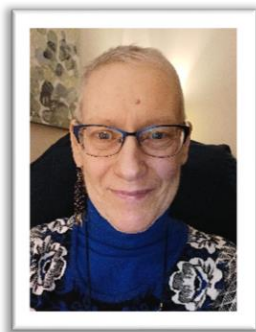


## 2023 Awards of Excellence

*Peer Specialist of the Year*



**Deborah "Deb" Carlson, CPRS, CCHW**  
*Coordinator of Peer Services, Peer Support Supervisor*  
Newport Mental Health Center

The National Council for Mental Wellbeing is proud to name Deborah "Deb" Carlson, CPRS, CCHW, a 2023 Peer Specialist of the Year Award winner in recognition of her work changing lives and strengthening communities. Carlson will be celebrated at [NatCon23](#) from May 1-3 in Los Angeles, California.

### **ABOUT THE AWARD**

Each year at NatCon, the Peer Specialist of the Year Award is given to select individuals with lived experience who work in health care organizations and use their strengths to help peers on their road to recovery from mental illness. Learn more about our [Awards of Excellence](#).

### **MAKING A MARK**

Carlson started out in peer support as a dually certified Peer Recovery Specialist and Community Health Worker five years ago at the Newport Mental Health Center, which provides trauma-informed, evidence-based services to children, adolescents, families and adults in Newport County, R.I., who are experiencing mental illness, substance use disorder and stress and would benefit from behavioral health supports.

The Center's Coordinator of Peer Services and Peer Support Supervisor, Carlson identifies as a person living and thriving with lifelong co-occurring challenges, including anxiety, depression and disordered eating, as well as sexual and multi-generational trauma. A near-completed suicide by a close family member when Deb was a teen instilled in her a deep understanding that secrets kill. These experiences led her to the late-in-life calling to share her own lived experience to serve other wounded souls.

The people in her community fuel Carlson's passion for fighting to end the stigma experienced by those living with behavioral health challenges and bringing their secrets into the light. She feels honored and privileged to walk alongside others on their recovery journeys.

