



The University of Texas at Austin  
Texas Institute for Excellence  
in Mental Health  
*School of Social Work*

# Survey of Peer Specialist Workforce in Texas

Summary Data Report FY 2015, August 2015



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# Background

- In 2010, to support and expand Texas's peer workforce, the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) authorized Via Hope to develop and implement a standardized peer specialist training and certification (PSTC) program. Peer specialists provide a unique perspective because of their lived experience with mental illness. The PSTC program enhances this unique perspective, providing the requisite skills necessary for the peer specialists to work in the mental healthcare system. Peer specialists receiving this training meet the professional standards of accountability required of all professionals in the mental healthcare system
- In subsequent years, Via Hope has continued to provide certification and training to peer specialists. As of August 2014, 599 individuals have been trained and certified through the Via Hope Peer Specialist Training and Certification program.
- Since FY 2010, DSHS has contracted with researchers at the Center for Social Work Research at the University of Texas (UT-CSWR) to initially examine factors related to the successful development and implementation of the PSTC Program. In FY 2011 and in subsequent years, research efforts focused on assessing individual peer specialist training participant outcomes related to the program.

# Method

- To assess the individual peer specialist participant outcomes related to the Peer Specialist Training and Certification program, online surveys are administered to trainees completing the Via Hope PSTC Training .
- Peer Specialist participant outcomes are assessed in the following domains:
  - Participant Characteristics (demographics, professional certifications and advocacy/ organizational involvement)
  - Training Associated with Peer Specialist Certification
  - Vocational Status

# Participants

	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Number receiving survey</b>	98	309	369	537
<b>Training cohort</b>	March 2010 – November 2010	March 2010 – July 2012	March 2010 – August 2013	March 2010 – August 2014
<b>Number participating</b>	32	111	115	126
<b>Response rate</b>	32.7%	35.9%	31.2%	23.5%
<b>Final number included in analysis</b>	31	96	95	97*

\* Number of respondents working or volunteering as a peer specialist.

# Demographics

## Gender

- 64% Female

## Race

- 72% White
- 21% Black/ African American
- 6% Selected “Other Race”
- 1% American Indian/  
Alaskan Native

## Age

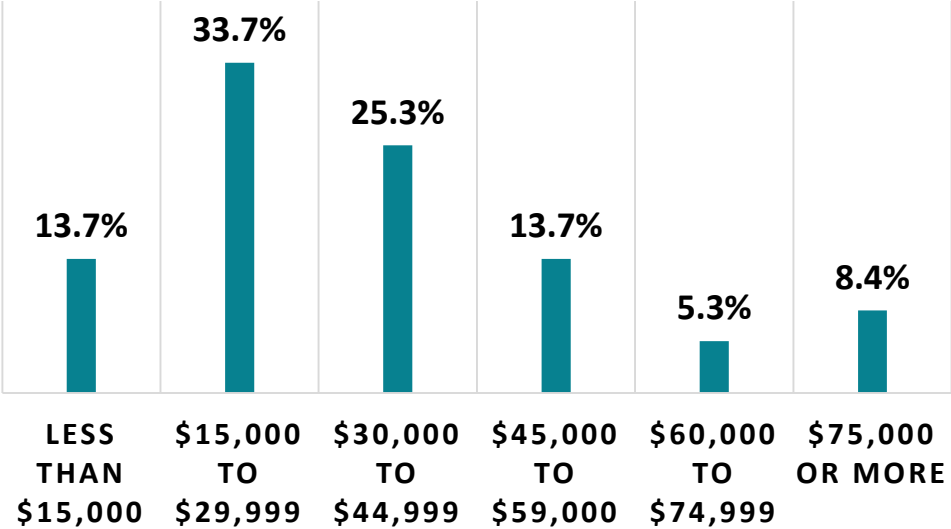
- 79% aged 40 or older
- 54% aged 40 to 55

