



# Annual Report 2021

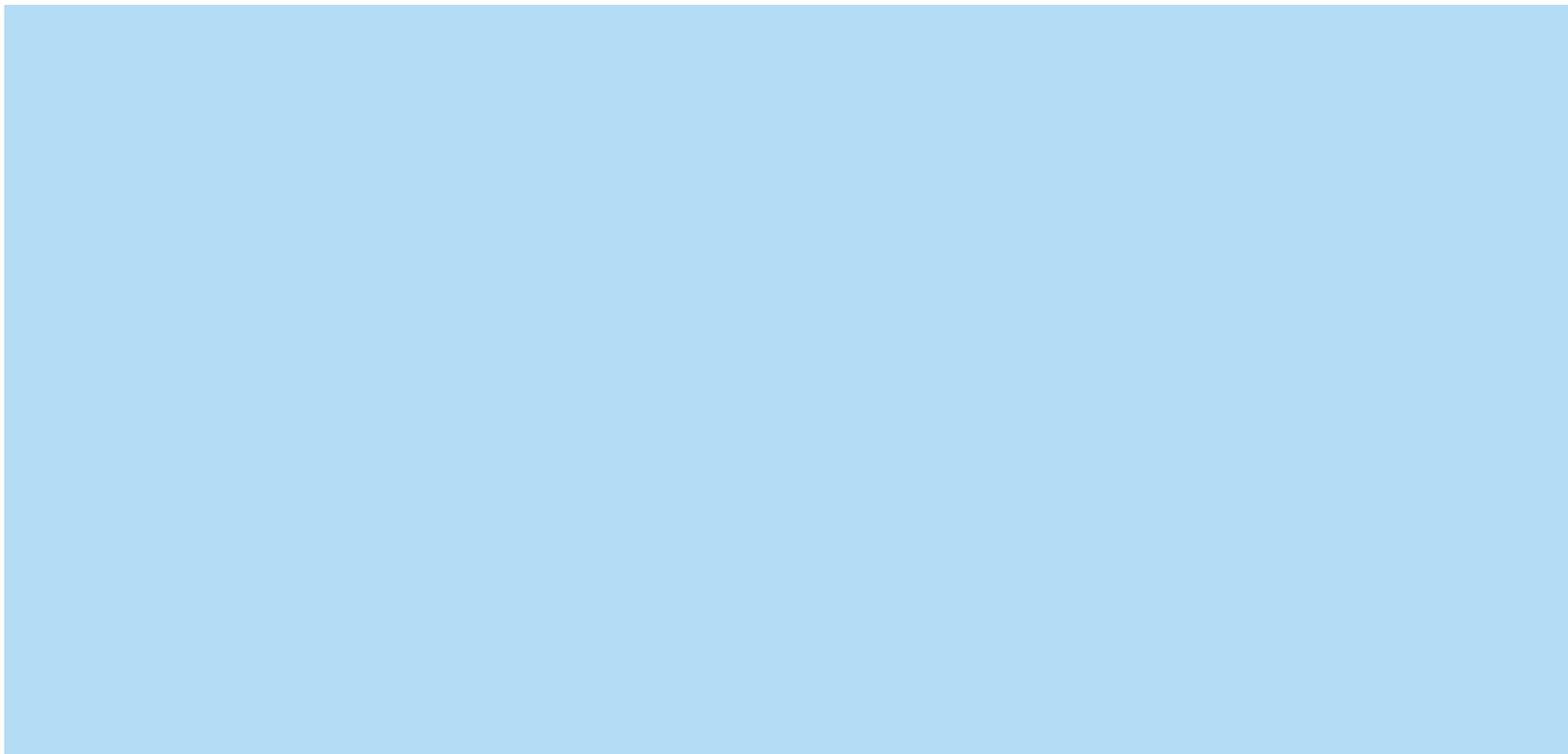
Support that Understands

Peerstar, LLC  
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# Welcome

Peerstar, LLC Annual Report 2021  
Support that Understands

Mental Illness is not a  
**CHOICE**, but **RECOVERY** is”



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# Message from the President

Larry J. Nulton, Ph.D.

