

Peer Bridger Program

Background or purpose

Peer Bridger staff deliver peer support services to individuals in state hospitals prior to discharge and after their return to their communities. The Peer Bridger develops a relationship of trust with the participant. In developing this trust the Peer Bridger may function as a role model, a mentor, a teacher, and an ally as they communicate hope and encouragement. They support the individual to advocate for themselves.

The Peer Bridger also acts as a champion of hope and recovery. Peer Bridgers interact with staff to help create culture change within an institution and promote the expectation that recovery is possible. The Peer Bridger program is based on the New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services' model.

The New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRYS) Peer Bridger program has operated since 1995. In 2008, NYAPRS worked with 229 individuals, and 176 of those individuals who consented to the release of their hospitalization data. After an initial review of this data, 125 of these individuals were not readmitted into the state psychiatric center in 2009. In summary, that means that approximately 71% percent of the people the Peer Bridgers worked with were able to stay out of the hospital in 2009.

<https://www.nyaprs.org/peer-bridger>

More about this program

The 2016 Washington State Legislative session (2ESHB 2376) directed the Washington State Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) to implement and provide twenty-two Peer Bridger team members within the behavioral health system in partnership with the state psychiatric hospital liaisons. These team members assist in community reintegration planning activities and promote service continuity. Transitioning individuals back to their communities enhances long-term recovery and reduces hospital readmissions. Impact of peer staff on the state hospital discharges and community placements is recorded through data collection.

82-0545 (10/23)

Funding

Funds for twenty-four Peer Bridgers have been allocated to Washington's ten regional service areas. Funding that supports this program comes from Mental Health Services Block Grant (MHBG) Funds,

FFY23 Budget - \$1,920,000

FFY24 Budget - \$1,920,000

Oversite

Current allocation of Peer Bridger FTEs is detailed as follows in the outline below:

Regional service area	#FTE's
North Central	1.0
Greater Columbia	3.0
Great Rivers	2.0
Salish	2.0
Thurston-Mason	2.0
North Sound	3.0
King County	4.0
Pierce County	3.0
Spokane	3.0
Southwest	3.0

Start up or who is served by the program

The Peer Bridger program serves those participants currently admitted to Western or Eastern State Hospital and who have had lengthy hospitalizations or a history of frequent or multiple hospitalizations. With the Governors initiative to transition people from the state hospitals, Peer Bridgers have started serving eligible individuals who are in community hospitals and Evaluation and Treatment Centers (E&Ts). Participation in the program is voluntary.

For more information

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