## Ethnicity

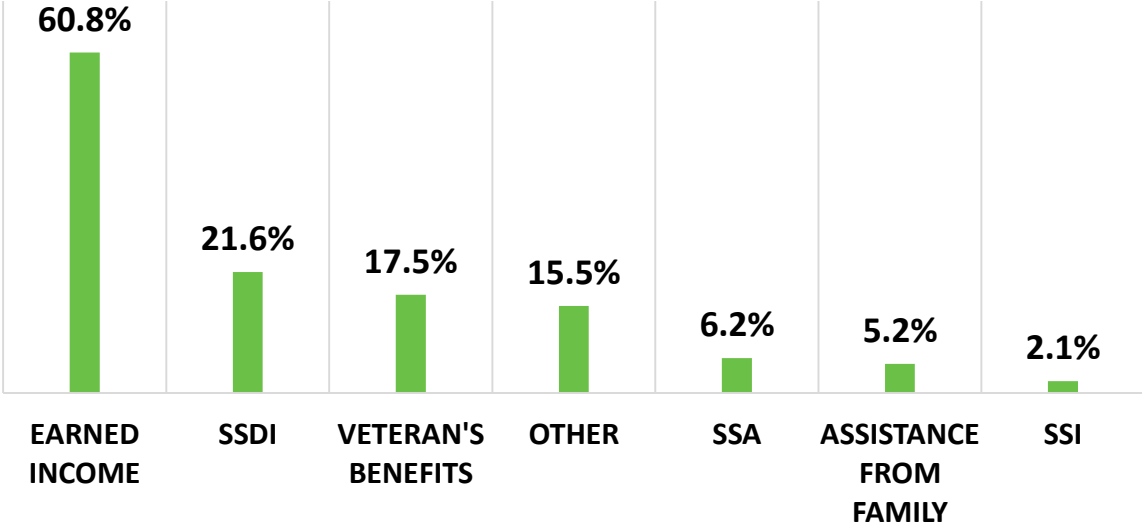
- 12% Hispanic

# Annual Household Income and Income Sources

### Annual Household Income



### Income Sources\*

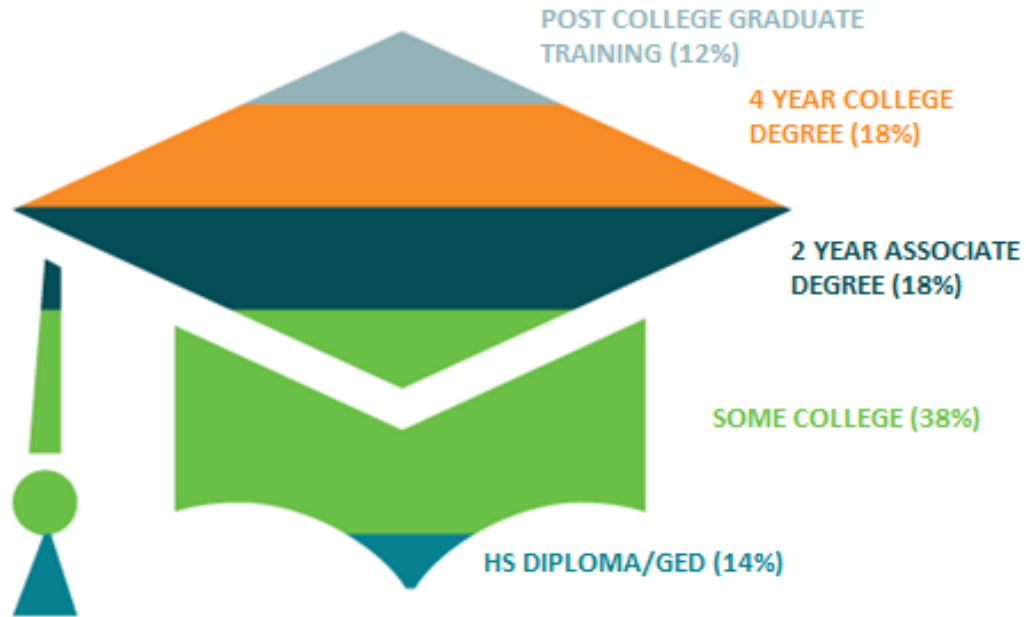


\* (more than one source could be selected)



# Education and Professional Certifications

## Education Level



## Professional Certifications

- 55% reported holding a professional certification:

Certification	Number Holding Certification
Certified Peer Specialist	25*
Other Mental Health Related	9
Other Certification not Health or Mental Health Related	5
Advanced Certified Peer Specialist	4
Other Health Related	3
Licensed Certified Drug Counselor	3
Recovery Coach	2
Licensed Master Social Worker	1

