Veteran Peer-to-Peer Evaluation

Peer-to-peer interventions have been found to be a promising strategy for service members who are experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Support services provided by peers can be particularly effective for those who have served in combat, binding individuals together and fostering the initial trust and credibility necessary for developing relationships in which individuals are willing to open up and discuss their problems. Peer services for veterans also represent a potentially rich source of outreach strategies for connecting with more difficult to reach veterans as well as an opportunity to use a preventive focus with regard to potential suicides.

New York State, recognizing the need to effectively address the challenges experienced by veterans suffering from PTSD, is supporting a pilot project utilizing peer-to-peer interventions. The NYS PFC Joseph Dwyer Veteran Peer-to-Peer Support Pilot is being implemented in four counties: Jefferson, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Suffolk.

The School of Social Welfare's Center for Innovation in Mental Health Research will be conducting a formative and summative evaluation of the program. The evaluation will consist of a mixed method formative study that will provide useful feedback to program-level and state-level administrators to inform program practices. Evaluation findings will also be used to inform potential replication efforts in other counties.

The evaluation will examine the implementation of the veteran peer support program with a focus on identifying the ingredients to successful implementation as well as the barriers to meeting program objectives. The analysis will explore how the Veteran Peer-to-Peer Support initiative was planned, how it operates, who is served, what services they receive, and how it impacts that target population. The evaluation team will create a logic model for each county site, with collaboration from county program staff and administrators. The development of logic models will allow for building strong relationships with each county program, and will form the basis for measures selection and development. It will also inform iterative modifications in the evaluation design.