We all should be very proud of our many accomplishments in 2021.

## As a team in Leadership, we took this year as a challenge.

Our goal was to resume many of our everyday practices during an abnormal time in our world. We forged ahead and continued to provide support and services to individuals across Pennsylvania when many areas faced access issues for other services. We all have come out of 2021 more robust than ever and hopeful for the future.

We continue to look for ways to support those who are the backbone of Peerstar. Peerstar spent this year advocating for our Peer Specialists and Peers with the MCOs for rate increases where necessary. Thus, we increased our staff pay rates to promote retention and improve our recruitment abilities. We continue to explore additional training and resources to support staff in providing services with various modalities, including telehealth.

## We have dedicated ourselves to ensuring that the peers we serve receive the highest quality support and can access support when needed.

We have been developing additional tools to assist peers with Social Determinants of Health needs, and we are excited to implement this initiative in 2022.

Thank you to everyone for another beautiful and encouraging year. We value the partnerships, dedication, and compassion we have with our staff, community members, stakeholders, and peers.

Warm Regards,

Larry J. Nulton, Ph.D.  
President and Chief Executive Officer

# Our Vision

Each individual or family member affected by mental illness has a unique history that can affect their treatment outcome. Each has the opportunity to be supported by a system of recovery that integrates the provider systems with community or other natural supports in an effort towards independence and individual healing.

# Our Guiding Principals

Peerstar's Certified Peer Specialists (CPS), Certified Peer Specialist Supervisors (CPSS), and Administrative Staff follow the "10 fundamental elements and guiding principles of mental health recovery that serve well as guideposts for recovery-oriented services."

- Self-Direction
- Individualized and Person Centered
- Empowerment
- Holistic
- Non-Linear
- Strength-Based
- Peer Support
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Hope

# 2021 Highlights

## ANSA/SDOH Updates

Certified Peer Specialists have always supported their peers in connecting to resources and services to meet their needs. It is widely acknowledged that particular unmet needs can drastically impact one's overall health, wellness, and life satisfaction. Encouraging and supporting the attainment of these Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) has been a significant focus and an imperative initiative in 2021 for Peerstar. Peerstar has been working diligently to update all Individualized Recovery Plans, activity guides, and peer support documentation to emphasize the importance of Social Determinants of Health for recovery and overall wellness. This initiative will continue through 2022 when we can implement the changes into our service delivery and employee training company-wide.

## Suicide Awareness Training & Screening

Suicide continues to be an essential topic in mental health and human services. Addressing the importance of gaining comfort and confidence in speaking about suicide in peer support services, Peerstar created training to help our staff recognize the warning signs of suicide. In addition, we developed screening questions within our Individualized Recovery Plans and our daily contact notes that allow and encourage Certified Peer Specialists and Certified Peer Specialist Supervisors to complete regular suicide screening. These screening questions provide our staff with action steps to be taken during sessions to support their peer in connecting to suicide prevention resources and other appropriate mental health services.

## Updated Abuse Recognition and Reporting Training

Peerstar has always provided staff with training to help them recognize and report signs of child abuse. In 2021, we reviewed and recreated this training to identify and report elder abuse and other adult abuse. This training was redeveloped and completed by all Peerstar staff as part of their annual compliance training requirements.

## Patient Portal

Peerstar began the creation of a Patient Portal, an opportunity that allows our peers to access peer support-related documents and their peer support service notes. This opportunity supports the idea that the peer should drive peer support services and that they should be the instrumental part of the services they receive. The patient portal will be made available to peers in 2022.

## Recovery Advisory Board

The Recovery Advisory Board continues its mission of growing our recovery initiatives for both peers and staff. The board meets monthly to brainstorm recovery initiatives and employee connection opportunities. In 2021 the board published recovery-inspired blogs, peer-support-focused podcast episodes, and employee engagement activities and contests. The Advisory Board is welcoming the onboarding of a new Recovery Outreach Coordinator in 2022 who will be working with the Advisory Board Chairperson to further the mission of the Advisory Board.

