STATE OF NEW YORK

6037--A

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

February 26, 2025

Introduced by M. of A. HUNTER, RAGA, K. BROWN, BURDICK -- read once and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

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:

1. the term "veteran peer support services" shall include any form of peer to peer counseling services for the treatment and recovery of mental illness, alcohol abuse, substance abuse, and/or chemical dependence that are delivered by a veteran peer counselor to veterans.

2. the term "veteran peer counselor" shall mean a veteran who provides veteran peer support services.

3. The term "veteran" means a person:

(i) who served in the active military, naval, air or space service of the United States and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable; or

(ii) has a qualifying condition, as defined in section one of the veterans' services law, and has received a discharge other than bad conduct or dishonorable from such service; or

(iii) is a discharged LGBT veteran, as defined in section one of the veterans' services law, and has received a discharge other than bad conduct or dishonorable from such service; or

(iv) is a "veteran" as defined by local law.

(b) 1. The commissioner, in consultation with with the commissioner of addiction services and supports and the commissioner of veterans'

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

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services shall establish recommended minimum qualifications for veteran peer counselors. Such recommended qualifications shall be consistent with the goals and purposes of veteran peer support services and may be based on consideration of factors including, but not 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, the criteria established by the United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs for appointment as a peer specialist pursuant to 38 U.S.C. § 7402 (b)(13), other credentials established or recognized by the office or any other experiences, qualities or qualifications deemed necessary or desirable in a veteran peer counselor.

2. The commissioner shall make the recommended minimum qualifications established pursuant to paragraph one of this subdivision publicly available and disseminate such recommended qualifications to municipalities and other entities that provide veteran peer support services.

3. The commissioner in conjunction with the commissioner of addiction services and supports and the commissioner of veterans' services shall establish procedures for providing or connecting veteran peer counselors to training and development opportunities that provide experience, education, credentials or other recognition meeting the recommended minimum qualifications established pursuant to paragraph one of this subdivision.

(c) Nothing in this section shall be construed as requiring professional credentials, licensing or training as a precondition of serving as veteran peer counselor, nor shall anything in this section be construed as affecting the eligibility criteria for participating in or providing "veteran peer support services" established by local law or by an entity's policies.

§ 2. This act shall take effect one year after it shall have become a law. 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.