# Certification and Continuing Education

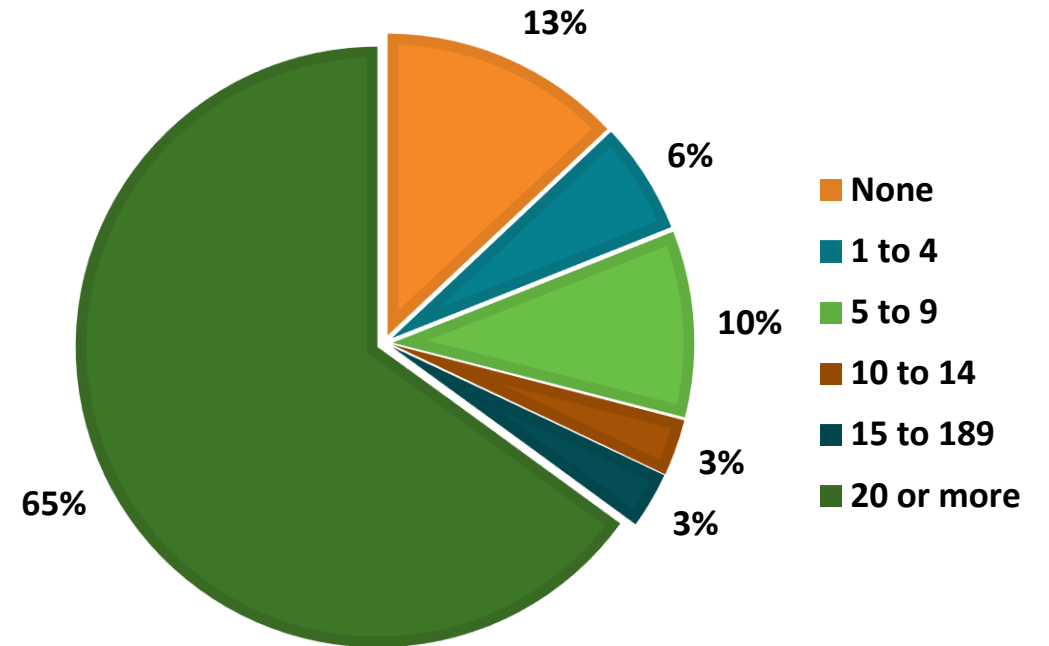
98% of the Respondents Passed the Via Hope Peer Specialist Certification Exam

Continuing Education Units Obtained Since Certification

Percent of Respondents per PSTC Class Year



- 2014
- 2013
- 2012
- 2011
- 2010



- None
- 1 to 4
- 5 to 9
- 10 to 14
- 15 to 189
- 20 or more

# Trainings Attended and Trainings Desired

## Top 5 Trainings Attended by Certified Peer Specialists

- Peer Support Whole Health and Resilience (45%)
- Trauma Informed Peer Support (43%)
- Alternatives Conference (40%)
- Emotional CPR (39%)
- Mental Health First Aid (32%)

## Top 5 Trainings Desired by Certified Peer Specialists

- Advanced Practices in Peer Support (68%)
- Peer Support for Individuals with Co-Occurring Disorders (57%)
- Intentional Peer Support (55%)
- Emotional CPR (45%)
- Wellness Recovery Action Planning - WRAP (44%)\*

# Employment Status and Average Hourly Wage

## Employment Status\*

Employed Full Time	53%
Employed Part Time	23%
Volunteer Full Time	18%
Contract Employee, Full Time	6%
Contract Employee, Part Time	10%
Other	6%

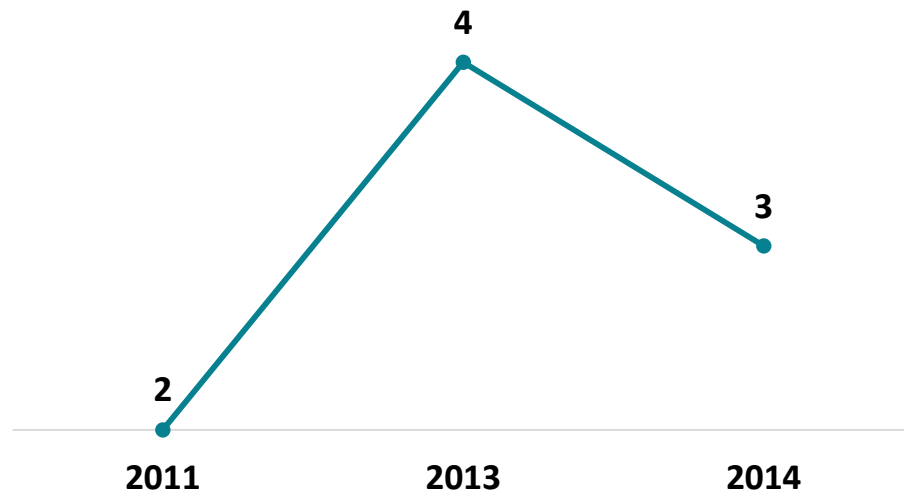
## Average Hourly Wage

**\$14.15**

\*Responses reflect % of whole, respondents could give more than one response.