### Resources for Staff

In 2021 we completed a revamp of the Peerstar website. To build upon this updated resource, the Recovery department and Recovery Advisory Board will begin creating new resources and worksheets to aid in personal recovery and support our staff when working with peers. These resources will be made available to staff, peers, and the general public through the recovery section of our website.

### Building Training Library

Peerstar continues to develop training based on the needs of our staff and the service of peer support. We ended 2021 with a collaborative brainstorming session aimed at identifying the training needs of our team at all levels. Peerstar will continue this training initiative in 2022 and values the opportunity to update and create trainings to meet the growing needs of our staff and peers.

## Federal Bureau of Prisons

In collaboration with FedWrites, Inc., a professional writing, communicating, and analysis company, Peerstar is excited to be working on developing a peer support training curriculum for use by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. This collaborative effort combines the professional writing experience of FedWrites, Inc. with the peer support knowledge and expertise of Peerstar. This project will continue into 2022, and we are honored to have this opportunity to share our passion for helping others reach their goals.

## Supervisor Workshops

In 2021, we implemented monthly Supervisor Workshops for our Certified Peer Specialist Supervisors. These workshops provided monthly opportunities to learn about and discuss topics unique to the role of a supervisor. These workshops will continue in 2022 and focus on two specific goals for supervisors: developing your professional identity and skill-building. The first half of 2022 will help supervisors build their professional identity by providing opportunities to reflect on their current role while learning to develop leadership values, roles, and styles. The second half of the year will focus on developing skills needed to effectively and successfully fulfill the duties of a peer support supervisor.

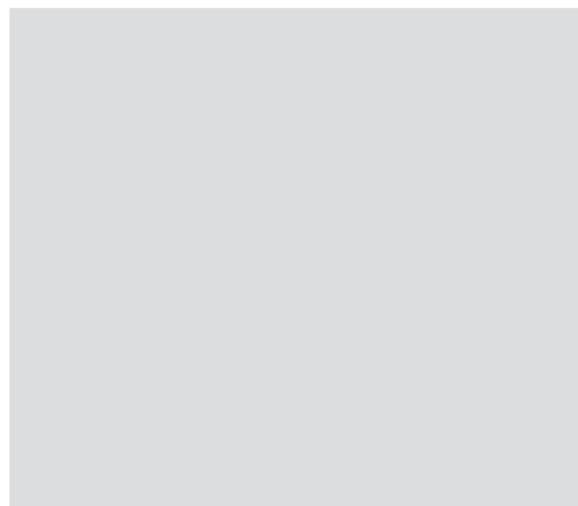
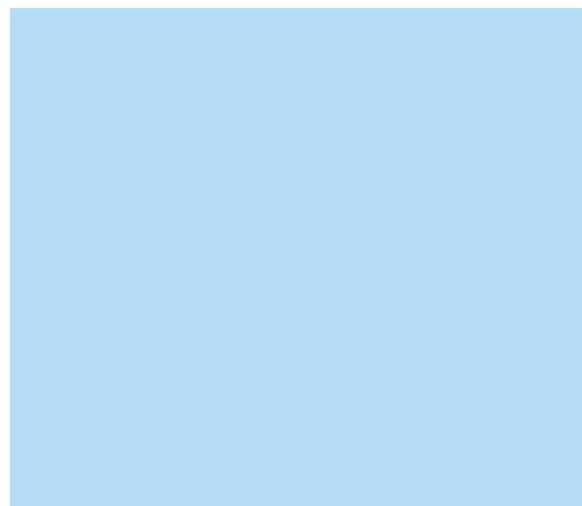
# First Episode Psychosis Program

In 2021, Peerstar had the opportunity to become part of the First Episode Psychosis Program that was initiated in Centre county. Peerstar partnered with Oasis Lifecare and Centre County Government to provide peer support services to individuals who qualify for the program. Peerstar, Oasis, and Centre County Government worked cohesively to provide a comprehensive team approach to services for individuals in the program. Two Certified Peer Specialists from Peerstar received specialized training to participate in the program, and services were provided to 5 individuals. Peerstar is looking forward to continuing the FEP partnership in 2022.

