EXECUTIVE SEARCH

DBSA

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Find Community.
Find Wellness.
Find Hope.™

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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Client:	**Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance**
Role:	**Chief Executive Officer**
Location:	**Chicago, IL**
Reports To:	**Board of Directors**
Website:	dbsalliance.org

DBSA Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

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SITUATION OVERVIEW:

ZRG Aspen Leadership Group is proud to partner with the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance in their search for a **Chief Executive Officer**.

ABOUT DEPRESSION AND BIPOLAR SUPPORT ALLIANCE:

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) is the leading national, peer-focused organization focusing on mood disorders, including depression and bipolar disorder, which affect over 21 million Americans, account for over 50% of the nation's suicides every year, and cost $23 billion in lost workdays and other workplace losses. DBSA provides peer-led support, trusted resources, and wellness tools for individuals living with mood disorders—as well as for their family members, friends, parents, and caregivers.

DBSA offers peer-based, wellness-oriented support and empowering services and resources available when people need them, where they need them, and how they need to receive them—online, in local support groups, in audio and video casts, or in printed materials distributed by DBSA, their chapters, and mental health care facilities across America. Written in plain English and crafted in consultation with both peers and leading clinicians, DBSA educational materials help people with diagnoses and their loved ones to know what mood disorders are, and what can be done for treatment and management.

Through their extensive resources and 450 support groups across the country, DBSA reaches millions of people each year with in-person and online peer support; current, readily understandable information about depression and bipolar disorder; and empowering tools focused on an integrated approach to wellness. DBSA aims to address the gap in access to mental health care by providing peer-led support groups, holding more than 20,000 support group meetings annually.

For people living with depression or bipolar disorder, recovery can look different for everyone and may include talk therapy, medication, peer support, and personal wellness strategies. DBSA recognizes that there is no single path to mental health recovery and promotes approaches that help people make informed decisions about their care and work toward their own wellness goal through its national organization, chapter and support-group network, educational resources, advocacy, and partnerships. DBSA is focused on long-term financial strength, sustainable growth, and new partnerships that expand support for the people and communities it serves.

POSITION:

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** will be a strategic, collaborative, and experienced leader with responsibility for the organization's overall direction, financial sustainability, external relationships, fundraising, and performance.

The CEO will serve as DBSA's chief fundraiser and a primary public representative. The CEO will personally develop relationships with major donors, foundations, corporate partners, healthcare organizations, and other supporters. The CEO will work with the Board and staff to broaden DBSA's base of support, increase flexible and multi-year funding, and develop partnerships that advance the mission and strengthen the organization over time.

The Board-approved 2026–2028 Strategic Plan provides the framework for DBSA's direction and priorities. The next CEO will be accountable for advancing the plan, measuring progress, and working with the Board and staff to refine implementation as conditions change. The CEO will lead major decisions about organizational priorities, risks and opportunities, resource allocation, and strategic partnerships. All decisions will be evaluated based on mission alignment, expected impact, organizational capacity, and long-term sustainability.

The CEO will maintain a strong partnership with the Board and provide clear information about strategy, finances, fundraising, performance, risks, and opportunities. The CEO will lead through a capable executive team and support a culture of accountability, inclusion, collaboration, and sound decision-making.

The successful candidate will combine strategic leadership with exceptional fundraising capability. While experience in mental health, healthcare, or advocacy is valuable, it is most important that the CEO has a history of successfully driving organizational growth, securing significant philanthropic investment, and making strategic decisions that strengthen long-term sustainability and mission impact.

FROM THE BOARD:

In 1985, two people living with mood disorders told their psychiatrist that what they needed most for their recovery was to meet others who understood. He introduced them. That introduction became DBSA. Four decades later, that idea is still the whole point: people who have lived with depression and bipolar disorder can help each other heal, recover, and thrive through professionally moderated, peer-led support groups across the country and online.

I found DBSA when my own son was struggling with severe depression. Parenting a child with any health challenge is challenging, but parenting a child with mental health struggles can be downright lonely and isolating. DBSA's parents and caregivers support provided a resource for me that no other organization offered.

