



# Fiscal Year 2023 Peer Support REPORT

## **NH Mental Health Peer Alliance**

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## Executive Summary

### Peer Support

Peer support encompasses a range of activities and interactions between people who share similar experiences (e.g., being diagnosed with mental health conditions, co-occurring substance use disorders or both). This mutuality—or “peerness”—between a peer support worker and person in or seeking recovery promotes connection and inspires hope (samhsa.gov).

The State of New Hampshire offers free peer support services to residents eighteen years of age and older who are current recipients or former recipients of mental health services or who are at significant risk of becoming a recipient of mental health services.

## Peer Support Agency Services

### Peer Support

Peer Support Agency services include support groups, one-on-one interactions, educational opportunities and recreational activities. Each peer support agency is open forty-four hours per week, by contract.

Peer Support Agencies are peer-driven organizations. Peer members have input about what hours the agency is open and how the agency is run at Community Meetings. They also help decide which groups and field trips the agency provides.

Peer Support Agencies are peer-led organizations. By administrative rule, at least 51% of our boards must be peers with mental health lived experience. Staff members, including Executive Directors, are also peers with lived experience.

Peer Support Agencies use evidence-based practices as part of peer support.

- Intentional Peer Support (IPS) by Shery Meade, MSW, ©2019 includes making connections by sharing common, personal experiences; respecting worldviews by listening with curiosity to the untold story; sharing mutual responsibility by negotiating the relationship in ways that work for member and staff members; and

practicing moving towards by focusing on what is possible rather than what is wrong.

- Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) by Mary Ellen Copeland, PhD, ©2003 includes developing tools members can use every day to maintain their wellness; addressing situations that might make members feel uncomfortable and identify wellness tools to feel better; addressing internal signs that let members know they may be headed for a difficult time and identify wellness tools they can use to help them feel better; identifying feelings and behaviors that indicate that the situation has gotten worse but has not reached a crisis and identifying wellness tools to use when they notice these feelings and behaviors; determining whether or not members can still make decisions for themselves and develop instructions that others will need in order to make decisions on their behalf and do things for them that will help them recover; and helping members recover from a crisis and move back to using their daily maintenance plan.
- Whole-Health Action Management (WHAM) by Appalachian Consulting Group, Incorporated and the University of Illinois at Chicago, Center on Mental Health Services Research and Policy, ©2014, includes managing their stress; eating healthfully; being physically active; sleeping restfully; serving others; creating and relying on a support network; expecting positive results based on optimism; using cognitive skills to avoid negative thinking; practicing spiritual beliefs; and giving their lives a sense of meaning and purpose. WHAM relies on five keys to success: person-centered goals, weekly action plans, daily/weekly personal logs, one-to-one peer support and weekly WHAM peer support groups.

### **Warmlines**

Warmlines are open when the Peer Support Agencies are closed. They are open every day from around 5 pm to 10 pm. See [nhmhp.org](http://nhmhp.org) for more information.

Experienced peers answer the phones and offer free peer support. You don't have to be in crisis to reach out to our warmlines around the state: North Country Peer Support Center, Connections Peer Support Center, Monadnock Peer Support, H.E.A.R.T.S. Peer Support Center of Greater Nashua and On the Road to Wellness.

### **Peer Respite**

Peer Respite includes free, intensive, residential peer support services for up to seven days. These services are offered by two Peer Support Agencies: H.E.A.R.T.S. Peer Support Center of Greater Nashua and Monadnock Peer Support, Keene, NH.

## Step-Up/Step-Down

Step-Up/Step-Down includes free, intensive, residential peer support services for up to ninety days. These services are available at four Peer Support Agencies: Connections Peer Support Center, H.E.A.R.T.S. Peer Support Center of Greater Nashua, On the Road to Wellness and Monadnock Peer Support.

## Contracts

Eight Peer Support Agencies, with fourteen locations around the State of New Hampshire, offer free peer support services to residents eighteen years of age and older who are current recipients or former recipients of mental health services or who are at significant risk of becoming a recipient of mental health services.

Peer Support, Warmlines and Peer Respite are funded out of the same budget.