Peerstar has continued the effort in keeping Peers in their communities and out of inpatient crisis-related services. In 2021, Peerstar began a collaborative initiative with UPMC in Blair County to connect patients with Peer Specialists as they were discharged from the hospital. Peerstar successfully joined Peers with Peer Specialists in similar programs in Bedford and Somerset County hospitals.

In Blair County, Peerstar started working closely with social workers at the hospital to set up a program to involve Peer Specialists and their Supervisors in a patient's discharge planning. This includes connecting patients with a Peer Specialist before they discharge from the hospital. This connection allows the patient to begin working on goals immediately and offer support as they return and readapt in their community.

## MHIP Collaborative

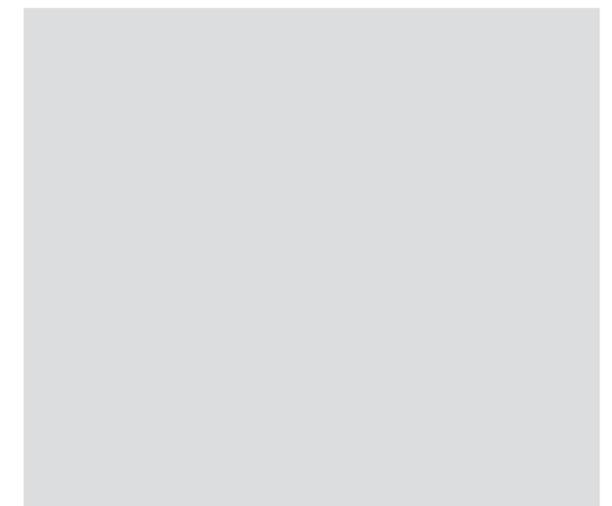
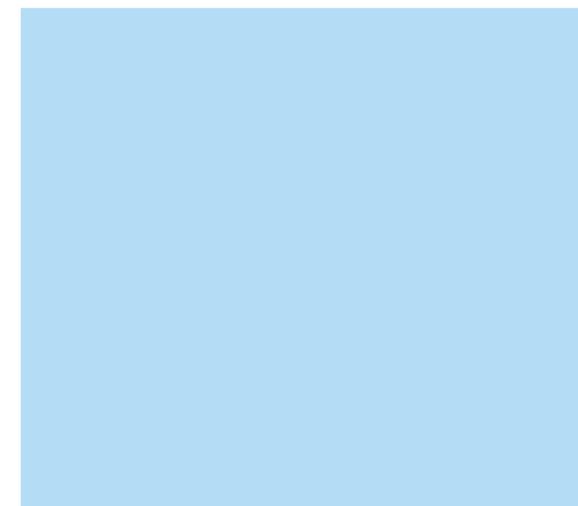


# Capacity Building Institute Panel

In 2021, Peerstar's Dual Diagnosis program accepted an enormous opportunity from Indiana County to sit on a panel regarding peer support. This panel was part of the Capacity Building Institute, a group of professionals looking to expand and improve services for Neurodivergent individuals. This panel included the Director of Dual Diagnosis Katherine Mullins, Certified Peer Specialist Shana Todd, and a peer currently receiving services from Peerstar. Katherine presented "Creative WRAPs" and "What is Peer Support" at the Capacity Building Institute panel. Shana and her peer presented the real-life representation of peer support and what the services have brought to the peer's life.

## Hawaii

In September of 2021, Peerstar had the privilege of presenting the second Forensic/Co-Occurring Peer Support Training for the Hawaii Department of Health. We trained 8 Hawaii Peer Specialists on the skills and knowledge needed to provide peer support to peers involved in the criminal justice system and/or have a co-occurring substance use disorder. We are honored by these training invitations and are dedicated to conducting our third training for Hawaii in 2022.



# Our Leaders

## About Corporate



Larry Nulton, PhD  
Chief Executive Officer

Bowling Green State University



Elissa Nulton, MBA  
Chief Operations Officer

Indiana University of Pennsylvania



Lori Miller, BA  
Chief Compliance Officer

University of Pittsburgh

# Our Team

“We are not a **TEAM** because we work together, we are a **TEAM** because we **RESPECT, TRUST, & CARE** for each other”

- Smart.
- Fun.
- Innovative.
- Passionate.
- Driven.
- Creative.
- Ambitious.
- Caring.