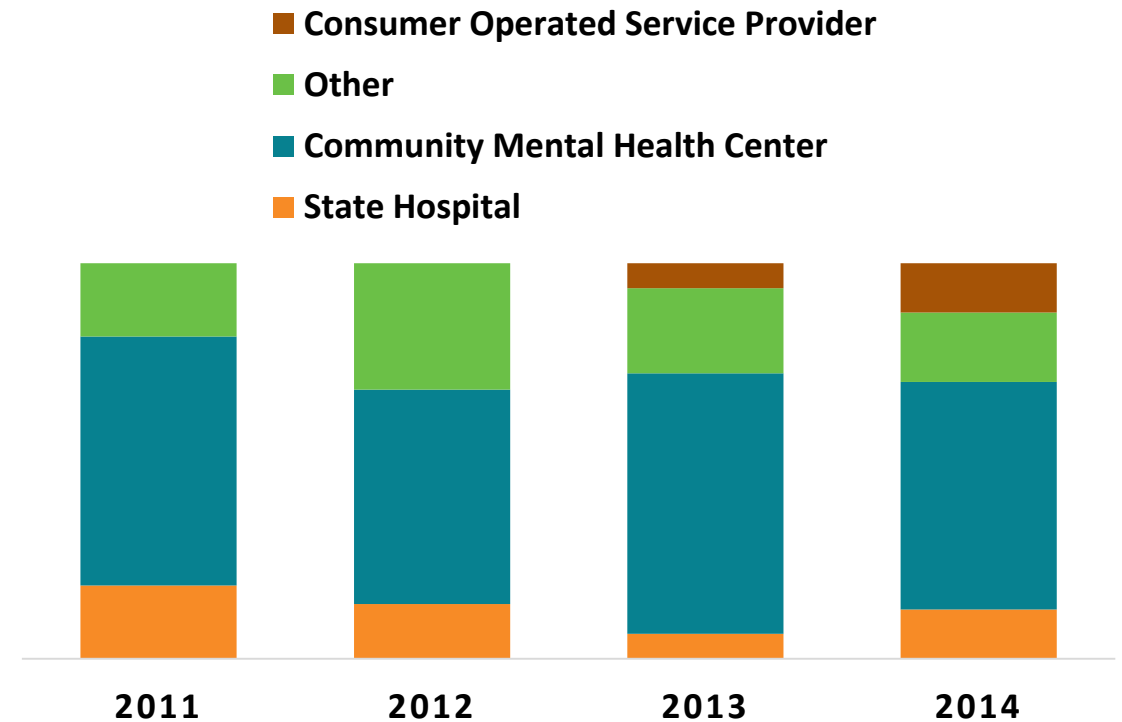
# Employment Duration and Organizations Where Employed

## Average Employment Duration: Years



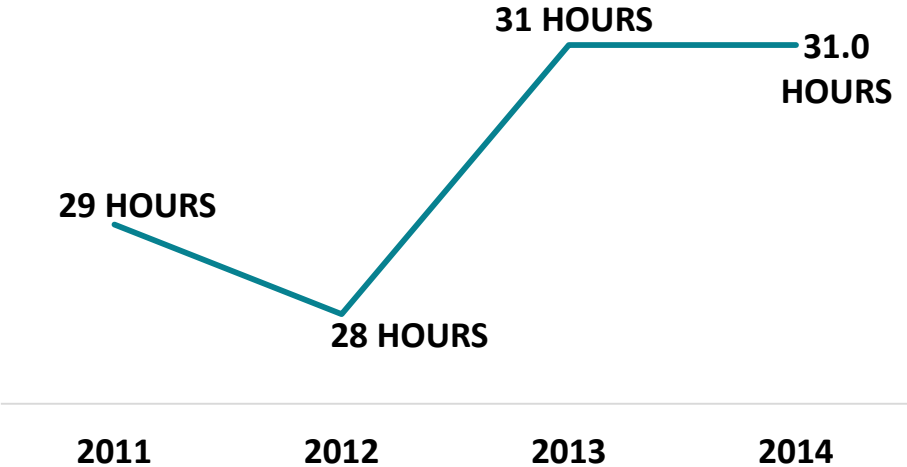
Note: Extreme outliers (z-score =  $\pm 3.0$ ) excluded from analysis.

