

Peer Bridger

Peer Bridgers deliver voluntary peer support services to individuals civilly committed at Washington's two state hospitals. Services are offered to as soon after admission as is possible. If accepted, Peer Bridgers work with people prior to their discharge from the hospital, as well as afterwards in their chosen communities. The Peer Bridger develops a relationship of trust with participants and in developing this trust may function as a role model, mentor, teacher, and ally as they communicate hope and encouragement. They support the individual to advocate for themselves and act as a champion of hope and recovery.

The Peer Bridger program is based on [the New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services' \(NYAPRS\) model](#). In 2008, NYAPRS worked with 176 individuals who consented to the release of their hospitalization data. An initial review showed that approximately 71% of the people Peer Bridgers worked with were not readmitted into the state psychiatric center and were able to stay out of the hospital the year after discharge in 2009.

Overview

In 2016, the Health Care Authority provided funding for twenty-two Peer Bridgers within the behavioral health system. These team members assisted in community reintegration planning activities and promoted care continuity. These services helping to transition individuals back to their communities enhances long-term recovery and has been shown to reduce hospital readmissions.

Eligibility requirements

The Peer Bridger program serves those participants currently admitted to Western or Eastern State Hospitals. With the Governor's initiative to transition people from the state hospitals, Peer Bridgers may also serve eligible individuals in community hospitals and Evaluation and Treatment Centers (E&Ts) after their efforts have been focused on the state hospitals, and if the Peer Bridgers have additional capacity.

Budget for SFY 25

Funds for a total of thirty-five Peer Bridgers have now been allocated to Washington's ten regional 82-0545 (10/24)

service areas, providing additional Peer Bridgers in the two regions where state hospitals are located. Funding that supports this program comes from Mental Health Services Block Grant (MHBG) Funds.

- FFY24 Budget - \$2,160,000
- FFY25 Budget - \$3,587,500

Partners

Peer Bridgers interact with state hospital staff to help create culture-change within the institution and promote an expectation that recovery is possible, within reach, and worth pursuing.

Network

Across Washington's 10 Behavioral Health Administrative Service Organization (BH-ASO) regions, 35 Peer Bridgers provide vital peer support to individuals civilly committed at Washington's two state hospitals – Western State Hospital (WSH) and Eastern State Hospital (ESH).

All BH-ASO regions of Washington have at least one Peer Bridger providing peer support to eligible individuals.

In 2024, HCA implemented five Peer Bridgers that are fully dedicated to serving individuals at Washington's two state hospitals.

- In Pierce County, four Peer Bridgers are fully designated to WSH.
- In Spokane County, one Peer Bridger is fully designated to ESH.

For more information

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