Schoenberg, M., Wituk, S., Warren , M., & Meissen, G. (1999) Continuum of professional involvement in self-help groups. Journal of Community Psychology, 27(1), 39-53**