

# 2018 DBSA Regional Meetings

NYC • Dallas • Greater Chicago • Los Angeles • Orlando

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

DBSA chapters are affiliates of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA). They are independently incorporated, non-profit organizations governed by a separate board of directors. Most chapters are run by volunteers and all provide self-help through peer-facilitated support group meetings. DBSA support groups offer individuals comfort and direction in a confidential and supportive setting, where they can make a difference in the lives of others.

The 2018 Chapter Regional Meetings were implemented to 1) understand the needs of DBSA chapters and the communities they serve, 2) collect stories of chapter impact, and 3) inform the programs and services offered by the national office. Between the months of May and September 2018, the Chapter Relations team along with various members of DBSA staff and board held meetings in 5 major cities: New York City, Dallas, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Orlando. Additionally, DBSA CEO, Michael Pollock, attended DBSA Tennessee State Organization's annual retreat along with several Tennessee chapters. Attendees at each meeting were asked the following questions:

- Why does DBSA matter to you?
- What is the single largest concern facing your community regarding mental health?
- Does DBSA help you meet this need? If so, how? If not, how could we?
- What are the benefits of affiliating with DBSA?
- What do you want to see more of from DBSA?
- What is your dream for your chapter and community?



*Lisa Goduco, DBSA Peer Engagement / Public Policy and Anna Patterson, DBSA Chicago Loop Chapter*

## WHO WE ARE

The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) is the leading peer-directed national organization focusing on the two most prevalent mental health conditions.

## OUR VISION AND MISSION

By providing hope, help, support, and education, DBSA envisions wellness for people living with mood disorders.

---

*We are the lucky ones, that have these diagnoses, and are able to go to support groups . . . [there] has to be a way get more people to know that there is help, and that it is a condition that is treatable. –John Balcomb, DBSA Tampa Bay Chapter*

---

## KEY FINDINGS

From the 42 chapters in attendance at these meetings, we learned that people living with mood disorders participate in DBSA chapters and support groups because they have personally benefited from peer support and want either to continue to benefit from it and/or give back to their community. However, they are concerned that mental healthcare, including peer support, is not equally accessible to all.

### Cited Barriers to Accessing Mental Healthcare

- Stigma
- Financial costs
- Scarcity of providers especially for Medicare/Medicaid recipients
- Lack of public funding/support
- Lack of awareness about DBSA
- Peer support not valued by decisionmakers

Chapters offered many suggestions for how DBSA can help them address these concerns. Generally, these suggestions were 1) create resources that directly assist peers, 2) increase public awareness of DBSA and the value of peer support, and 3) provide administrative assistance to chapters. Examples of specific suggestions are:

#### Peer Resources

- National database of clinicians and facilities
- Peer employment training and resources
- Checklist for patients to use when meeting with their provider

#### Public Awareness

- Media campaign
- Public service announcements
- Collaboration with other organizations
- Specific outreach to marginalized or minority communities
- National advocacy initiatives

#### Administrative Assistance

- Crisis management
- Board development and training
- Liability insurance
- Regional representatives
- Facilitator training
- Professional advisor recruitment
- Support for chapter fundraising and grant writing



Michael Pollock, DBSA National Office, Chief Executive Officer and Christy Beckmann, DBSA Board of Directors, Treasurer

## NEXT STEPS

DBSA's board of directors and executive leadership have begun a strategic planning process to determine the organization's long-term direction, goals, and priorities. The feedback collected from the regional meetings provides them with invaluable insight into the chapter community and the role they play in DBSA's mission. While 2019 will be a year of planning, the Chapter Relations team is committed to helping our chapters achieve their dream of connecting people with resources and empowering peers to advocate for themselves and share their story.

Special thank you to our event sponsors who made our regional meetings possible.



55 E. Jackson Blvd. Suite 490  
Chicago, IL 60604  
[www.DBSAAlliance.org](http://www.DBSAAlliance.org)