



Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance

2025 Annual Report





Letter from the CEO

As I reflect on 2025, I am reminded of a truth that has guided DBSA for more than 40 years: recovery is strongest when people living with mood disorders are heard, valued, and empowered to lead.

At a time when loneliness, disconnection, and unmet mental health needs continue to affect so many people, the power of peer support has never been more important. DBSA is committed to ensuring more people have access to the understanding, belonging, and encouragement peers provide, while advancing recognition of peer support as part of the standard of care for people living with mood disorders.

Healing happens in connection. This belief is at the heart of everything we do.

Throughout 2025, as we celebrated our 40th anniversary, DBSA expanded opportunities for people to connect, learn, lead, and support one another. We launched our inaugural Peer Leadership & Education Convening and Mental Health Equity Convening, strengthened our chapter network, trained peer specialists, advanced research partnerships, and advocated for policies that increase access to care.

These accomplishments matter because of the lives they touch. Our work has always been grounded in the belief that lived experience improves outcomes. Every support group conversation, every peer connection, and every opportunity for someone to feel seen and understood reinforces the power of community. Together, these moments create pathways to hope, resilience, and recovery.

As I stepped into the role of CEO in 2026, I did so with deep appreciation for the community reflected throughout this report. Every accomplishment represents people coming together to reduce isolation, foster hope, and create pathways to wellness.

Thank you for being part of the DBSA community and for helping build a future where lived experience is valued, peer support is accessible, and no one faces depression or bipolar disorder alone.

With gratitude,
Suzanne Baber
Chief Executive Officer



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Message from DBSA Board Chair

2025 was both a year of celebration and a year of preparation for DBSA.

As we marked the organization’s 40th anniversary, we reflected on four decades of advancing hope, help, support, and education for people living with depression and bipolar disorder. At the same time, we looked ahead—strengthening the foundation needed to support DBSA’s next chapter of growth and impact.

Throughout the year, DBSA continued to expand its reach through peer support, education, advocacy, research partnerships, and leadership development initiatives. The launch of the inaugural Peer Leadership & Education Convening and Mental Health Equity Convening reflected our commitment to fostering collaboration, elevating diverse voices, and advancing innovation across the mental health community.

2025 also marked an important leadership transition. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank Michael Pollock for his years of dedicated service and leadership. We are grateful for the strong organization he helped build and the momentum he helped create.

As DBSA moves forward under the leadership of Suzanne Baber, we remain focused on an ambitious vision for the future: ensuring that peer support is recognized as part of the standard of care for people living with mood disorders. We believe this work has the potential to transform lives, strengthen communities, and improve mental health outcomes for generations to come.

Thank you to our donors, volunteers, chapter leaders, partners, staff, and community members for your continued commitment to DBSA’s mission. Your support makes this work possible.

With gratitude,
Rebecca Weinstein Bacon
DBSA Board Chair



DBSA Celebrated 40 Years of Peer Support and Advocacy

Helping Peers for 40 Years

In 2025, the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) celebrated its 40th anniversary, marking four decades of empowering individuals living with depression and bipolar disorder through peer support, education, advocacy, and community connection. What began as a small meeting in co-founder Rose Kurland’s living room has grown into the nation’s leading peer-focused organization serving people with mood disorders. Today, DBSA connects more than 1.5 million people annually with resources and support, facilitates over 20,000 support group meetings each year through 73 local chapters, and serves more than 250,000 support group participants nationwide.

As part of the anniversary celebration, DBSA reflected on its history and impact through contributions from former organizational leaders, highlighting the organization’s unique role as an authentic first-person voice for people living with depression and bipolar disorder.

Throughout the anniversary year, DBSA recognized key mental health awareness observances, including World Bipolar Day, Mental Health Awareness Month, Pride Month, BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Month, and Mental Illness Awareness Week.



To commemorate the milestone, DBSA hosted three signature events:



Peer Leaders Inspire Change at DBSA’s 2025 Convening

Last September, DBSA proudly hosted the 2025 Peer Leadership & Education Convening in Chicago—a powerful two-day gathering that brought together peer leaders, advocates, and partners from across the country. From Dr. Kay Redfield Jamison’s moving keynote to heartfelt conversations and collaborative sessions, the convening celebrated the strength of lived experience and the essential role of peer support in mental health recovery. Attendees shared insights, built new connections, and helped shape the future of peer leadership. This event was a testament to the passion and impact of our community. Together, we’re continuing to grow a national movement that empowers individuals living with mood disorders to lead, connect, and thrive.



DBSA 2025 Mental Health Equity Convening

Last November, DBSA proudly hosted its inaugural in-person Mental Health Equity Convening in Chicago, centered on Radical Hope, Sustainable Collaboration. The gathering brought together senior staff and volunteer leaders from smaller national mental health organizations that support historically marginalized communities to share resources, explore collaboration, elevate collective impact, and lay the groundwork for future connections. The convening featured a keynote address from former DBSA Board Member Altha Stewart, MD, a nationally recognized leader in community and public mental health.



