



PEERSTAR*LLC

A COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE SERVICE
WORKING TOWARD RECOVERY AND INTEGRATION

Annual Report 2020

Support that Understands

Peerstar, LLC
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Welcome

Peerstar, LLC Annual Report 2020

Support that Understands

I want to **INSPIRE** people. I want someone to look at me and say “**Because of you, I didn’t give up.**”

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Message from the President

Larry J. Nulton, Ph.D.

We have had an “interesting” journey this past year. The global COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented action by our government and how we conduct healthcare, especially mental healthcare, in Pennsylvania and worldwide. The pandemic has impacted our daily lives and routines across the globe. And throughout this pandemic, Peerstar has shown its strength!

We worked to fulfill our social mission by ensuring the health and safety of our employees, Peer Specialists, and Peers.

Our Peers’ and Peer Specialists’ wellbeing is our primary purpose as an organization. This is the driving force behind everything we are doing and have done in response to the pandemic. We know that people’s mental health and wellbeing is being strained due to the many necessary inconveniences, high anxiety, and an increased risk of isolation given social distancing practices. I want you to know that we are and will continue to be here to help at Peerstar.

We are very proud of how Peerstar responded to the pandemic and how everyone became a team/family within the organization. Many selfless actions took place, and we put others’ needs before our own. Even though there were new challenges like doing Peer Support via Telephone, Video, or through a window, we rose to the challenge and solved the perceived problem. I guess you could say we persevered and practiced what we preach.

In a year of rapid change, we made significant progress toward the creation of a new future.

Where do we go from here? As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, we need to explore a new “normal.” Peerstar is well equipped to accept this new challenge, given that we did not sit on our hands during the pandemic as we are experts in “Recovery.” During this time, we prepared for the future by dealing with the current situation and attempting to forecast the future. We enhanced our infrastructure, began delivering services by telephone, video, and digitally, alongside face-to-face service. We found supplies for our staff to include PPE; we found funding to assist our Peer Specialists, such as Hazard Pay. With the innovations and passion for protection, we will witness Peerstar continue to work this diligently as we enter the new phase of our journey. So, where do we go from here? Forward!

In addition to our proactive measures, we are also prioritizing enhancing the quality of our services and outcomes.

Peerstar continues to be a leader in Recovery and Peer Support services throughout PA. To continue this approach, Peerstar will begin introducing the measurement and monitoring of the Social Determinants of Health (SDoH). The goal is to look at the individual’s social needs and the broader social determinants of health in the communities. This includes societal and environmental conditions such as food, housing, transportation, education, violence, social support, health behaviors, and employment. These factors are known to impact a person’s mental and physical health. Peerstar finds this important to continue to improve the quality of care for our Peers and meet our duty to the state, managed care, and county that we serve.

Additionally, Peerstar is working with the payers to explore Value-Based Payment Programs and Alternative Payment Arrangements to create stability for employment and the agency. All of this ties into Peerstar’s continuity plans and what keeps us in the lead.

Throughout this time, we commit to communicating regularly with our Peers and with the community at large, offering information that you can use to support your Peers and ways to leverage our support.

We value your partnership and understand our work’s value for you and what you do for us. We take every action to ensure that we continue this work effectively, efficiently and empathetically, when you need us the most.

Warm regards,

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

Our Vision

Each individual or family member affected by mental illness has his or her own unique history that can affect his or her 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 recovery.

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

2020 Highlights

ANSA Updates

Peerstar recognized a need for accommodations to our current Adult Needs and Strengths Assessment (ANSA) scoring measures as well as the ANSA training that Peerstar supervisors receive. In 2020 we were able to work with Dr. Dan Warner and the Praed Foundation to develop the Peerstar ANSA 2.0, which incorporated new ANSA measures specifically relevant to the service of peer support.

The Peerstar ANSA 2.0 includes a change in language more fitting to the service of peer support as well as the training of peer support supervisors. It incorporates new measures that collect needs relevant to peer support recipients written in appropriate service-level language. In addition, the Peerstar ANSA 2.0 certification process through the Praed Foundation includes vignettes specifically created to be relevant to Certified Peer Support Services and Certified Recovery Support Services.

