

## Tying the Knot: The importance of co-occurring disorder training integration for peers

### Introduction

- ❖ Peer Recovery Specialists (PRS) improve engagement, retention, and other treatment outcomes for those with co-occurring disorders.
- ❖ Despite the many benefits that PRSs provide, a challenge that is present in the peer role is insufficient trainings (Stack et al., 2022).
- ❖ Research Question 1: What are core skills and competencies that peers learn in training and on the job that relate to serving those with co-occurring disorders?
- ❖ Research Question 2: What are unmet training needs for PRSs who work with individuals with co-occurring disorders?

### Methods

- ❖ Qualitative study design
- ❖ 23 study participants
- ❖ Key informant interviews ( $n=8$ ) and focus groups ( $n=15$ )
- ❖ Questions focused on trainings that peers feel have been helpful in providing relevant skills, as well as naming challenges they face
- ❖ Participant responses were examined within context of SAMHSA's core competencies of the peer role.



# Professional development for peers serving populations with co-occurring disorders should be enhanced with greater mental health training

### Key Results

1. All participants expressed a prior understanding of SAMHSA's core competencies.
2. Some Peers had more agency specific training that related to mental health disorders (MHD)
  - Agency specific training better informed peers, with peers identifying more skills of job preparedness.
  - Most responses related back to core skills involving person centered and trauma informed care.



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### Discussion

- ❖ While current core training workshops like WRAP provide valuable information, there remains a strong need for further training support around MHD and co-occurring disorders, as the current focus is on substance use disorders.
- ❖ There has been research in Maryland to identify and implement more evidence-based interventions for peers to administer that address training gaps related to MHD and co-occurring disorders such as Behavioral Activation.

### Conclusion

- ❖ The implications of existing research and my study indicate that additional training in MHD and co-occurring disorders are appropriate and necessary for PRSs to grow and develop in core competencies.
- ❖ Additional research should be conducted to determine more precisely what additional training curricula may be utilized to both address core competencies of PRSs and optimally equip them to provide service delivery for populations suffering from co-occurring disorders.