



Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance

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Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance Endorses Veterans Partners' Effort to Enhance Re-Integration (PEER) Act Sponsored by Senator Blumenthal

CHICAGO, IL -- The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) announced today endorsement of legislation that promotes the use and integration of peer support services into the primary care setting at Department of Veterans' Affairs facilities and centers. Since 2013, the Veterans Administration has effectively used peer support services to enhance behavioral health care delivered to veterans in behavioral health settings. Yet, a majority of veterans in need of behavioral health care enter the VA system through a primary care center.

The PEER Act, sponsored by Senator Richard Blumenthal, will require the Veterans Administration (VA) to establish a pilot program. The program will assess the feasibility and advisability of establishing peer support services in Patient Aligned Care Teams at VA medical centers and incorporating these services into the primary care setting.

"The PEER Act addresses a critically important gap within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs," commented Allen Doederlein, DBSA president. "As the leading peer-led organization supporting individuals with mood disorders and their families, DBSA understands the importance of peer support for individuals with a behavioral health condition. We feel strongly that expanded use of peer support services within VA facilities and centers will increase veteran

engagement in their care, and lead to better outcomes. We applaud Senator Blumenthal for leading this new effort and stand ready to support the VA as it implements this pilot."

The [PEER Act](#) introduced by Senator Blumenthal on October 28, 2015 and co-sponsored by Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisc) and Edward J. Markey (D-Mass) would be implemented in 25 settings over a two year period. Special consideration would be given to needs of female veterans and ensure that female peer support specialists are providing the services. The legislation includes provisions for periodic reporting to Congress on the benefits and effectiveness of the program to veterans and family members.

About DBSA

The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) strives to improve the lives of people living with mood disorders. The organization fosters an environment of understanding of the impact and management of these life-threatening illnesses by providing up-to-date, scientifically based tools and information; supports research; and works to ensure that people living with mood disorders are treated equitably. Assisted by a scientific advisory board comprising leading researchers and clinicians in the field of mood disorders, DBSA has more than 700 peer-run support groups across the country. Hundreds of thousands of people are assisted each year with in-person and online peer support; readily understandable and current information about depression and bipolar disorder; and empowering tools focused on an integrated approach to wellness.

For more information go to www.DBSAAlliance.org

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