Activities associated with DBSA’s 40th Anniversary Celebration were made possible through the support of the following partners:



2025 Gerald L. Klerman Award Presentation

DBSA honored three clinicians for their contributions to mood disorder research at the 2025 Gerald L. Klerman Awards ceremony held in Los Angeles during the American Psychiatric Conference. The Gerald L. Klerman Awards are the highest honor DBSA gives to members of the scientific community. In 2025, the Gerald L. Klerman Award recognized the following achievers:



Dr. Hilary Blumberg | 2025 Senior Investigator Award

Hilary P. Blumberg, MD is a psychiatrist, the John and Hope Furth Professor of Psychiatric Neuroscience, Professor of Psychiatry, Radiology and Biomedical Imaging and in the Child Center, and Director of the Mood Disorders Research Program, at the Yale School of Medicine.



Dr. Roy Perlis | 2025 Senior Investigator Award

Roy Perlis, MD MSc is the Associate Chief for Research and Ronald I. Dozoretz, MD Endowed Chair in the Department of Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital, where he also directs the hospital-wide Center for Quantitative Health. He is a Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.



Dr. Sarah Sperry | 2025 Young Investigator Award

Sarah H. Sperry, PhD, is the Richard Tam Early Career Professor of Translational Bipolar Research in the Department of Psychiatry and a Faculty Associate in Psychology at the University of Michigan (UM).



Chapters & Support Groups

Connection is at the heart of recovery. Across the country, DBSA Chapters and support groups provide welcoming spaces where people living with depression and bipolar disorder—and those who care about them—can find understanding, encouragement, and hope. Led by trained peer facilitators, these communities offer opportunities to share experiences, build meaningful connections, and remind people that they are never alone on their mental health journey.



DBSA City of Angels



Supporting 73 Chapter Affiliates Nationwide

Throughout 2025, DBSA strengthened its national chapter network by providing training, peer collaboration, and leadership development opportunities, resulting in 136 chapter engagements across four learning initiatives.



Support Group Participant Outcomes

83%

reported feeling more hopeful after attending a DBSA support group meeting

96%

felt welcome at DBSA support group meetings

81%

gained new coping tools, wellness strategies, & resources for mood disorders

Support Group Meetings

237,193 total Peer Support Group Attendances

- 20,000+ Support Group Meetings Hosted by DBSA Chapters
- 348 General Online Support Group Meetings
- 293 Black Community Support Group Meetings
- 87 Parent & Caregiver Support Group Meetings
- 51 Family & Friends Support Group Meetings
- 50 Rural Community Support Group Meetings
- 19 LGBTQ+ Community Support Group Meetings (Launched August 2025)



DBSA extends its sincere gratitude to Johnson & Johnson Healthcare Systems for its \$35,000 contribution and to Johnson & Johnson Foundation for its \$50,000 contribution in support of DBSA's Online Peer Support Groups.

Johnson&Johnson



Advancing Change Through Lived Experience

At DBSA, we believe that people living with mood disorders are experts in their own experiences. By elevating the peer voice, we help ensure that research, healthcare, education, and support programs reflect the real needs, priorities, and perspectives of the communities they are designed to serve.

DBSA Peer Advisory Councils

A Peer Advisory Council is a group of individuals with lived experience who provide critical insight, feedback, and guidance on programs, content, policies, and protocols. By elevating the voices of those most directly impacted, peer councils help ensure that our work is relevant, responsive, and grounded in real-world experience.

In 2025, 39 peers participated in the following 5 DBSA peer councils. In those sessions, we:

- Partnered with the BD² Learning Health Network to gather community insights on managing physical health while living with bipolar disorder.
- Engaged participants in DBSA Black Community Peer Support Groups to provide feedback on a Mayo Clinic survey exploring perceptions of peer support, research, clinical trials, and factors that influence participation.
- Developed a co-branded patient education campaign with Optum to help people with bipolar disorder recognize the early warning signs of mania and hypomania.
- Convened a DBSA Peer Council to help inform the development of a new national online LGBTQ+ peer support group.
- Collaborated with Lundbeck on a co-branded PTSD patient education campaign designed for women in civilian populations, with an emphasis on reaching BIPOC and rural communities.

Transforming the Definition of Wellness for People Living with Mood Disorders

In 2025, DBSA completed a draft of a new Depression Wellness Measure (DWM) to be used as an adjunctive Clinical Outcome Assessment to improve health outcomes for people living with mood disorders by transforming the way researchers, medical product developers, clinicians, and third-party payers evaluate wellness for peers who engage with the healthcare ecosystem.

To date, the following work has been completed for the study:

- Peer input collected through stakeholder workshops, surveys, and focus groups
- Subject matter expert interviews, systematic literature review, and mapping
- Completed and analyzed qualitative interviews with people with lived experience, refining domains and language
- Draft proposed wellness measure finalized

DBSA's next steps in Transforming the Definition of Wellness include validating the proposed DWM in a Mayo Clinic research study, completing psychometrics on the measure, and identifying the appropriate federal agency to provide guidance.