Region	Peer Support Agencies	Peer Support Two-Year Contract Amount	Annual Total Members	Annual Average Daily Visits
1	North Country Peer Support Center	\$2,863,522	214	27
2	Stepping Stone & Next Step Peer Support Centers	\$2,296,642	394	10
3	One Peer To Another	\$2,036,620	88	14
4	Monadnock Peer Support	\$1,623,907	TBD	34
5	H.E.A.R.T.S. Peer Support Center of Greater Nashua	\$2,313,757	411	32
6	On the Road to Wellness	\$2,566,471	301	18
7	Connections Peer Support Center	\$1,469,950	146	10
8	Infinity Peer Support	\$1,138,405	396	18
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$16,309,274</b>	<b>1,950</b>	<b>163</b>

In fiscal year 2024, 2,326 total members visited that year—with 151 average daily visits.

Step-Up/Step-Down services come under a separate budget line item. They began in NH in fiscal year 2023 with a two-year contract amount of \$3,200,000 for three beds each in four locations: Monadnock Peer Support, H.E.A.R.T.S. Peer Support Center of Greater Nashua, On the Road to Wellness and Connections Peer Support Center.

The success of the pilot program led to three additional beds being added at Monadnock Peer Support.

In fiscal year 2024, H.E.A.R.T.S. Peer Support Center of Greater Nashua, with 1046 Total Occupied Bed Days and 1098 Total Bed Days, had an Occupancy Rate of 95%.

## Organizational Effectiveness

**Eight Peer Support Agencies**, collectively operating with a total two-year peer support budget of \$16,309,274, supplied free peer mental health support to 1,950 adult members in fiscal year 2023—with an average of 163 daily visitors.

On the 2023 NH Peer Support Services Survey, 99.36% members (68.59% strongly agreed and 30.77% agreed) that they were satisfied with their respective peer support agency. This survey was completed by 156 members around the State of NH.

Of the members who completed the NH Peer Support Services Survey, 32.40% have been coming to their PSA for more than 5 years; 24.58% for 1 year to 5 years; 20.11% for 6 months to 1 year and 22.35% for 0 months to 6 months.

Of the members who completed the NH Peer Support Services Survey, 2.79% are 18 to 20 years of age; 4.47% are 21 to 24; 36.7% are 25 to 44; 46.37% are 45 to 64; 8.38% are 65 to 74 and 0% are 75+.

## History

In 1990, the Office of Consumer & Family Affairs (OCFA) was formed as one of the first of two such organizations. Originally, it was tasked by the Bureau of Behavioral Health to “facilitate individual and family input into all aspects of the state-funded mental health system as well as the Bureau of Mental Health Services program planning and policy development.” (NH DHHS website)

David Hilton, the original Director of the OCFA, also worked with the ad hoc groups around the state to form the original drop-in centers. The OCFA helped advocate for the drop-in centers.

Peer Support Agencies began in the early 1990s as a collaboration between the Bureau of Behavioral Health and regional ad hoc peer groups. With the support of the Bureau of Behavioral Health, drop-in centers arose as 501(c)(3)s to provide support to adults with mental health conditions. They later became Peer Support Agencies where members could learn skills to cope with their mental health conditions and progress with their recovery.



## Scope of Work

Peer Support Agencies serve members with mental health conditions. Of those served, many also have co-occurring substance use disorders. Some members also experience homelessness. All Peer Support Agencies serve people with mental health conditions, but different agencies work with different percentages of people with substance use and people experiencing homelessness.

**Peer Support Agencies provide free support to people with mental health conditions. No charge. No waiting list. Walk in the door and get free peer support immediately.**

