

Written Testimony

EXHIBIT 12
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HB 2

To: Chair
Human Services
From: James Hollimon *JH*
Date: 10 Jan 2007
Re: Comments on Peer support

Madam Chair

I am James Hollimon and I live at 213 17th Ave N. W. Great Falls Montana 59404. I am a 53 year old male with 20 years of service in the USAF. I suffered PTSD as a child due to a severe trauma, I also suffered PTSD in 1973, which wasn't diagnosed for years. I suffered a severe mental break just prior to retirement in 1992. I was later given 100% V/A and Social Security Disability due to unemployability in 1995. I became so ill that I was hospitalized over 20 times in 12 years .

Then in 2006 I completed WRAP and PEER training . This brought the word recovery into my life . I am still in recovery . I am not "Well" but I can function . I can be worth something. I can use my life experiences to tell others and help others that have similar problems. I can help fellow Peers get through problems and crisis. I feel I have a special connection with fellow Veterans, who have PTSD issues and other mental problems

Until I went through WRAP and PEER Training I could not even cope with a simple weekend alone with my family without a major event occurring. WRAP and PEER gave me the tools to function and now as a PEER Support specialist I hope to help others through crisis similar to what I have experienced. It's through shared experiences and during crisis situations that PEERS help one another.

The best example I have of this is during Peer Training. I was overcome with stress of taking the open book take home test. It was suppose to take 3 hours to complete. It took me 7. I came to class that next Monday with the finished test, ready to quit, because I was sure I had failed it . Our Instructor Chris Martin calmed me down and told me that the best place to be when your symptoms were up was with your PEERS and the group supported me. They helped me through a near mental break until I could continue. Chris graded my paper as quickly as time would allow it during the day and I made a B+. I finished the class with an overall grade of an A.

Only because I believed in my self and discovered the true meaning of recovery did I successfully complete that course and become one of only 13 certified Peer Support Specialists in the State.

Thank You

Jim Hollimon