At a time when stigma against mental illness runs rampant, treatment is hard to access, and federal funding is shrinking, DBSA fills a void in the mental health space that no other organization in the country fills. The peer support DBSA provides is not a cure for mental illness, but it is a critical tool in the treatment of life-threatening diseases that currently have no cure. Even with access to the best healthcare, treating mood disorders requires a multi-pronged approach, and the services DBSA provides to the public for free have been scientifically proven to improve the lives of people living with mood disorders. Studies have demonstrated that attending peer support groups at DBSA improved individuals' day-to-day functioning and sense of well-being, increased their medication compliance, and even made them substantially less likely to be hospitalized for their illness. Put simply, the work DBSA does improves lives in concrete ways and at scale.

We are grateful for the stewardship of our departing CEO and excited to provide the next leader with real room to shape what DBSA becomes. We are looking for a CEO who will partner with the Board to drive DBSA's mission by expanding our sources of funding, expanding our ability to serve the people already clamoring for what we offer, and expanding our reach to those who have not yet heard of the organization. Last year, DBSA had over 237,000 annual support group attendances, and our support groups have had a waitlist for years. DBSA needs to expand its capacity to serve those who have already discovered the organization and needs revenue to do so. Beyond that, however, the Board believes far too few people living with mood disorders know about DBSA and the help that we offer. The Board is looking for a leader who understands both the scale of the mental health crisis in this country and the potential DBSA has to meet the moment. You need to believe, as we do, that people are experts in their own recovery, and that support from someone who has been there can change the course of a life.

You will be joining a compassionate and committed board. We are made up of people from various walks of life and industries – who either have lived experience or who have supported a family member with lived experience. We want to be real partners to our CEO: supportive, candid, and invested in your success.

I complete my term as Chair at the end of this year. Rachel Yeates, our Vice Chair and incoming Chair, joins me in signing this note. She will be your partner from your first day.

DBSA is at the forefront of the fight against mental illness, and we are looking for an ambitious, entrepreneurial leader to join us in the cause. If this work speaks to you, we would very much like to meet you.

— Rebecca Bacon, Chair, Board of Directors & Rachel Yeates, Vice Chair & incoming Chair

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The **Chief Executive Officer** will

- maintain relationships within and a deep knowledge of DBSA's community, assuring that the organization has an effective long-range strategy to achieve its mission and the people, systems, and infrastructure needed to support its strategy;
- lead a diversified resource development strategy and remain personally accountable for high-level donor relationships, major requests, new funding opportunities, and overall fundraising results;
- provide leadership for DBSA's programs, strengthen organizational functions, and implement Board-approved financial plans;
- build partnerships with healthcare organizations, employers, foundations, researchers, advocacy groups, policymakers, industry partners, and community organizations when those relationships support DBSA's mission and sustainability;
- serve as a highly visible ambassador and steward of the organization, maintaining and developing relationships with key stakeholders and supporters to strengthen DBSA's visibility and standing as a trusted national voice on mood disorders;
- align financial decisions with programmatic and organizational priorities, identifying tradeoffs, managing risk, and pursuing opportunities that strengthen DBSA's long-term sustainability;
- work effectively with the Board on governance, strategy, financial oversight, fundraising, and organizational risk; and
- lead and develop senior staff, set clear expectations, and support a culture of accountability, collaboration, inclusion, and results.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance seeks a **Chief Executive Officer** with

- a respect for the role of lived experience and a commitment to the mission of DBSA – to provide hope, help, support, and education to improve the lives of people who have mood disorders;
- an understanding of the importance of peer support, access to useful information and resources, and reducing stigma and barriers facing people living with mood disorders;
- an ability to set organizational direction, make sound organization-wide decisions, and translate strategy into measurable results;
- demonstrated success in fundraising and relationship building, including experience engaging donors, funders, Board members, and community partners and personally soliciting gifts with significant institutional impact;
- experience leading and supporting staff and working collaboratively with a governing board;

- experience strengthening an organization over time through sustainable growth, improved financial stability, new partnerships, and focused use of resources;
- an ability to effectively negotiate, develop lasting partnerships with key stakeholders, and serve as an ambassador for DBSA with donors, Board members, staff, partners, policymakers, and public audiences;
- an understanding of sound budgeting, forecasting, revenue diversification, and risk management strategies and the relationship between strategy and financial capacity;
- integrity, sound judgment, transparency, and a commitment to responsible stewardship and building an inclusive organizational culture; and
- an ability to communicate complex issues in plain language.