Community Connections

In 2020, Peerstar had the opportunity to collaborate with the Center for Community Resources on two projects. The first was the Persevere PA Helpline. The Center for Community Resources partnered with the Pennsylvania and Federal Emergency Management Agencies to make the Helpline available to individuals in need of support and referrals. Peerstar provided two peer specialists who were trained by Center for Community Resources to assist callers by providing a supportive listening ear and community referrals as needed. Peerstar staff supported with the PA Helpline from April 2020-July 2020.

In December of 2020, Peerstar began collaboration with the Center for Community Resources on the Suicide Attempt Survivor Support Group. A certified peer specialist from Peerstar participates in the weekly group and is available to provide additional support to participants as needed. The group follows the Journey to Health and Hope Workbook and runs in 6 week cohorts. Peerstar will continue collaboration and support of this group in 2021.

Recovery Advisory Board

At the beginning of 2020, the Peerstar Recovery Advisory Board welcomed the onboarding of a CPS/CPSS to act as the Recovery Advisory Board Chairperson. The Recovery Advisory Board developed four subcommittees to work on tasks aimed at offering additional recovery knowledge and support to all Peerstar staff. The three active subcommittees and their 2020 accomplishments include:

Blog

The Recovery Blog subcommittee has created a blog on the Peerstar website focusing on recovery-oriented stories and submissions from Peerstar CPS, CPSS, and administrative staff. Our blog submissions focus on overcoming obstacles or viewing the world from a recovery-mindframe. Posts are published on our website and then shared throughout social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Podcast

The Recovery Podcast subcommittee was created with the goal of developing a recovery-themed podcast that would incorporate current Peerstar staff discussing various recovery-related topics. As of the end of 2020, the Recovery Podcast subcommittee had published four recovery-themed podcasts that are shared among staff as well as on social media and the Peerstar website. The subcommittee continues to record one podcast per month.

Employee Connection

During 2020 the employee connection subcommittee engaged in numerous activities to keep employees connected to each other. The committee developed a staff-only page on Facebook that allows co-workers to share resources, find support, etc. Over 100 employees have joined and are engaged in utilizing this resource. In addition, the connection committee oversaw multiple connection-campaigns throughout the fall to encourage connection. Campaigns included a 30-day thankfulness challenge and a holiday joy challenge. Lastly, the group offered video-conference support opportunities during the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic in an attempt to offer continued emotional support to staff.

Recovery Story

In March of 2020, Peerstar worked with CPS/CPSS Ivelisse to record her powerful and inspirational story of recovery. Ivelisse's story continues to be shared through social media and our website in hopes of encouraging others and inspiring hope that recovery is possible.

Creating Videos

Peerstar created multiple video resources to meet the needs of staff and other organizational partners in a time where face-to-face meetings and networking opportunities could not be held. For example, to help encourage proper safety measures for COVID-19, Peerstar developed explainer videos for staff. In an attempt to meet the marketing and networking needs of peer support services, staff utilized ZOOM capabilities to record and distribute peer support introductory videos. Peerstar continues to focus on the use of audio and visual resources and is excited about what the future holds for building additional resources for our staff and community.

Employee Retention

Over the last year, Peerstar, LLC developed an Employee Retention Subcommittee. The goal of this initiative is to aid newly hired CPS and CPSS in beginning their positions at Peerstar. The subcommittee implemented trainings to support new employees, such as live trainings, workshops with veteran CPS, and flexiquizzes. These trainings will begin after New Employee Orientation and continue through their first year with Peerstar. Starting a new position can be challenging. The New Employee Retention Subcommittee aims to give new CPS the tools they need to be successful as their position while providing quality care to others. For 2021, the subcommittee will pursue goals to implement similar support trainings to assist in CPSS new hire training and retention.

Pandemic Response

As the COVID 19 Pandemic came upon us, it brought a vast set of concerns for our staff and peers. From the beginning of the pandemic, there was immediate out-reach to the staff to help assist with concerns ranging from keeping healthy to financial / job security concerns, and how to maintain the support to their peers. As each week passed, the staff were provided almost daily emails relating to resources that focused on how they can continue with their jobs and the ever-changing environment.

