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**MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES NEW PROGRAM CONNECTING THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH
SUBSTANCE USE RECOVERY PROGRAMS WITH TRAINING FOR CAREERS AS PEER ADVOCATES FOR
OTHERS IN RECOVERY**

***City's first-of-its-kind training program to increase availability of Certified Recovery Peer Advocates for
substance use treatment will help meet industry demand***

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced a first-of-its-kind Certified Recovery Peer Advocate (CRPA) training program connecting those with experience in substance use recovery programs with training for careers helping others in recovery. The program, a product of the Department of Small Business Services' New York Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (NYACH), will fill a growing demand for peer support services in substance use treatment. Peer support services have been found to reduce hospitalizations, reduce recovery times and result in improved patient experiences.

"We have been working every day to destigmatize substance use and mental health issues through our ThriveNYC initiative," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "The Certified Recovery Peer Advocate program is yet another tool we will use to ensure that New Yorkers struggling with these issues not only have the support they need to overcome their challenges, but that they can use their experience to help others."

"For those struggling with substance misuse, the support and understanding of people who have gone through recovery can make all the difference. This program will add counselors in all of the five boroughs for those seeking rehabilitation from substance misuse, and provide these counselors with the opportunity to give back to their brothers and sisters in need. As the de Blasio administration continues to expand access to mental health and substance misuse help through our comprehensive citywide plan ThriveNYC, we recognize that this is the sort of program that will help propel New Yorkers taking the next step into recovery," said **First Lady Chirlane McCray, Chair of the Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC, who spearheads the City's mental health and substance misuse efforts.**

"Quality behavioral health services are vital to our City and the wellness of our people. New Yorkers who are confronting behavioral health challenges deserve the support and resources they need for recovery and this program helps meet this challenge," said **Gregg Bishop, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services**. "This new peer advocate program supports behavioral health service providers in delivering successful treatment while connecting New Yorkers with a path to quality employment in the healthcare field."

“A peer support worker can connect to people with mental illness or substance use disorder in a way that no one else can,” said **Health Department Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett**. “And peer support workers help the people they work with have more sustained recovery with lower treatment costs. I thank Mayor Bill de Blasio and Small Business Services Commissioner Gregg Bishop for further investing in this successful model.”

Treatment and recovery providers anticipate an increased demand for peer support services following Medicaid’s enhanced reimbursement rates for peer services and the integration of behavioral health services in Medicaid managed care plans. In the past, the majority of peer support specialists were limited to funding through grant programs or working as volunteers. This is the first program in New York City that provides a seamless, credit-bearing training path through post-secondary education to CRPA certification and employment. The program is open to individuals who self-identify as having lived experience with a substance use disorder.

The CRPA training program is part of First Lady Chirlane McCray’s [ThriveNYC](#) initiative, which will train 200 peer support workers per year. The *ThriveNYC* training prepares graduates to obtain their New York State Certification and pursue careers in the behavioral health workforce. The first cohort of peer support workers will graduate by the end of June 2017

ThriveNYC emphasizes peer support as part of the effort to create sustainable recovery models. Training for certified peer specialists is one of the goals of *ThriveNYC*.

“The de Blasio administration’s innovative Certified Recovery Peer Advocate program will help meet the growing demand for peer support services in alcohol and substance abuse treatment,” said **Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried, Chair of the Committee on Health**. “Studies show peer support works. This program builds on the Mayor de Blasio’s focus on improving New Yorkers’ behavioral health and wellness, and helps provides important career opportunities for peer advocates.”

Council Member Andrew Cohen, Chair of the Committee on Mental Health, said, "As Chair of the City Council's Mental Health Committee, I am proud to support the administration's ThriveNYC Initiative. The newest program being launched, training of peer advocates, is an innovative solution for combatting substance abuse problems. I commend all involved with developing this new strategy, and look forward to seeing the positive impact it will have in our community."

"Mental and physical well-being is key to a thriving city," said **Council Member Rafael Espinal**. As a member of the City Council Committee on Health and a representative of a low-income community, where quality medical care isn't always readily accessible, I look forward to the support the Certified Recovery Peer Advocate Program will provide to New Yorker's everywhere."

"Not only will the CRPA training program provide an excellent behavioral health resource for treating substance abuse, it will also create good jobs for New Yorkers in the healthcare field," said **Council Member Paul Vallone**. "This initiative will go a long way towards protecting and supporting the wellness of New Yorkers struggling with these issues."

“It is well known that it takes significant resources to help individuals recover from substance abuse problems. I am pleased to see the launching of the Certified Recovery peer advocate program, which will ensure that people who are battling with these issues every day receive the services they need to persevere in the face of these challenges, while obtaining invaluable training to help others striving to

recover. This program will make a big difference for so many New Yorkers by giving them the opportunity to restore their lives,” said **Council Member Mathieu Eugene**.

“Mount Sinai Beth Israel is honored to partner with the New York Alliance for Careers in Healthcare in this very important project. Certified Peer Recovery Advocates play an extremely important role in the recovery process of individuals with substance abuse disorders. As substance use is a national health issue, this project is not only relevant, but necessary,” said **Sabina Lim MD, MPH, Vice President of Behavioral Health at Mount Sinai Health System**.

Certified Recovery Peer Advocate Training Program

The CRPA training program at Queensborough Community College will prepare participants to become certified in providing support, information, guidance, and motivation to those seeking or sustaining recovery from a substance use disorder. The curriculum will incorporate feedback from the industry and will include test preparation, professional skills, boundaries and ethics, and academic remediation. The program will also provide participants with case management and employment services to ensure they receive the support needed to successfully complete the program and advance to or begin employment as CRPAs.

After completing the three month program, trainees will be fully prepared to sit for the certification exam and to work as CRPAs. Peer advocates can perform tasks such as helping peers develop recovery plans, helping peers self-monitor their progress, modeling effective coping skills, attending court and other system meetings as a support, and supporting another peer in advocating for themselves to obtain effective services.

Acknowledgements

This initiative has been developed in collaboration with Queensborough Community College, City University of New York, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, and Mount Sinai Beth Israel.

NYACH

NYACH is an Industry Partnership, bringing together multiple stakeholders of the healthcare workforce development system in order to address the industry’s rapidly changing labor force needs. NYACH is an initiative of the public-private partnership between the NYC Department of Small Business Services and the NYC Workforce Funders. For more information, visit <http://nyachnyc.org>.

About NYC Small Business Services (SBS)

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