## Directors



Michelle Seaman

Region A  
Clearfield, Jefferson, Armstrong  
Indiana, and Westmorland



Christine Butterbaugh

Region B  
Cambria, Blair, Somerset,  
Bedford, Franklin, and Fulton



Heather Moran

Region C  
Centre, Huntingdon, Mifflin,  
and Juniata



Christy DiStefino

Region D  
Philadelphia and Delaware  
Director of Forensics



Thomas McHugh

Region E  
Lackawana, Susquehanna, Wayne  
Luzerne, and Wyoming



Ronald Nase Jr.

Region F  
Northampton, Lehigh, Carbon,  
Monroe, and Pike



Katherine Mullins

Director of Dual Diagnosis



Jessica Peacock

Director of Recovery



Jessica West

Director of Intake

# Specialty Services

Forensic - Certified Recovery Specialist - Empowered Aging Peer Support - Dual Diagnosis



## Forensics

Peerstar’s renowned forensic peer support services specialize in providing informed assistance to individuals involved in the justice system coping with mental health or co-occurring disorders. As of December 31, 2021, Peerstar employed 62 CPS and 27 CPSS who received training in supporting justice-involved individuals

to achieve recovery goals while reducing stigma and recidivism rates. This two-day training focuses on providing tools and resources for returning citizens and individuals living in the community with justice involvement. The training was developed by Peerstar and highlights the peer specialist’s role in supporting individuals to achieve successful outcomes by analyzing the Sequential Intercept Model and identifying access points to diversionary programs and available interventions. Portions of the training will be available virtually in 2022.

Peerstar’s forensic training is available to all interested employees and was offered once internally and externally in 2021. Over the years, other agencies and justice facilities have sought out Peerstar’s forensic training. It has been provided to various agencies across the United States, including Vermont, Alaska, New Orleans, and Hawaii. Our internal training will be offered more frequently in 2022 for CPS/CPSS interested in and/or working with the justice population.

9

County Jails Community-Based

27

317

County Jails

177

Community-Based

**26 Peers converted from In-Jail Services to Community-Based Forensic Services**

## Certified Recovery Specialist

Peerstar hosted our first internal Certified Recovery Support training in April. We trained 6 of our current Certified Peer Specialists to be co-trained as Certified Recovery Specialists and hired two new additional staff to focus solely on the Certified Recovery Specialist program. PRO-A facilitated the training.

Across the six counties, we are approved to provide Certified Recovery Support; we currently have 10 staff who are trained as Certified Recovery Specialists. In 2021, we provided CRS services to 6 unique peers. We participated in many community events to reduce the stigma associated with substance use disorders. We partnered with the SCA in Bedford county and assisted in Narcan distribution, participated in Somerset’s Drug-Free Community activities, and provided resources to many families at the Overdose Awareness Events.

In 2022, Peerstar Certified Recovery Support Program plans to increase our marketing efforts and focus on growing the program. Our CRS staff is also dedicated to reducing the stigma associated with substance use disorders and will be seen at various community events to help spread the message.

## Empowered Aging Peer Support

In 2021, Peerstar developed a new specialty training to support the needs of older adults. Empowered Aging Peer Support (EAPS) teaches Certified Peer Specialists aspects of the typical aging process and common mental health needs of older adults. EAPS teaches staff about the unique circumstances and life experiences of older adults while providing practical techniques for supporting older adults in reaching goals while continuing to improve their overall wellness and life satisfaction.

## Dual Diagnosis

In 2021, we saw vast improvements and exposure for the Dual Diagnosis Program. We presented at five conferences throughout the year to bring education and awareness about Dual Diagnosis. A one-hour training was developed on a brief overview of how to interact with Dual Diagnosis or Neurodivergent populations for local and state police. We continued to widen our training platform to include eight new pieces of training, including disability etiquette, boundaries, and much more. We trained over 80 staff within the agency over eight different trainings. Lastly, we continued to work diligently towards the growth of the Peer Connect program and hope to see it begin in 2022.