## Organizations Where Employed Top 4 Each Year



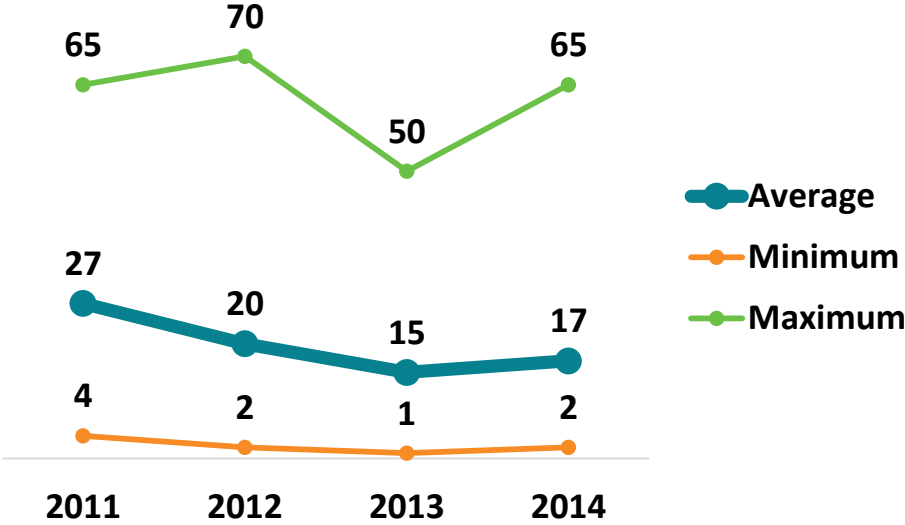
# Average Hours Worked and People Served

### Average Hours Worked



Note: Extreme outliers (z-score =  $\pm 3.0$ ) excluded from analysis.

### Minimum, Average and Maximum Number of People Served



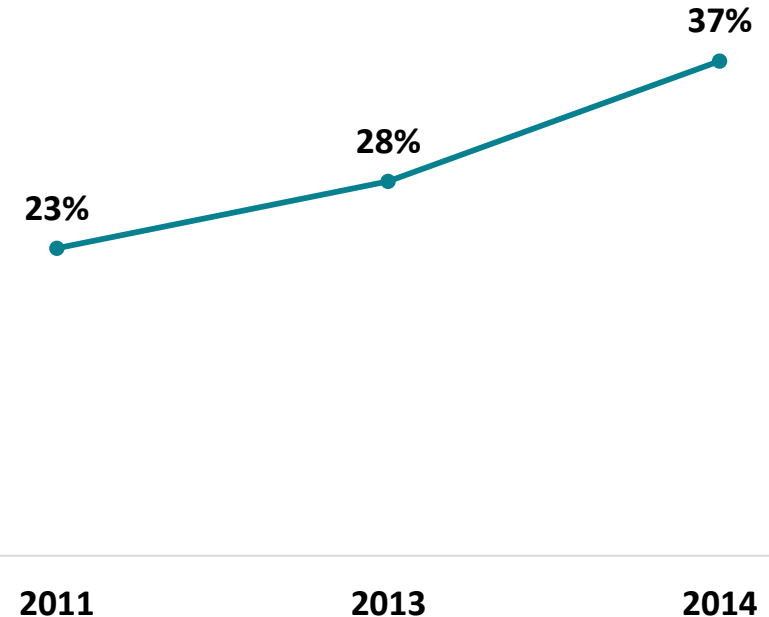
Note: Extreme outliers (z-score =  $\pm 3.0$ ) excluded from analysis.

# Career Support and Advancement

## Career Support

- 83% Peer specialists report that organization has a job description.
  - Peer Specialists rated the Job Descriptions' reflections of actual job duty 3.9 out of 5.
- 80% of the peer specialists have a copy of that job description.
- 84% receive supervision related to their job.
- Only 59% receive supervision at least once per month.