Personal Protective Equipment

Peerstar was able to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to approximately 265 staff members throughout 2020. PPE distributed included hand sanitizer, hand-sanitizing wipes, and face masks. Peerstar was also able to continue to provide appropriate cleaning and disinfecting supplies throughout our satellite office locations

Telehealth was made available for CPS's to continue to support their peers via video calls. This also allowed for supervisions to be completed through video sessions. To support staff through this abrupt change, video, training, and document resources were created and distributed. Peerstar utilized CPS and CPSS staff to create an additional training video to share their strategies for completing telehealth visits successfully and this training was shared internally and externally

Telehealth



On-Going Pandemic Response

Resources

Resources are offered on an ongoing basis relating to mental health (specific WRAP relating to COVID, mental health tool kit, managing stress, and self-care); financial assistance (places that offer free food during the pandemic, rental and mortgage assistance, how to reach the social services offices that are closed, and paper work sheets that could be used with the peers to assist with engaging them while using the telehealth services.

Staff Support

A weekly staff virtual hang-out was offered as well as a Peerstar Facebook page for staff to network with each other as the pandemic continued

Financial

Pursuit and receiving of hazard pay for staff.

Continued COVID-19 Response

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, Peerstar is committed to providing safe and supportive services to our peers. In addition, Peerstar continues to assess and respond to the needs of our staff to support their physical and emotional wellness. Peerstar continues to offer transparent COVID-19 information as it is received and will continue to monitor for additional PPE needs throughout 2021. Peerstar is proud to have offered all staff the opportunity to be vaccinated, in which many staff have utilized. We are dedicated to the continued needs of response and support brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and are passionate about providing safe and effective peer support services.



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

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nocterfenine in te inatu.

Our Team

“When you hand good people possibility,
they do great things.” -Biz Stone

- 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



Samantha Longenecker

Human Resources



Jessica West

Director of Intake

Specialty Services

Forensic - Certified Recovery Specialist- Peer Connect

What is Forensic Peer Support?

Forensic Peer Support is support for individuals with a mental health diagnosis and involvement in the criminal justice system

Forensics

Peerstar's forensic training is offered internally to all interested employees. Over the years, other agencies and criminal justice facilities have sought out Peerstar's training. We've provided it to various agencies across the United States including Vermont, Alaska, and New Orleans.

In 2020, Peerstar facilitated the training for an agency in Hawaii. The first week of training was facilitated by Regional Director Christy DiStefano and Jay Murray. Jay is a CPS with extensive lived experience and knowledge in the criminal justice system and was among the first graduating Certified Peer Specialist class through the Department of Corrections. Week one of the training focused on statistical information on incarceration rates and practical applications/resources for CPS to utilize while assisting individuals. The second week of training was facilitated by Regional Director Christine Butterbaugh and Carla Povich, a CPS/CPSS with lived experience in mental health and substance use disorders. Week two focused on common drugs of abuse, mental health disorders, the disease concept, relapse prevention, tips for peers with co-occurring disorders and developing a self-care plan. The training also covered trauma-informed topics and modeled appropriate techniques for storytelling. Participants applied teachings from the training to share their story at graduation.

Services Provided In:

8

County Jails Community-Based

Peers Served:

200

County Jails

138

Community-Based

23 Peers converted from In-Jail Services to Community-Based Forensic

Certified Recovery Specialist

In 2020, Peerstar was approved to provide Certified Recovery Support in six of our counties to include Bedford, Somerset, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Wyoming and Susquehanna counties. Certified Recovery Specialists (CRS) are individuals with a history of having a substance use disorder who use their own lived experiences to help provide hope and inspiration to those who are struggling. They attend a 54 hour training and become certified to provide the service. Peerstar currently has two CRS staff and four CRS peers. In 2021 we hope to expand the program.

What is Certified Recovery Support?

Certified Recovery Support is recovery services for individuals with a substance use disorder

What is Peer Connect?

