WHY CERTIFIED PEER SUPPORT MATTERS

A bridge of lived experience, practical support, and connection to care for Veterans, service members, caregivers, and military families



Your generosity can help build the human connection between "I need help" and "I am connected to the help I need."

Prepared for friends and donors of Beyond Broken Incorporated

The gap we are trying to fill

The United States continues to face behavioral-health workforce shortages and barriers to accessing care. HRSA reported in its 2025 national workforce brief that 40% of the U.S. population lived in a designated Mental Health Professional Shortage Area as of December 2, 2025. HRSA also identifies stigma, ability to pay, reimbursement constraints, clinician burnout, and workforce distribution as barriers to access. [1]

A shortage of clinicians does **not** mean peers should become substitute therapists. It means communities need more ways to keep people connected, supported, and moving toward appropriate care while remaining clear about professional boundaries.

That is where appropriately trained and certified peer support can matter.

What peer support is

SAMHSA describes peer support specialists as people with lived or living experience who support people facing similar challenges. Their nonclinical, community-based work can include advocacy, system navigation, linkage to resources, mentoring, group facilitation, skill building, social support, and person-led goal setting. SAMHSA describes peer support services as an evidence-based practice. [2]

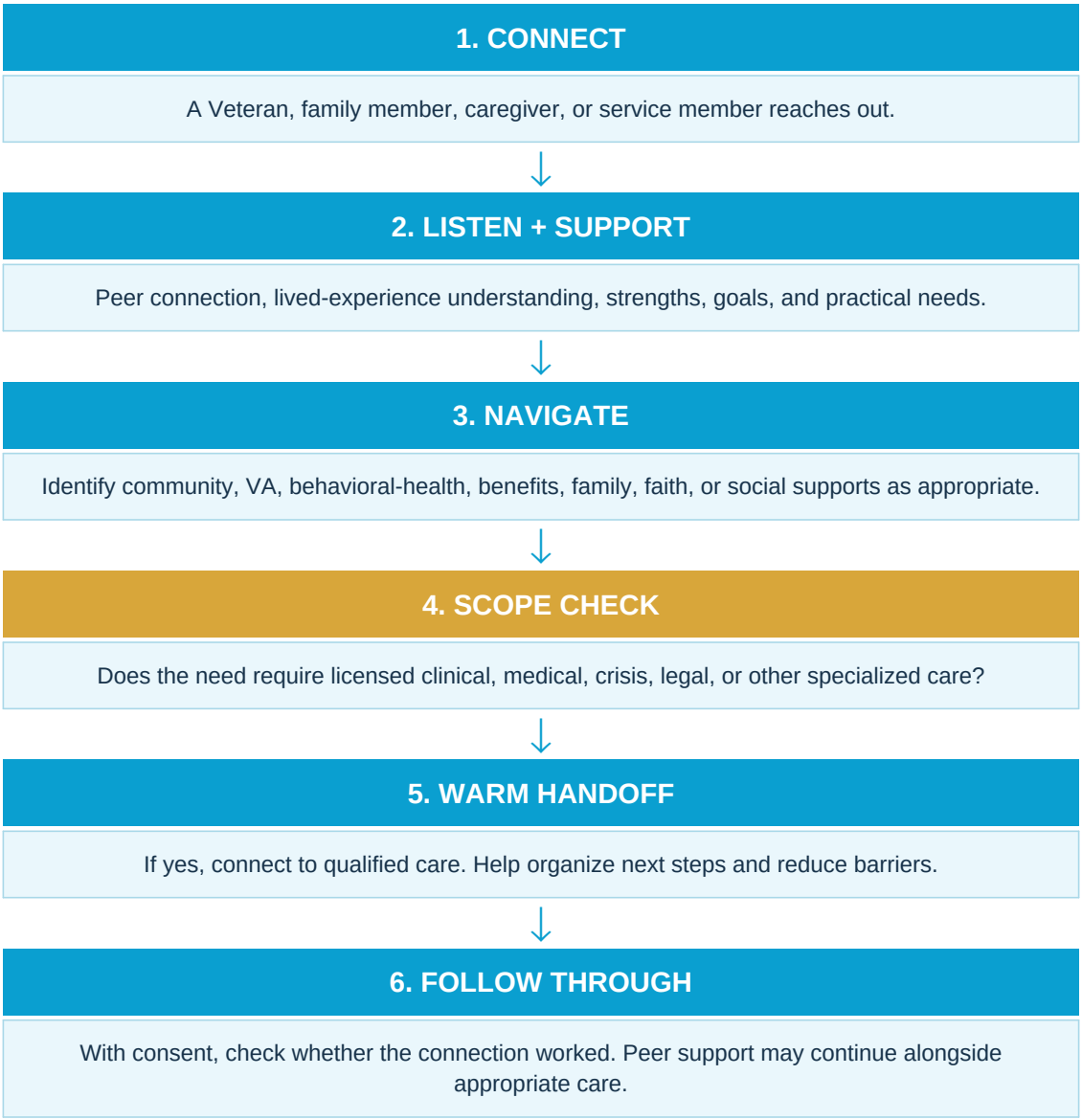
For Veterans specifically, VA describes peer specialists as trained and certified people with personal recovery experience who can help Veterans work toward recovery and wellness goals, strengthen problem-solving and self-care skills, advocate for themselves, and connect with VA and community resources. [3]