## COD TRAINING

Peerstar continues to provide specialized training in working with people with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. We held four staff trainings in 2021. Currently, we have fifty CPSs who have been trained.

# Continious Quality Improvement

The Peerstar CQI plan was reviewed by the Chief Compliance Officer on 1/18/22. The following is a summary of the findings.

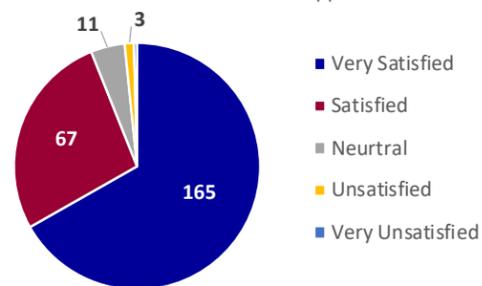
## Satisfaction Outcomes

There were 246 surveys completed in 2021. No significant deficiency trends were found in quality or satisfaction. Peerstar will begin utilizing the Credible electronic health record data to gather more specific and objective outcome data. This date will target overall and individual outcomes using ANSA scores and daily ratings of progress.

**94%**

Peers are satisfied or very satisfied with their services

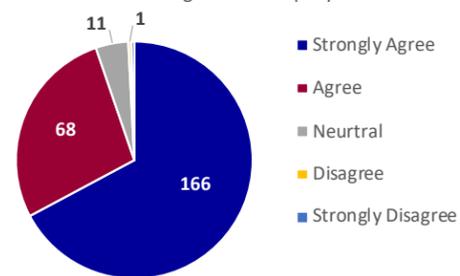
Overall Satisfaction with Peer Support Services



**95%**

Peers believe their CPS provides them the opportunity to recover

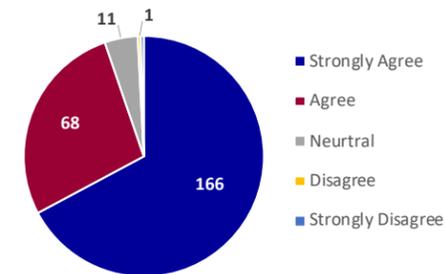
My Peer Specialist provides me with opportunities for recovery and encourages me to help myself?



**95%**

Peers say they learn new skills for their recovery from their CPS

My Peer Specialist teaches me new skills that I use for recovery?



## Peer Support Service Description

As of 2021, the Peerstar PSS service description was reviewed and found to comply with state and managed care regulations. Updates to Peerstar's Service Descriptions will be completed as needed and copies will continue to be sent to the various regional state licensing offices for review and approval.

## Individual Records

In 2021, the Compliance Department staff reviewed on average, 1100 individual peer charts performed with no significant trends noted. Included was an analysis of timeliness and appropriateness of services by reviewing the medical necessity of service provision. Record reviews verified all services began timely and within 60 days of LPHA recommendation, as per the individual recovery plan. Benefits are verified upon referral and through bi-monthly EVS checks and peer outcomes are provided on the home page of the individual's medical chart.

Peerstar's goals for 2022 include enhanced trainings for CPS and CPSS that demonstrated techniques for quality documentation writing. Adjustments will be made to the Electronic Medical Record progress note to reduce documentation errors significantly. For example, specific fields will be made mandatory so that information must be entered in order to advance to the following field within the note. In 2021, Peerstar had no licensing issues.

## How our employee's feel!

**91%**

Say their work gives them a feeling of personal accomplishment

**89%**

Say they are satisfied with their job

**92%**

Say that they are proud to say they work for Peerstar

**84%**

Say they would recommend Peerstar to others for employment

# Outcomes

## Transformational Collaborative Outcomes Monitoring

Peerstar uses the Transformational Collaborative Outcomes Monitoring (TCOM) approach to manage its assessment and outcomes. All peers receive a formal evaluation with the Adults Needs and Strengths Assessment (ANSA) upon entry to the program and every 6 months from their onwards. The assessment is used to gauge needs and strengths and develop a strengths-based, individualized recovery plan.