Peer Connect is a specialized program for individuals with a mental health diagnosis and an intellectual disability

Peer Connect

Peerstar started working on a new program initiative in 2020, Peer Connect. Peer Connect is a program started for the Dual Diagnosis program in the Philadelphia and Delaware County areas. This new program is designed for individuals with Dual Diagnosis who are seeking more specialized services such as psychiatry, therapy, community providers, etc. Peer Connect assists the peers with setting up these specialized services. There are specific assessments that will assist in triaging the peers to the correct services upon start with Peerstar.

This program will connect peers with Certified Peer Specialists who will assist with connecting the peer to specialized services in the community. The Certified Peer Specialists are going to be educated in community mental health trainings. These trainings are modeled after several different community health trainings that are important to ensure collaborative and intensive services. The Certified Peer Specialists will be assisting the peers to meet their new providers for the first couple months. This will assist the peer with the transitioning of new services and assist peers in being more independent with the new providers.

Continious Quality Improvement

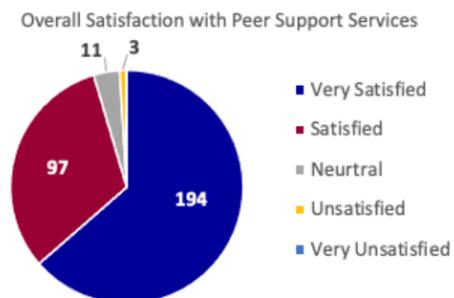
The Peerstar CQI plan was reviewed by the Chief Compliance Officer on 1/13/21. The following is a summary of the findings.

Satisfaction Outcomes

There were 305 surveys completed in 2020. No significant deficiency trends were found in quality or satisfaction. Peerstar will begin utilizing data in the Credible electronic health record to gather more specific and objective outcome data related to overall outcomes and individual outcomes utilizing ANSA scores and daily rating of progress.

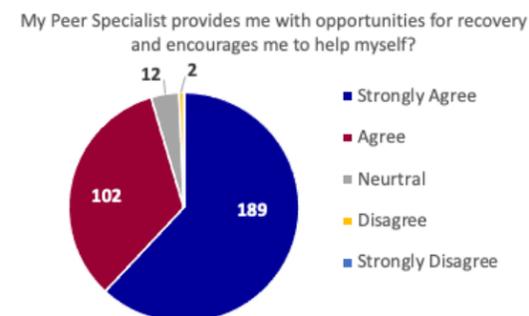
95%

Peers are satisfied or very satisfied with their services



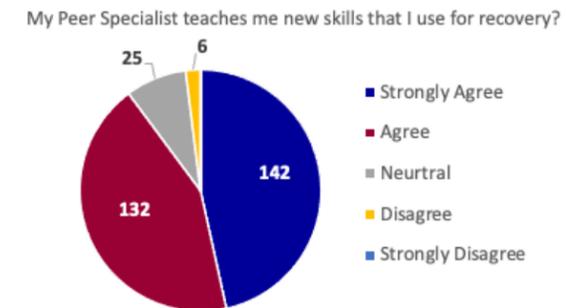
95%

Peers believe their CPS provides them the opportunity to recover



90%

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



Peer Support Service Description

In 2020, the Peerstar PSS service description was reviewed and found to be in compliance with state and managed care regulations. Specialists (CPS). Updates to the Services Descriptions will be completed in early 2020. Also, copies will be sent to the various regional State Licensing offices for review and approval.

Peer Involvement

During February 2021, the Chief Compliance Officer presented the findings of the annual review to the Certified Peer Specialists and Supervisors. COVID was a topic that dominated the conversation. Both CPS and CPS Supervisors noted that COVID restrictions played a significant role in staying in touch with each other. Supervision sessions were moved to video calls, which was a welcomed way to meet, but most preferred face to face supervision session, and they look forward to when they can resume meeting again. Some CPSs said that peers were reluctant to use video during COVID, but most welcomed the method, because it was better than no support at all. CPSs reported some peers wish to continue telehealth or telephone because they found it more convenient to schedule sessions. Some CPSs like to use telephone/telehealth too, because it made it easier to juggle work and family obligations during COVID.