## Organizations with Career Ladders

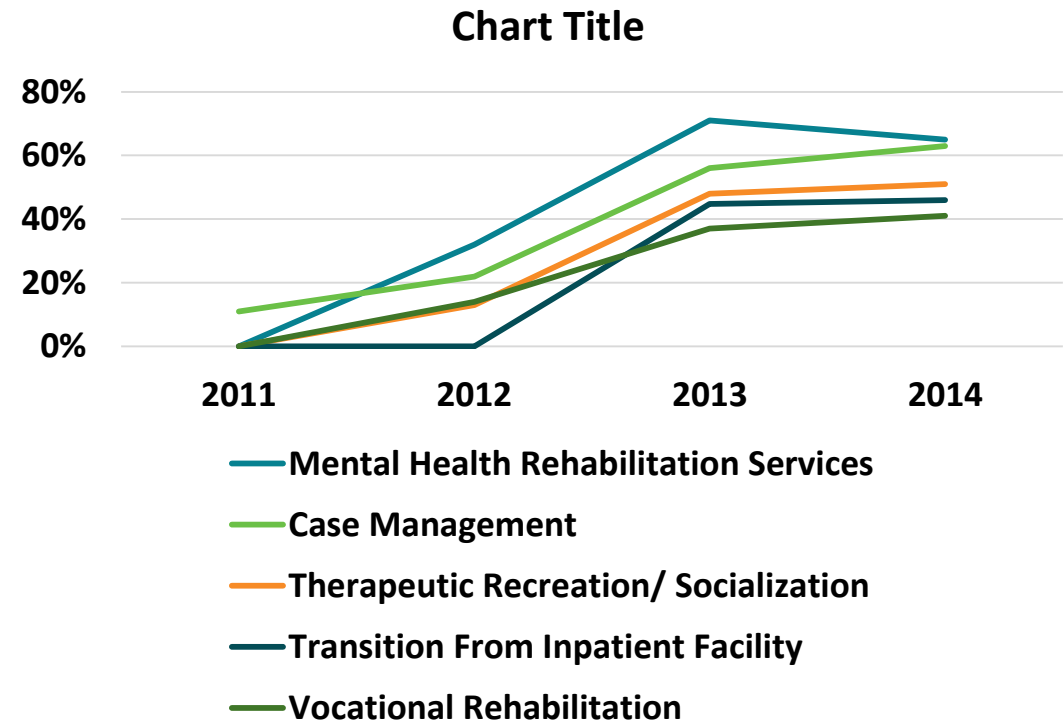


# In What Programs are the Peer Specialists Working?

## Top 5 Peer Specialist Programs FY 2014

- Mental Health Rehabilitation (65%)
- Case Management (63%)
- Therapeutic Recreation/ Socialization (51%)
- Transition from Inpatient (46%)
- Vocational Rehabilitation (41%)

## Trend for Top Five over Last 4 Years





# What Work Tasks are the Peer Specialists Performing?

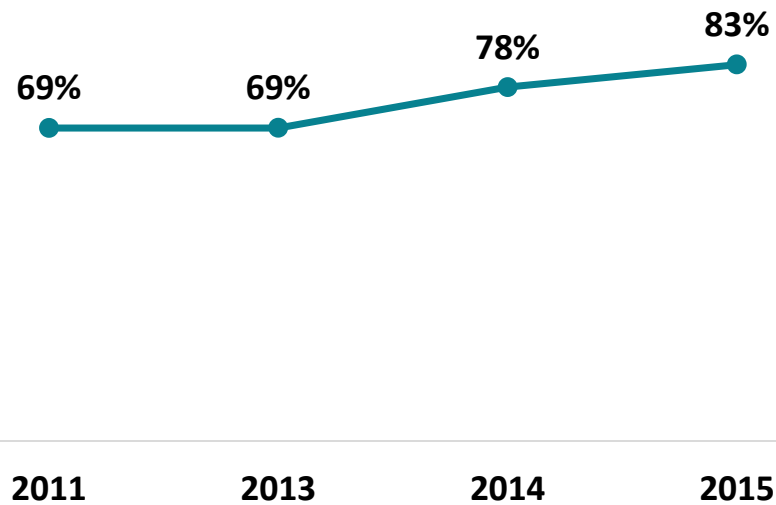
## Top 5 Peer Specialist Work Tasks FY 2014