### 2021 Highlight

Key Highlight

# ~85% Reduction

In odds of hospitalization when a peer participates in the program

See Graph Below

Male **177** Female **261**

Demographics are predominantly female

# ~60% Decrease

In average number of hospitalizations

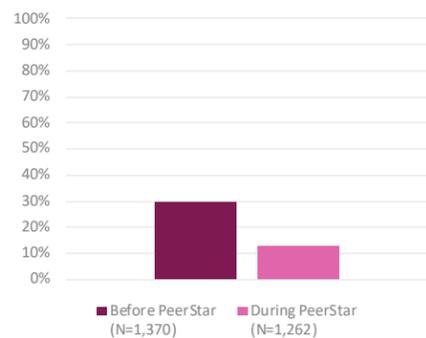
See Graph Below

# Ages 18 - 84

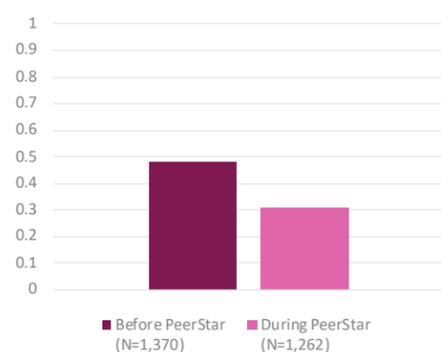
Peerstar services a wide range of age groups

PeerStar consumers are high risk, suffering from significant mental health symptoms, psychological trauma symptoms, functional deficits, and often have medical comorbidities

% of peers that had any hospitalization within last 6 months



Avg. number of hospital admissions in the last 6 months

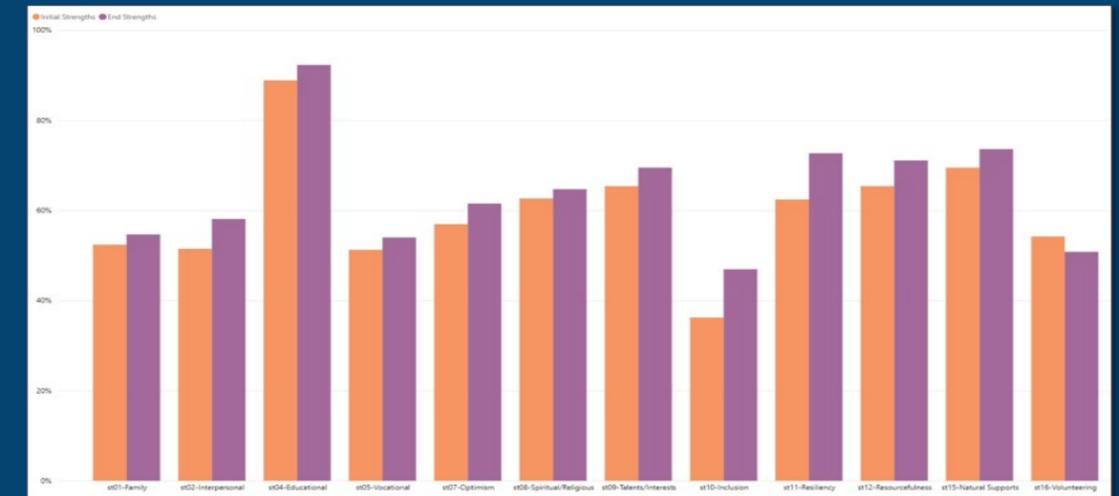


# Our Client Response

## Improving Needs & Strengths

Peers experience slow, steady clinical improvement, as seen through a reduction in needs, and a gaining of measurable strengths

% Strengths Improvement through Care



Top 6 Problem Presentation and Risk Behaviors

Typical Needs of a PeerStar Consumer show slow improvement on a broad variety of needs.



