

## **Issue: Don't Cut \$50 Million from the NH Department of Health & Human Services Budget**

Please don't eliminate \$50 million and don't cut 226 positions from the NH Department of Health and Human Services in "back-of-the-budget" cuts that could limit our ability to respond to the needs of people with mental health lived experience.

**Avoiding psychiatric hospitalizations, emergency-room boardings and incarcerations save taxpayer dollars and better serve people with mental health conditions, substance misuse challenges and homelessness.**



### **Why We Care**

The New Hampshire Mental Health Peer Alliance supports peers to educate and advocate for equal rights and a recovery-based mental health system. Peers participate and exercise leadership in regional and statewide forums. We reach out to mental health professionals, legislators, government officials and the general public to realize our goals. Visit us at [nhmhp.org](http://nhmhp.org).

**How Can We Save NH Taxpayers' Money and Better Serve Peers with Mental Health Lived Experience?** Avoid psychiatric hospitalizations, emergency-room boardings and incarcerations. Keep people in the communities in which they live.

### **NH Hospital Visits Cost \$1,506/Person per Day**

According to NH Hospital, the mean daily census averaged 176 people. The median length-of-stay-in-days averaged 26 days. That equates to \$39,156 per person per average stay. It is less expensive to treat mental health peers in the community at their Peer Support Agencies.

**Source:** *New Hampshire Hospital's Quarterly Report, Adult Census Summary Measures: July to December 2020*. Note (1/21/2021): mean daily census includes patients on leave and is rounded to nearest whole number.

### **Emergency-Room Boardings Cost Up to \$3,000/Person per Day**

Between July 1, 2017 and January 31, 2021, the number of adults waiting for inpatient psychiatric services ranged from 3 to 65 people. During the same timeframe, the total number of psychiatric boarding days ranged from 490 to 1,913: up to \$5.7 million in emergency-room boarding costs. It is far less costly to treat mental health peers in the community at their Peer Support Agencies.

The NH Supreme Court sided with Jane Doe: people being held involuntarily in emergency rooms must now be given a chance to contest their detention within three days of their arrival.

"Part of what I believe the Jane Doe decision reflects is the longstanding discrimination against people with mental illness," said Ken Norton, Executive Director of NAMI NH. "We don't treat any other medical condition; we don't hold people in a life-threatening situation for days on end in an emergency room without proper care."

**Source:** *New Hampshire Hospital's Presentation to the House Finance Division III and Concord Monitor*.

## **Incarceration, Transitional Prison Housing and Probation Cost \$576 to \$155,144/Person per Year**

NH taxpayers spent more than \$97 million in fiscal year 2019 to incarcerate people. Prisons spent \$44,400/person per year; transitional prison housing spent \$20,613/person per year; probation/parole spent \$576/person per year and the secure psychiatric unit spent \$155,144/person per year.

It is far less expensive to treat mental health peers in the community at their Peer Support Agencies.

**Source:** *NH Department of Corrections Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Report.*

## **Mental Health Courts: A Better Use of Taxpayer Dollars**

**HB 578** moves New Hampshire forward in establishing a statewide system of mental health courts. This bill enables the New Hampshire court system to develop standards for court programs across the state serving individuals who become involved with the justice system due to mental health conditions.

Mental Health Courts are multi-phase intervention programs for adults with criminal offenses who are eligible for mental health services. The court, county and community mental health center collaborate to provide supervision, monitoring, case management and mental health treatment.

Mental Health Courts increase access to behavioral health services. They reduce recidivism, protect public safety and save taxpayer dollars by reducing incarceration.

**Source:** *New Futures*, 100 North Main Street, Suite 400, Concord, NH 03301.

## **Peer Support Agencies Cost \$507/Person per Year**

Peer Support Agencies are located in ten regions around NH. These peer-led, peer-driven organizations provide an alternative, peer-oriented approach to mental health wellness and recovery. They also enhance regional delivery of community-based mental health services at no cost to the peer and have no waiting list.

Some Peer Support Agencies host telephone warmlines and/or provide peer-respite beds. Some are now adding Step-Up/Step-Down services to their array of offerings.

Between January 2020 and December 2020, NH peer support agencies served a total of 8,041 people with an average of 549 daily visits. Since the State of NH contributes approximately \$4.1 million per year, it costs NH taxpayers approximately \$507/person per year for peer support services, including warmlines and peer respite.

Warmlines provide peer-to-peer support to people with mental health conditions who need telephone support.

Peer Respite stabilizes and supports individuals experiencing mental health crises and acute psychiatric episodes, while reducing avoidable inpatient stays.

Most Peer Support Agency staff are trained in Intentional Peer Support (IPS), Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) and other recovery tools like emotional CPR, Whole Health Action Management (WHAM) and Mental Health First Aid.

**Source:** *New Hampshire Mental Health Client Peer Support Agencies: Census Summary: January to December 2020. Bureau of Mental Health Services and Peer Support Agency Quarterly Statistics Reports.* Data compiled February 2, 2021.

**Peer Step-Up/Step-Down Services Cost \$100,000/Bed per Year**

Step-Up/Step-Down safely supports people at risk of hospitalization in their communities, while reducing avoidable psychiatric hospitalizations and readmissions. It will cost the State of NH \$2.4 million to fund three peer beds at four different locations (12 peer beds in total) for two years: 12 peer beds.

Since Step-Up/Step-Down services are new, they don't yet have statistics to report. However, they are fulfilling part of the NH Ten-Year Mental Health Plan.