- One-on-One Support (97%)
- Helping People Advocate for Themselves (94%)
- Goal Setting (94%)
- Connecting People to Resources/ Networking (93%)
- Facilitating Support Groups (80.5)

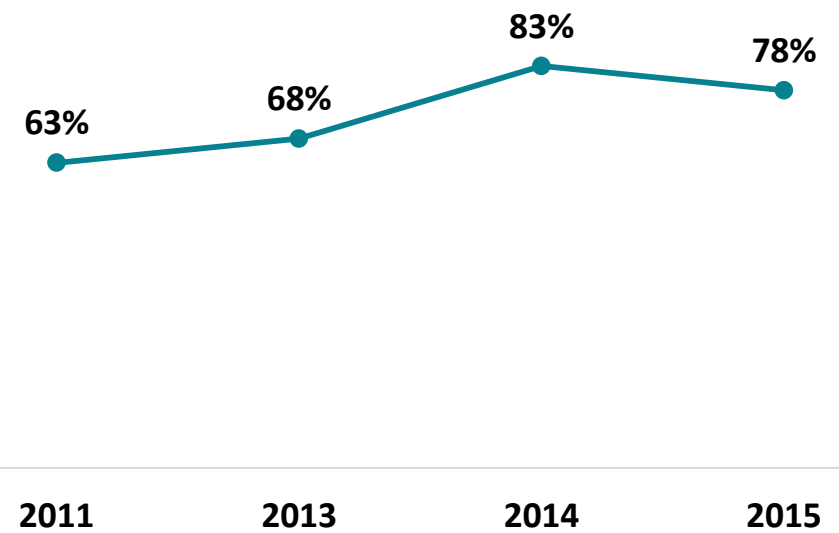
**41% say their Employers bill Medicaid for their services.**

# Collaboration with Other Peer Specialists

Other Peer Specialists Employed at the Organization



Collaborates with Peer Specialists at Organization



# Work Environment

## Ratings of Supportiveness and Understanding of Peer Specialist Role\*

<b>Supervisors' understanding of the peer specialist role</b>	<b>8.2</b>
<b>Supervisors' supportiveness</b>	<b>8.7</b>
<b>Non-peer support staff's understanding of peer specialist role</b>	<b>6.4</b>
<b>Non-peer support staff's supportiveness</b>	<b>6.9</b>

\*On a scale of 1 to 10

## Work Environment Ratings\*

<b>Peer Specialists feel accepted and respected by colleagues.</b>	<b>4.1</b>
<b>The supervisors explain the skills or procedures the Peer Specialist is expected to perform.</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>The supervisors listen to the Peer Specialists' ideas, suggestions and opinions.</b>	<b>4.3</b>
<b>Peer Specialists feel stigmatized as a result of the actions and words of co-workers.</b>	<b>3.7<sup>^</sup></b>

\*On a scale of 1 to 5

# Job Stability and Job Satisfaction

- **25% Changed job positions since being certified as a Peer Specialist.**
  - Of the 24 who changed position, 11 (46%) received a promotion, 2 of which went into an executive or leadership position.

## Job Satisfaction Indicators

Ratings based on a scale of 1 to 5.

<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	<b>4.3</b>
<b>Able to do Job Well</b>	<b>4.6</b>
<b>Working has a Positive Impact on my Recovery</b>	<b>4.5</b>

# Highlights from the Data

- Household income for the majority of peer specialists is less than \$29,999; the 2015 Federal Poverty Income Limit for a family of 4 is \$24,250.
- 86% have some college education or beyond.\*
  - 48% hold a college degree (Associates and beyond).\*
- The trainings attended and desired by peer specialists are practice oriented and build upon role specific knowledge and skills.
- Hourly wage is higher than the national average of \$13.53.
- Duration of employment fell slightly.
- There are extreme differences between the minimum (1) and maximum (65) number of people peer specialists serve.
- While the percentage of organizations with a career ladder continues a steady climb, the overall percentage remains low.
- 41% receive supervision less than once a month.
- 65 % provide rehabilitation services; only 41% responded that their organization billed Medicaid.
- Non-peer staff received low ratings for supportiveness and understanding of the peer role.
- Peer specialists report feeling that they are accepted by their co-workers, but that they also feel stigmatized.

\*In line with national *Report on US Peer Support Provider Levels of Education, Compensation, and satisfaction A Comparison between 2007 and 2014*. averages based on the International Association of Peer Supporters: [Report Available Here](#)