Peer support is not

Not psychotherapy or diagnosis	Peers do not replace licensed mental-health assessment, psychotherapy, or diagnostic services.
Not medication or medical management	Peers do not prescribe, alter, or manage medication or provide medical treatment.
Not emergency or crisis treatment	When a situation requires crisis, emergency, or higher-level care, the peer role is to help connect the person to appropriately qualified services and follow applicable escalation procedures.
Not "just talking"	A trained peer role is intentional, strengths-based, person-led, boundaried, and focused on connection, practical navigation, wellness, and recovery goals.

How a peer can fill the gap without replacing clinical care

Beyond Broken has already been developing a relationship-centered model built around connection, support, navigation, warm handoffs, and follow-through. The core idea is simple: **we do not just refer; we walk with people.** This is consistent with the organization's proposed nonclinical and certified-peer pathways. [4]



The boundary is the strength of the model: peers provide peer support; clinicians provide clinical care. The participant should not have to navigate the distance between those systems alone.

Why certification and structure matter

Beyond Broken's internal planning materials distinguish volunteer peer mentorship from certified peer recovery support and emphasize defined scope, consent, privacy, documentation, supervision, referral, and escalation. [4][5] Certification does not turn a peer into a therapist. It adds a formal framework for using lived experience responsibly within the peer role.

SAMHSA's peer-work core competencies identify knowledge, skills, and abilities for peer workers in behavioral-health services and recognize that additional competencies may be needed for specific settings or populations, including Veterans. [6]

What a donor helps make possible

Investment area	What it supports
Qualified peer workforce	Recruiting, credentialing, training, supervision, continuing education, and ethical practice.
Connection before care	A trusted human relationship while a participant identifies needs and considers next steps.
Navigation and warm handoffs	Finding the right resource, preparing for the connection, reducing practical barriers, and following through.
Family and community support	Support that recognizes caregivers and military families as participants in their own right.
Safety and boundaries	Clear scope, consent, referral practices, privacy protections, documentation, and escalation procedures.

> **"The goal is not to make peers into clinicians. The goal is to make sure nobody has to face the space between need and care alone."**

A message to those who have already given

Thank you. Your gift to Beyond Broken is more than support for an organization. It is an investment in a community where Veterans and military-connected families can encounter someone who understands, listens without judgment, helps identify the next step, and stays connected when professional care or specialized resources are needed.

Clinical care remains essential. Peer support is not a replacement for it. But the realities of access mean that a strong community cannot depend on a clinician being immediately available for every need. A well-designed peer-support program can help create continuity: connection, practical support, navigation, appropriate referral, and follow-through.

Beyond Broken's mission is centered on restoration through Faith, Family, and Forgiveness. In that mission, peer support can become a practical expression of a simple promise: **you do not have to walk alone.**

Sources and notes

[1] Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), *State of the Behavioral Health Workforce, 2025*.

[2] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), *Peer Support Specialist Fact Sheet: A Growing Mental Health and Addictions Workforce*; and SAMHSA, *Value of Peers: General Peer Support*.

[3] U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Library, *Peer Support Services in VA*.

[4] Beyond Broken Incorporated, *Beyond_Broken_Peer_Support_Flowcharts.pptx*, planning model, November 2026.

[5] Beyond Broken Incorporated, *Six Pillars of Beyond Broken Incorporated Programs*, internal planning document.

[6] SAMHSA, *Core Competencies for Peer Workers in Behavioral Health Services*.

Important: This donor education piece describes a program direction and support model. It should not be read as a representation that Beyond Broken currently provides licensed clinical treatment. Certified peer services should be delivered only within applicable credential, supervision, ethical, organizational, and legal requirements.