

Nomination of Peter Ashenden for the Clifford Beers Award

Submitted by: Allen Daniels, Ed.D

I am pleased to nominate Peter Ashenden for the Clifford Beers award. Peter is a tireless advocate for those with behavioral health conditions, and the quality of services they receive. He is nationally acclaimed for his work in the development of innovative peer support programs and services that are person-centered and recovery-oriented.

Peter Ashenden's consumer advocacy work spans over 45 years and includes program development, leadership, and services for individuals with developmental disabilities, vocational placement for individuals with behavioral health conditions, housing services, the development of statewide behavioral health peer support service networks (Mental Health Empowerment Project, Inc.), and leadership of the nation's largest consumer run behavioral health organization (Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance). For the last 7 years Peter has worked and advocated for the integration of consumer and family services in managed care programs. He has done this through his role as National Vice-President of Consumer and Family Affairs for OptumHealth – a division of United Healthcare.

Peter is a frequent speaker at national behavioral health meetings, having delivered over 80 keynote presentations. In this role he is able to use his life story and his service to others as a means to educate those with behavioral health conditions, their families, and the general public on the challenges of mental illnesses and the hope and realization of recovery. Peter is a certified trainer for Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP); Mental Health First Aid; Seeking Safety; and Self-Directed Rehabilitation. He has also published articles on empowering staff to safely share their own recovery stories, coping strategies for suicidal thinking, and advancing peer support services in promoting recovery.

As a recognized leader and advocate for consumer involvement in all health services, Peter Ashenden has served on and led several national boards. His commitments span federal health policy agencies, service and accreditation organizations, and peer delivered services. These roles include the past 4 years serving on the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services Consumer Advisory Board. In this

role he has been able to support the national Health and Human Services and SAMHSA commitment to consumers and peer delivered services. He has also spent 5 years on the National Board of the Certification Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) advocating for the integration of consumer rights and peer services in the accreditation of behavioral health programs. Peter has also led and served on boards for the United States Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association and the International Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services. In his commitment to peer delivered services Peter has also been on the boards of the Inter-National Association of Peer Supporters (iNAPS) and the Copeland Wellness and Recovery Center.

Peter Ashenden's professional roles over the past 22 years demonstrate a commitment of service to others, promoting recovery and wellness, and self-sacrifice using his own personal experiences with behavioral health conditions for the betterment of others. He is tireless in his commitment to ensure that others find hope in their own recovery, receive the highest quality of care, and challenging abuses that are commonly characterized by stigma and discrimination in this population.

Peter's leadership roles have included serving as Executive Director at the Mental Health Empowerment Project, Inc. In this role he directed a statewide mental health peer operated organization serving individuals with mental health issues to become empowered to take responsibility, find their voice, and make important recovery based life choices while attending regular support programs. As the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance he oversaw the nation's largest consumer run behavioral health organization. He helped lead and establish a National Peer Specialist Training Program and the development of over 1000 support groups and the oversight of 40 state chapters. Peter was also able to champion the role of evidenced based care in consumer delivered services through the development and oversight of a peer recovery focused Scientific Advisory Board.

A cornerstone of Peter Ashenden's career has been his role as National Vice President of Consumer and Family Affairs at OptumHealth, a Division United Healthcare. Over the past 7 years he has helped to establish and lead a major healthcare insurer's commitment to

consumer affairs and peer delivered services. This has included the development and leadership of the organizations recovery and resiliency programs, and integrating the mental and physical health aspects of wellness across all state based public sector markets. Peter has developed an innovative adaptation of the Seeking Safety program for suicide prevention. In this new model services are delivered by peers rather than clinicians, and integrated across health services. He has also promoted the training and role of Mental Health First Aid among communities. Peter has also trained the Care Advocacy Staff in recovery and resiliency principles, and fostered the growth of peer support services both within the organization and their service delivery systems.

Peter's work has led Optum to be recognized as an industry leader in consumer affairs and peer delivered services. Accomplishing this has also come with diverse personal challenges and risks. There is a common belief in the peer community that consumers who work in managed care and other corporate payer systems have sold out to the establishment. Peter has boldly accepted this challenge and been able to negotiate the complex landscape of promoting peer and recovery services in a large corporate system while staying true to his consumer roots.

As an advocate for the rights of individuals who receive behavioral health services, Peter Ashenden has devoted his career to serving others and lending his voice to those in need. This commitment has helped foster enhanced awareness, improved systems of care, and empowered recipients of services. This has been effectively accomplished within the existing framework of organizations and services, while continuously striving for improvements in their quality of care, and across all human interactions. He truly epitomizes the values represented by the Clifford Beers Award.