

Peer Bridger program

Program overview

Peer Bridger's deliver peer support services to state hospital patients prior to discharge and after their return to their communities. The Peer Bridger works to develop 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. Washington's 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 initial review of this data, 125 of these individuals were not readmitted into the state psychiatric center in 2009. This means that approximately 71% percent of those whom peer bridgers worked with were able to stay out of the hospital in 2009.

[NYAPRS Peer Bridger Project](#)

Eligibility requirements

The Peer Bridger Program serves participants currently admitted to Western or Eastern State Hospital who have had lengthy hospitalizations or a history of frequent or multiple hospitalizations. With Governor Jay Inslee' initiative to prioritize efforts to transition people from the state hospitals. Peer Bridgers began serving eligible individuals in community hospitals and Evaluation and Treatment Centers (E&Ts). Participation in the program is voluntary.

The SUD Peer Bridger pilot program serves people who are exiting inpatient substance use disorder treatment centers.

Authority

The 2016 Washington State Legislative session (2ESHB 2376) directed the Washington State Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) to implement and provide 22 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.

In 2022, HCA was authorized to use substance use block grant covid enhancement funding to pilot a substance use disorder peer bridger program in Washington State. This program is contracted with Pioneer Human Services for 10 peer bridgers across Washington State.

Budget and funding

Funds for 24 peer bridgers have been allocated to Washington's 10 regional service areas. Funding for this program from Community Mental Health Services Block Grant (MHBG) Funds,

FFY22 Budget - \$1,920,000

FFY23 Budget - \$1,920,000

FFY22/23 Budget - \$800,000 Covid Enhancement

Primary partners

The Peer Bridger distribution is outlined below;

Regional service area	#FTE's
North Central	1.0
Greater Columbia	2.0
Great Rivers	2.0
Salish	2.0
Thurston-Mason	2.0
North Sound	3.0
King County	3.0
Pierce County	3.0
Spokane	3.0
Southwest	3.0
Pioneer Human Services	10

For More Information Contact

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