DBSA thanks Otsuka for its sponsorship of the Transforming the Definition of Wellness initiative during 2025.



Building the Peer Workforce

As demand for mental health services continues to grow, peer specialists play a vital role in expanding access to support. Through the DBSA Peer Specialist Course and scholarship program, we help prepare individuals with lived experience to provide compassionate, recovery-focused peer support. For more than 20 years, this nationally recognized program has strengthened the peer workforce, helping more people find connection, hope, and support when they need it most.

122 Peer Specialists Trained

- 8 DBSA Peer Specialist Course training sessions offered
- 22 Dauten Scholarship Recipients graduated DBSA Peer Specialist Course
- 56% increase in DBSA Peer Specialist Course graduates from 2024 to 2025
- 42% of all 2025 DBSA Peer Specialist Course graduates were Veterans

Dauten Scholarship Fund

DBSA launched its first scholarship fund in 2025, thanks to a generous inaugural donation from Nick Savasta honoring longtime supporters Kent and Liz Dauten. The fund helped remove financial barriers to Certified Peer Specialist training, resulting in 22 graduates prepared to provide peer support in their communities.

“I would like to thank you all for providing such an amazing opportunity. I am proud to say that I have fully capitalized on this scholarship that you made possible. Since attending the peer support certification training through DBSA I have successfully started a new career with a community mental health organization providing mental health peer support services in my community. Thanks for all you have done to help me achieve this level of success!” -Dauten Scholarship Awardee

California Mental Health Services Authority

DBSA continued its strong relationship with the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA), training 42 California peers in 2025. Through a CalMHSA-funded initiative, DBSA was able to offer Peer Specialist training at no cost to eligible California students.

Bipolar Action Network

DBSA continues to participate in the Bipolar Action Network (BAN), a collaborative learning health network working to improve the diagnosis, treatment, and outcomes of bipolar disorder. As the lived-experience representative, DBSA brings person-centered, peer-informed perspectives to help advance more responsive, effective, and patient-centered systems of care.

Tardive Dyskinesia and Mental Health Research & Clinical Trial Education Initiative

Convened a Peer Council of current and former DBSA Peer Support Specialist Course trainees to inform education and outreach related to tardive dyskinesia (TD), mental health research, and clinical trial participation. Insights from individuals with lived experience helped shape more relevant and accessible educational resources and messaging for DBSA's Peer Support Specialist Course.

As one participant reflected:

“I now see the close connection between peer support and tardive dyskinesia. I did not know that one of the main causes of TD comes from the use of long-term medication. That makes a lot more sense why we as peers should be here for those who may have TD.”

This reflection highlights the value of integrating lived experience into peer education and underscores the important role peer support can play in increasing awareness of TD.

DBSA gratefully acknowledges Teva Pharmaceuticals for its generous support of this initiative.



Statement of Activities		
	2025	2024
REVENUE		
Contributions	2,465,032	3,790,335
Program Fees	186,437	297,809
Net investment (loss) income	133,267	(5,569)
TOTAL REVENUE EXPENSES	2,784,736	4,082,575
Program Expenses	1,892,562	1,530,477
Supporting services		
Management and general	727,324	590,734
Fundraising	644,381	866,657
TOTAL EXPENSES	3,264,267	2,987,868
CHANGE IN NET ASSET	(479,531)	1,094,707
Net Asset, Beginning of year	3,434,623	2,339,916
Net Asset, End of Year	2,955,092	3,434,623
Statements of Financial Position		
ASSETS		
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	658,983	1,441,995
Accounts receivable	11,500	15,931
Contributions receivable	463,757	796,888
Prepaid expenses and other current assets	54,287	107,820
Total current assets	1,188,527	2,362,634
Property and equipment, net	9,183	152,749
Other assets		
Deposits	24,125	20,000
Investments	1,978,815	1,325,173
Total other assets	2,002,940	1,345,173
Total assets	3,200,650	3,860,556
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Current liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$115,275	\$94,666
Accrued payroll and vacation	46,084	119,163
Operating lease liability	-	138,304
Deferred revenue	84,200	73,800
Total current liabilities	245,559	425,933
Noncurrent liabilities		
Operating lease liability	-	-
Total liabilities	245,559	425,933
NET ASSETS		
Without donor restrictions	2,578,047	2,321,027
With donor restrictions	377,045	1,113,596
Total net assets	2,955,092	3,434,623
Total liabilities and net assets	\$3,200,651	\$3,860,556

2025 Investors

\$100,000 or more

Anonymous
Rebecca and Wade Bacon
Intra-Cellular Therapies (ITCI)
Ellen Krantz
Otsuka America Pharmaceutical Inc.
The Marilee Wheeler Fund

\$25,000 - \$99,000

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