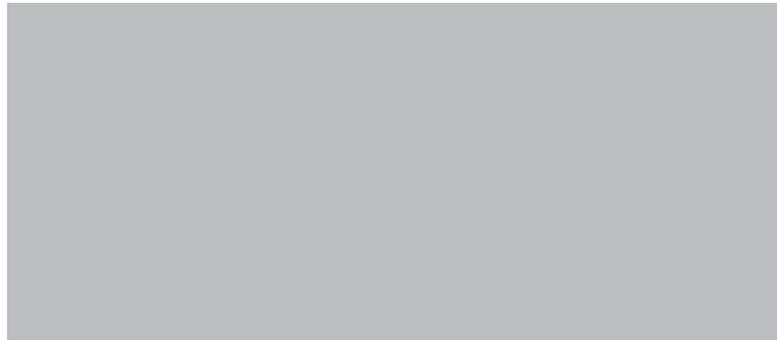
# Looking Ahead: 2022

## Trauma Awareness Initiative

Peerstar continues to recognize and evaluate trends of best practices in peer support and recovery practices. In 2022, Peerstar will begin working on a Trauma Awareness Initiative to acknowledge the prevalence and impact of trauma on the peers we support. We will be developing a trauma-screening process that is appropriate for the peer support level of care while also developing additional staff training to improve awareness of the impacts trauma has on wellness and recovery. In addition, we will be developing other resources for staff to utilize when connecting peers to mental health professionals specializing in the treatment of trauma.

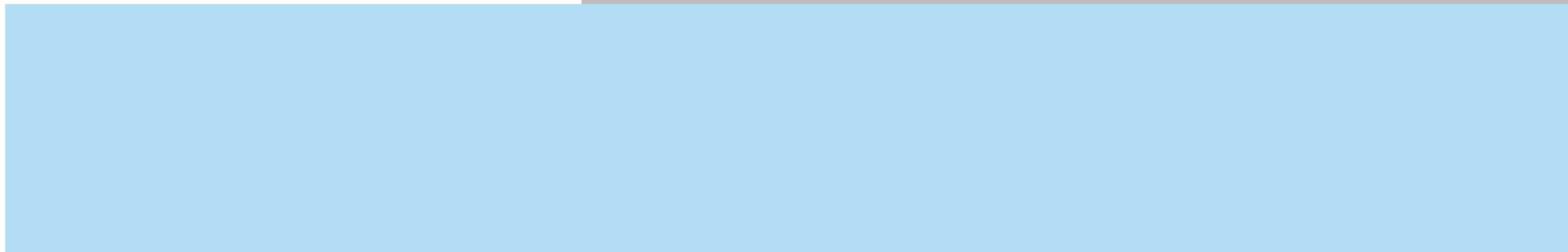
## Enhancing Retention

In an effort to enhance retention, Peerstar will be adding the position of New Employee Mentor. The Mentor will work directly with all new Peer Specialists for their first 6-12 months. The Mentor will provide additional support to the staff regarding scheduling, paperwork, and engaging peers. The Mentor will work as a liaison between the peer specialist, their supervisor, director, intake, and human resources, serving as a one-stop-shop for questions and support.



## Revised Trainings

In 2022 we will be implementing new and revised Peer Specialist and Peer Specialist Supervisor Orientations. These trainings will consist of online prerequisite training, live training, and field shadowing. This enhanced process will ensure a consistent introduction to Peerstar and overall preparedness.



# Message from the Chief Operations Officer

Elissa Nulton, MBA

As I look ahead to 2022, I see a year of opportunity and hope. We have come through 2 difficult years feeling stronger and filled with encouragement. We continue to look for ways to enhance the quality of our services through ongoing training, support, and initiatives. We will strive to maintain our workforce through competitive wages, opportunities for growth, and other benefits that can be offered. We will continue to enhance our recovery department and support for new hires to ensure that everyone feels supported and has a voice at the table. When someone thinks of peer support in Pennsylvania, we want them to think of Peerstar as a place to work, grow, and be successful.

**Recovery lives in all of us!**

Elissa Nulton, MBA  
Chief Operations Officer

# PODCAST & VIDEO SERIES

2022 goals include a new Podcast entitled "From Hurt to Healing", a "Wellness Wednesday" weekly video series, a Caffeinate and Advocate video series, and continued employee connection opportunities through online activities and monthly networking meetings.



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## CONTACT US

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