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## **Veterans Serving Veterans**

### **Discover the power of your story as a peer specialist at VA**

When Veterans need support and encouragement in dark times from a person who can relate to their challenges, our peer specialists are available to help. A peer specialist has traveled the road to recovery and now works at VA supporting other Veterans in finding their own personalized paths.

### **Veterans serving Veterans**

The hardest battle for many Veterans is the one fought at home. Years of long nights, early mornings, and hanging up the uniform for the last time can all take a serious mental toll on service members.

Enter peer specialists, a VA profession that has grown significantly in the last 2 decades, and for good reason.

Combining the power of lived recovery experiences and unique military perspectives, peer specialists encourage Veterans to prioritize self-care, advocate for their goals, locate available resources, and find a sense of belonging in their communities.

Thankfully, peer specialists don't need to worry about expensive degrees or extensive professional experience to find their way to VA.

Veteran status already checks a box for peer specialist qualifications. If you also have at least one year of recovery from a mental health condition, you're just a VA-approved certification away from an incredible career caring for heroes like you.

Using our General Scale (GS) [classification system](#), these positions start at GS-6, roughly the equivalent of a U.S. Army sergeant first class, for candidates who have already obtained a peer specialist certification.

Over time, you can advance up to GS-9, which is the full performance level all peer specialists are expected to reach. If you are highly experienced, you can potentially be hired as a GS-10 lead peer specialist or a GS-11 supervisory peer specialist to serve as a role model for your team and the Veterans you serve.

We also offer GS-5 peer support apprentice positions to eligible Veterans who are missing their peer specialist certification and specialized experience. We'll support you in reaching these requirements during your first year of employment so that you can qualify for a position.

## **Mental health matters**

A successful or ongoing recovery from a mental health condition is a strange sight for a job requirement, but that lived experience is vital as a peer specialist.

"Peer specialists are trained to share their own life recovery story, where appropriate, to add mutuality and commonality to the Veteran's recovery process," says Eric Foster, a certified peer specialist at the VA Veterans Crisis Line's Peer Support Outreach Center.

When you join our team of over 1,350 proud peer specialists, you can make a difference across a variety of programs. You'll find your fit working in intensive community mental health recovery services, mental health and substance use treatment programs, vocational rehabilitation services, homeless programs, primary care settings, and many more.

Wherever you go, you'll build meaningful bonds with Veterans as part of their mental health recovery through a mix of individual and group-based meetings. Your personal experience with mental health recovery will also be complemented with training in effective communication skills, group facilitation, ethics, and supporting crisis intervention in a non-clinical role.

Once you get comfortable with your role, you can take advantage of VA's many [training](#) and [education](#) opportunities to further support your growth.

## **No better calling**

We offer extensive [benefits](#) that give you flexibility in your work/life balance. You can enjoy 13-26 paid vacation days, robust health care options, generous

retirement, and a salary that supports your lifestyle.

Whether you are attracted to city life or the advantages of serving [rural](#) Veterans, the greatest advantage you'll find with a VA career is the fulfilling work you can accomplish.

"What is more honorable than being able to use your life experiences to help other Veterans navigate their challenges, get their lives back, and make positive changes," says Tony Hedges, a lead peer specialist at VA. "It's the most rewarding job I've ever had."

## **Veteran Crisis Line**

If you are a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one, you can **dial 988** and press 1 for the Veteran Crisis Line or [chat](#) with responders online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## **Work at VA**

Get started with a workplace that values your past and supports your future.

- EXPLORE [mental health](#) work at VA.
- FIND open peer specialist [positions](#).
- LEARN about VA [careers](#) for Veterans.
- VIEW our [commitment](#) to Veteran care.

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VA Careers

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