Individual Records

In 2020, individual chart audits were performed with no significant trends noted and Peerstar had no licensing issues.

*"Peer support is **best thing** that has happened to me."*

*"The Peerstar program is **my favorite** mental health program "*

*My CPS is the **best ever**. He's **kind, patient, & very helpful**.*

*"Since my first session to now, **my CPS** has helped **more than I** thought **possible!**"*

Outcomes

Transformational Collaborative Outcomes Monitoring

Peerstar uses the Transformational Collaborative Outcomes Monitoring (TCOM) approach for its assessment and outcomes management. All consumers 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 then to develop a strengths-based, individualized recovery plan.

2020 Highlight

Key Highlight

~50% Reduction

In odds of hospitalization when a peer participates in the program

See Graph Below

Male **279** Female **447**

Demographics are predominantly female

~66% Decrease

In average number of hospitalizations

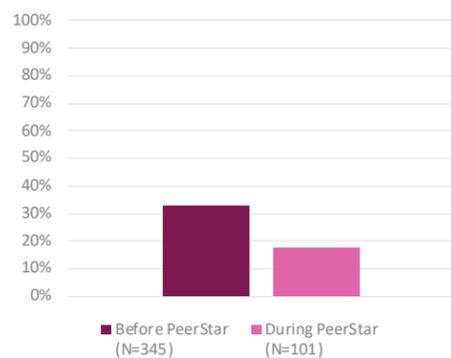
See Graph Below

Ages 18 - 85

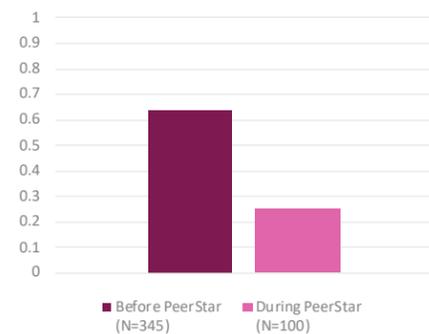
Peerstar services a wide range of age groups

