STATE OF NEW YORK

5146

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

February 23, 2023

Introduced by Sens. PARKER, GALLIVAN, SEPULVEDA -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs

AN ACT to amend the mental hygiene law, in relation to establishing a peer support program for veterans

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The mental hygiene law is amended by adding a new section 7.42 to read as follows:

§ 7.42 Peer support program for veterans.

(a) For the purpose of this section the term "peer support services" shall mean any service designated by the office used in the treatment and recovery of mental illness, alcohol abuse, substance abuse, and/or chemical dependence that is delivered by a certified peer counselor or a veteran recognized pursuant to the provisions of this section; and the term "certified or recognized veteran peer counselor" shall mean an individual who has served in the active military or naval service of the United States and has been released from such service otherwise than by dishonorable discharge as documented by his or her discharge papers or who has been furloughed to the reserve components of the armed forces of the United States who has training, credentials or experience recognized by the office.

(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the commissioner, in conjunction with the commissioner of addiction services and supports, and the state commissioner of the department of veterans' services shall develop and establish regional or county based peer support services programs for women veterans. Services provided by the recognized or certified woman veteran peer support services program shall include, but not be limited to, peer counseling techniques for mental illness including post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol and

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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substance abuse counseling, family support services, domestic violence, mental health, child care, physical health and legal issues.

(c) The commissioner, in conjunction with the commissioner of the office of addiction services and supports and the state commissioner of the department of veterans' services shall foster programs for the training and development of persons capable of providing the services set forth in this section, including, but not limited to, a process of issuing, either directly or through contract, credentials for recognized or certified veteran peer counselors in accordance with the following:

1. The office shall establish minimum qualifications for recognized or certified veteran peer counselors in all phases of delivery of services to veterans who are evaluated and certified or recognized by the office on factors including, but not be limited to, completion of approved courses of study or equivalent on-the-job experience in mental health counseling and/or alcoholism and substance abuse counseling or other credentials established or recognized by the office; and

2. The office shall establish procedures for issuing, directly or through contract, credentials to certified peer counselors who meet minimum qualifications, and shall further establish procedures to suspend, revoke, or annul such credentials for good cause.

§ 2. This act shall take effect one year after it shall have become a law; provided however, that if section 2 of part PP of chapter 56 of the laws of 2022 shall not have taken effect on or before such date then this act shall take effect on the same date and in the same manner as such section of such part of such chapter of the laws of 2022 takes effect. Effective immediately the addition, amendment and/or repeal of any rule or regulation necessary for the implementation of this act on its effective date are authorized to be made and completed on or before such date.