The ideal CEO will bring a deep understanding of mental health, informed by personal lived experience, experience supporting a family member or loved one, or professional experience as a mental health practitioner, advocate, or leader.

Professional experience in mental health, behavioral health, healthcare, public health, disability advocacy, or a related field is preferred. Comparable leadership experience in another mission-driven field will be considered when combined with strong fundraising, strategic leadership, and partnership development experience.

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance will consider candidates with a broad range of backgrounds. If you are excited about this role and feel that you can contribute to DBSA, but your experience does not exactly align with every qualification listed above, we encourage you to apply.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS:

The **Chief Executive Officer** will report to the Board of Directors. The CEO will oversee a team of fourteen staff, including six direct reports.

SALARY & BENEFITS:

The target salary for this position is $210,000. Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance offers a comprehensive package of benefits, including medical, dental, and vision insurance, a 401(k)-retirement plan with employer contributions, and generous paid time off.

LOCATION:

Chicago, IL offers an exciting mix of big-city energy and distinct neighborhood charm. Residents can enjoy beautiful Lake Michigan beaches and lakefront trails, renowned architecture, a diverse food and cultural scene, and plenty of museums, theaters, music venues, parks, and shopping.



Neighborhoods such as Lincoln Park, Lakeview, Hyde Park, and Wicker Park each have their own personality, while the CTA train and bus system makes many parts of the city accessible without relying on a car. Overall, Chicago is a vibrant place to live for anyone who enjoys a wide variety of amenities, waterfront recreation, great food, and a strong sense of neighborhood community.



APPLICATION PROCESS:

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. Cover letters should be responsive to the mission of Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance and the responsibilities and competencies presented in the position prospectus. Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

To apply for this position, visit: Chief Executive Officer, Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance.

To nominate a candidate or inquire about the position, please contact Steven Wallace.

ABOUT ZRG PARTNERS:

ZRG is a global talent advisory firm that is changing the way companies find, hire, and manage talent through its data-driven approach to executive and professional search. The company's digital Zi platform combines talent intelligence, candidate insights, and process improvement to dramatically deliver executive searches quicker and with proven better results.

ABOUT ZRG ASPEN LEADERSHIP GROUP:

ZRG Aspen Leadership Group (ALG) supports exceptional careers in the nonprofit sector, recruiting presidents, executive directors, and chief advancement officers and helping them recruit, train, and inspire high-performing teams. The company's search services and leadership consulting focus on building teams that enable an organization to engage all its potential donors and volunteers and to drive unprecedented fundraising results.



Steven Wallace
Managing Director and Vice President, Stewardship and Partnerships
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Steven W. Wallace brings 28 years of philanthropy experience to his work in executive search and leadership consulting with clients. His expertise covers a wide array of disciplines, including: fundraising; team building; donor relations, recognition and stewardship; board management; and the increasingly important field of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I). Throughout his career,

Steven has helped some of the nation's most prestigious healthcare and higher education institutions expand their programs and achieve their philanthropic goals.

Previously he served as an associate vice president in the Office of Philanthropy at City of Hope (COH), working with major donors and leading a team of fundraisers focused on the Hematologic Malignancies Research Institute. He was a member of the leadership team at COH's Division of Health Equities, helping to lead development for both internal and external DE&I programs.

Prior to joining City of Hope, Steven worked for 12 years with Providence Health & Services, one of America's ten largest health systems, serving as vice president of development for both Providence Holy Cross Foundation and Providence Little Company of Mary Foundation – fundraising roles that included a heavy emphasis on stakeholder engagement, as well as Board recruitment and management.

Prior to entering the healthcare field, Steven successfully fundraised for California State University, Northridge (CSUN), where he also managed a volunteer advisory board for the Jewish Studies program. Before joining CSUN, Steven served as senior associate director of development for the University of Chicago, Graduate School of Business where he established new recognition and communications programs for alumni donors, including The Harper Society, which still exist to this day. Before moving to Chicago, Steven was director of donor relations for Columbia University in New York, and held administrative positions at Hunter College's School of Health Sciences in New York. His first fundraising position was at UC San Francisco School of Dentistry.

A frequent presenter at Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) in Donor Relations conferences, Steven received his Bachelor's degree in Mass Communications from the University of California, Berkeley and Master's degree in Public Administration from the University of San Francisco.