



# Mental Health Association

*in Orange County, Inc.*

NADIA ALLEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## **Mental Health Association in Orange County, Inc. Awarded Special Grant PFC Dwyer Peer Support Program for Veterans**

Mental Health Association in Orange County, Inc. (MHA) is pleased to announce the award of the PFC Dwyer Peer Support Program for Veterans grant. The program is named in honor of Private First Class Joseph Patrick Dwyer, an Army Medic who served in Iraq, and subsequently passed away after a long battle with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Federal Veterans Administration statistics show that as many as 20 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans, 10 percent of Gulf War veterans and 30 percent of Vietnam veterans experience PTSD.

The program will provide “peer-to-peer” counseling for veterans who personally understand the effects of PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and substance abuse. This special service will offer the opportunity for veterans to come together in support of each other, to listen and benefit from each other’s experience with service related issues which may include getting back into civilian life, returning to school, securing civilian jobs, re-entry to family life or obtaining VA services.

MHA’s Peer Support Program for Veterans will utilize a combination of peer-to-peer mentoring, support groups, creative programming and additional activities. The peer mentoring and support groups will be provided by veterans who are in recovery from mental health or substance abuse illness. While every deployment is different, there is one constant: the camaraderie that comes from a shared experience of life in the military. This project will be administered through the NYS Office of Mental Health, locally through the Orange County Department of Mental Health.

Nadia Allen, MHA’s Executive Director, stated “The Peer Support Program for Veterans is compatible with MHA’s mission and strategic focus in the provision of mental health services to Orange County residents. We look forward with much hope and enthusiasm to the positive impact we will continue to make on countless lives, one person at a time. MHA is proud, honored and stands poised to support those who have served in all branches of the armed forces. We want to thank the New York Senate and particularly Senators Lee Zeldin and Roy McDonald who spearheaded securing funding for PFC Joseph Dwyer Programs in the 2012-2013 State Budget for four initial counties: Suffolk, Jefferson, Saratoga and Rensselaer. In March of 2013 Senator Zeldin announced the expansion of funding for seven additional counties: Nassau, Erie, Onondaga, Orange, Putnam, Rockland and Westchester for the 2013-2014 budget”.

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