

Via Hope Resource FAQ's

Who runs Via Hope?

Via Hope is a collaboration between Mental Health America of Texas and the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Texas. It is funded by a grant from the Department of State Health Services as part of the State's Mental Health Transformation effort. It was started in March, 2009 and is still under development.

Our staff bring a variety of perspectives and experience to their work. To speak directly with Via Hope, call us at (877) 482-8550 and we will connect you with the appropriate staff member to answer your questions.

What, or who, are peer specialists?

This is a great question. The term "peer specialist" has been defined in several ways by various organizations. The definition we use at Via Hope is "individuals who have been diagnosed with a mental illness, are in recovery, and use their life experiences to assist other individuals in their own recovery." A Certified Peer Specialist has taken specialized training to provide them with additional skills and has passed an exam to demonstrate their competency in these areas. Peer specialists are employed throughout the state of Texas (and the nation) at various mental health organizations and agencies that provide services to consumers.

I want to be a peer specialist. How can I get involved?

Viahope.org has information about the peer specialist training and certification program, including the application form and training calendar. Click the link under Peer Certification on the home page. Via Hope does not employ peer specialists directly, but we can help refer certified peer specialists to potential employers.

What kinds of resources are available near me?

Texas is a large, diverse state. We have a number of metropolitan areas that are home to millions of people, and vast rural landscapes where just a few families make up the population for many miles. In each region there are different resources available, depending on what has been created to meet the needs of the population. To find out what is available in your area, you can look in the Via Hope database for organizations that will connect you with local resources, such as Mental Health America (MHA), National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Depression and Bi-Polar Alliance (DBSA), or your local mental health authority. You can also call Via Hope directly at (877) 482-8550 to find out more about resources in your area.

I don't have any money but I need medication and other supports. Where can I go to get help?

Every Texas county is served by a Community MHMR Center that provides mental health services to those of us with scarce financial resources. [Click here](#) to learn what Center serves your county so that you can call for an appointment.

Does Via Hope run support groups?

No. Via Hope collaborates with other programs that provide support groups, but we do not facilitate any of our own. If you would like to connect with other members of the Via Hope community, you can participate in online forums through www.mhtonline.org, an online community for mental health consumers, youth, and family members. If you are looking for a support group, check under “Adult Peer Supports” in our [database](#). If you do not see anything listed under your county, select “All Counties - Statewide” in the pull-down menu to contact a statewide organization to help you locate a group.

If you are interested in becoming a Certified Peer Specialist, our website viahope.org provides information. It [will] also host an online community just for Certified Peer Specialists.

Can I volunteer for Via Hope?

Via Hope is not currently taking volunteers, though there are volunteer opportunities available through NAMI and MHA Texas.

Can I visit the Via Hope office to receive assistance?

Via Hope is a program housed in Mental Health America of Texas, which is located in downtown Austin. We do not have a drop-in center; rather, we run our programs online or at program sites throughout the state of Texas.

I just moved to a new city and there doesn't seem to be any peer support organizations. How do I create something of my own?

There are a number of state and national organizations that can assist you with starting your own peer support group or organization. Organizations like the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA), and Alcoholics Anonymous all provide support to individuals who hope to begin their own support community in their area, and often know about past efforts to organize groups, individuals who might be interested in helping, etc. To identify which organization is most appropriate for your needs, you can either start calling around to various organizations listed in our database or call our Via Hope Resource Coordinator to get her thoughts about which organization might be a good fit.

I have a loved one with a mental illness and we need help with long term planning. Who can I talk to?

There are a number of useful resources to assist you with long term planning and support for your loved one. Employment and housing supports are often available through your local mental health authority or other community resources. An organization called PLAN (Planned Living Assistance Network) can assist individuals living in [central Texas](#) or the [Dallas area](#). Information on advanced directives can be

found at [Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law](#) or [the National Resource Center on Psychiatric Advance Directives](#).

Nothing seems to be working--I keep hitting walls. What can I do when there seems to be nothing that meets my needs?

Feel free to call Via Hope staff and explain what kinds of needs you have. We believe in the wisdom of individual mental health consumers and their families, and also know that we can sometimes access ideas and resources through our organizational networks that aren't always advertised through other channels. At any rate, two minds working together are better than one, right? Give us a call and we'll do our best to assist you and think creatively about ways to address your needs.

I am very concerned about one of my friends or loved ones. I think she may be considering suicide. What should I do?

Via Hope does not provide crisis services, but we are committed to helping you find the best resources to prevent suicide and other forms of violence. The most widely used suicide prevention resource in the United States is the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which is available at any time and connected to over 140 call centers throughout the United States. You can speak to someone directly about your concerns at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**. You can also call your loved one's regular clinician, your [local mental health authority](#), or 911 (if the person is in immediate crisis). We encourage you to call as soon as possible to receive the help you need.