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

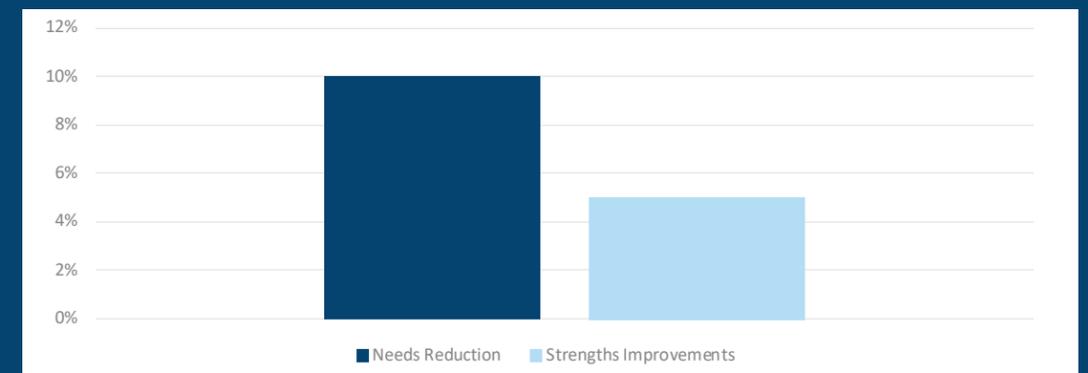


Our Client Response

Improving Needs & Strengths

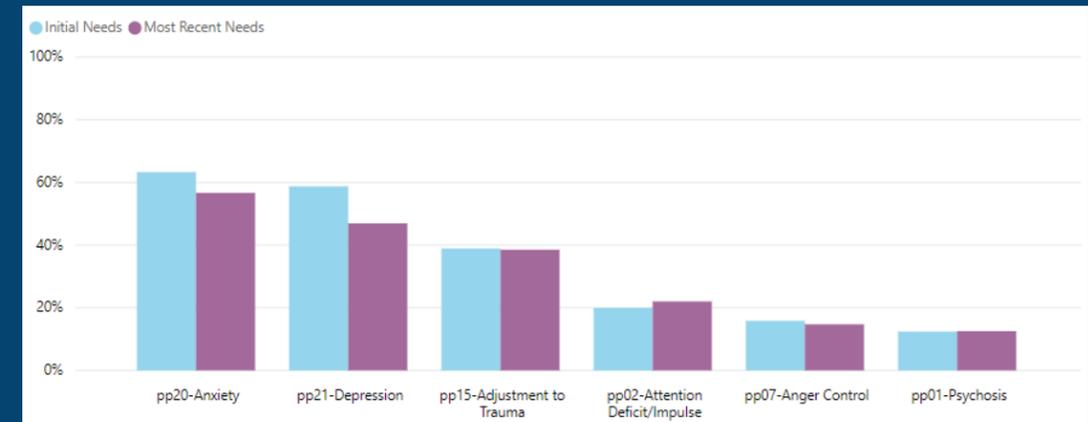
Peers experience slow, steady clinical improvement, as seen through a reduction in needs, and a gaining of measurable strengths

% of Needs and 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: 2021

Website Revamp

Peerstar is in the process of redeveloping our online presence through the redesign of the Peerstar website. The redesign includes a focus on presenting the recovery-principles that Peerstar genuinely encompasses. The focus of the website will be to not only provide information about Peerstar, but to offer recovery resources and support to our communities. Recent additions that will be elaborated on moving forward include the sharing of our recovery-focused podcast and blogs, initiatives that involve certified peer specialists, certified peer specialist supervisors, and administrative personnel.

Social Determinants of Health

Peerstar is currently in the process of developing a Social Determinants of Health initiative for the year 2021. Although peer support naturally encourages and supports the advancement of peer's social determinants of health, Peerstar's goal in 2021 is to incorporate a more intentional approach to Social Determinants of Health in numerous levels of our program, including staff training, service delivery, and data collection and analysis.

Supervisor Workgroups

To provide additional and ongoing support to our CPS Supervisors, Peerstar began a monthly work group initiative in January 2021 aimed at offering supervisors the opportunity to network with their peers through facilitated workgroups. Supervisors were surveyed to determine what their additional support needs are and a curriculum of topics was developed by the Director of Recovery and trained workgroup facilitators to meet these needs. Facilitators lead workgroups based on a specific topic each month and allow supervisors the opportunity to ask questions, brainstorm barriers, and share tips and support to each other. Topics include: engaging peers and CPSs, understanding your role as a supervisor, skills needed to be an effective supervisor, Individual Recovery Plans, and documentation support.

Recovery Stories

Peerstar is hopeful to continue highlighting their amazing staff by giving them an opportunity to tell their story in a short form docustyle videos.

Message from the Chief Operations Officer

Elissa Nulton, MBA

As I reflect on 2020, it may seem obvious that the COVID-19 pandemic would overshadow anything else that occurred this year. And although the pandemic has definitely been at the forefront of our personal and professional lives, what impresses me most is how all of us at Peerstar have faced these challenges and changes and at the same time continued our commitment to quality improvement, expansion and selfless focus on our peers. I am more impressed by what we all have accomplished at Peerstar than I have ever been, and I continue to be proud to be a part of something spectacular.

This retrospective report of 2020 speaks volumes. We have launched a blog, podcast, and staff Facebook page for networking and support, all laborious tasks (during a pandemic). We hosted 3 in-house CPS trainings when training and hiring have come to a virtual stop elsewhere (during a pandemic). We've developed new programs and initiatives, including DD Connect, a new hire support committee, and a revised ANSA training, to name a few (during a pandemic). We grew our census by 9% in 2020, reaching even more peers than in any other year.

So much in the world has had to be postponed or has come to a halt in this past year. But not us, Peerstar and recovery never sleep! As we have many times before, we have risen to the occasion, and we set the bar. Great things happened in 2020, and they will continue into 2021.

Elissa Nulton, MBA
Chief Operations Officer



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