## Achievements

Peer Support Agency	Executive Director	Achievements
North Country Peer Support	Barbara Payer, alcexecutivedirector@gmail.com 603-447-1765	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recruited new executive director.</li> <li>▪ Developed new board of directors.</li> <li>▪ Ended receivership in February 2023.</li> <li>▪ Reach out to NCHC, White Horse Recovery, Glenclyff Home and LRH.</li> <li>▪ Developed new website.</li> <li>▪ Improved staff supervision and support.</li> <li>▪ Applied for grant to assist with tight cash flow.</li> <li>▪ Considering respite services at Conway location.</li> </ul>
Stepping Stone & Next Step Peer Support Centers	Susan Seidler, susan.seidler@steppingstonenextstep.org 603-543-1388	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Supplemented on-site support with virtual groups and meetings.</li> <li>▪ Increased wages and added positions.</li> <li>▪ Increased Warmline participation.</li> <li>▪ Completed or registered for Intentional Peer Support (IPS) training.</li> <li>▪ Participated in the Leadership Council for the Health Resources and Services Administration grant to address peer support workforce challenges and student mental health.</li> </ul>
One Peer To Another	Michelle Ladue, michelle@onepeer.org 603-528-7742	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hired a new Executive Director.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Created our mission statement with our members.</li> <li>▪ Restored the Laconia Center's interior to be more welcoming and attractive to members.</li> <li>▪ Established the Franklin Community Outreach program.</li> </ul>
Monadnock Peer Support	<p>Stephen Tavella, stephen@monadnockpsa.org 603-352-5093</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Partnered with local non-profits and businesses to help better our community and the Monadnock Region.</li> <li>▪ Hosted a COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic, blood drive, local barber to secure free haircuts for our members.</li> <li>▪ Offered 50 groups/week, weekly shopping trip, monthly field trip, monthly bowling outing, monthly trip to the YMCA and free WiFi.</li> <li>▪ Used full-kitchen and full-gym on-site.</li> <li>▪ Hosted five weekly AA meetings, 1 HA meeting and a local church service.</li> <li>▪ Provided a continuum-of-care with Monadnock Family Services and Keene Serenity Center under our roof.</li> </ul>
H.E.A.R.T.S. Peer Support Center of Greater Nashua	<p>Ken Lewis, kenl@heartpsa.org 603-882-8400</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Joined together as a community.</li> <li>▪ Partnered with other Peer Support Agencies, Greater Nashua Mental Health Center, National Alliance on Mental Illness NH, local providers, state providers, especially the Bureau of Mental Health Services.</li> <li>▪ Created a community that cares about adults with</li> </ul>



		<p>behavioral health conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Appreciated loyal membership and staff.</li> </ul>
On the Road to Wellness	<p>David Blacksmith, manchester@otrtw.org 603-623-4523</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased funding by 45% to raise staff salaries.</li> <li>▪ Expanded programs: Warmline and Volunteers.</li> <li>▪ Built community by adding outings and recreation and offering extra educational opportunities.</li> <li>▪ Improved community awareness and outreach via social media presence and website traffic increase.</li> </ul>
Connections Peer Support Center	<p>Fred Poisson, fred@connectionspeer support.org 603-427-6966</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved quality of life for members who regularly participate.</li> <li>▪ Reported fewer hospitalization and fewer mental health crises by members who regularly participate.</li> </ul>
Infinity Peer Support	<p>Carole Otash, Acting Executive Director carole@infinitypeersup port.org 603-948-1036</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Involved community stakeholders in expanding our staff and diversifying our programs and services.</li> <li>▪ Doubled our membership to 396 members.</li> <li>▪ Introduced new programming: Trauma-Informed Yoga and Trauma-Informed Reiki.</li> <li>▪ Led groups such as 23 Ways to Stop Overthinking, Trauma Survivors, Boundaries, Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP), Journaling and Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunctional Families.</li> <li>▪ Established a Resources in Strafford County list that a</li> </ul>

		<p>staff member updates periodically.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hosted Narcotics Anonymous (NA) two nights/week.</li> <li>▪ Expanded our one-on-one interactions each day: members identify barriers to living their best life (e.g., applying for rental assistance, non-driver IDs, Social Security cards, etc.).</li> <li>▪ Hosted a Community Meeting each month to facilitate a conversation about our mission, our values—seeking input from members about preferred groups and field trips.</li> <li>▪ Presented information about harm reduction, methamphetamine behaviors and side effects, Community Partners' Mobile Crisis Unit and Goodwin Community Health Mobile Health Services Van.</li> <li>▪ Participated in SOS Recovery Rally and National Night Out outreach events.</li> <li>▪ Became a centralized location for supplies needed by our unsheltered members: tents, sleeping bags, tarps, propane, sterno and basic toiletries.</li> </ul>
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## Challenges

<b>Peer Support Agency</b>	<b>Executive Director</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
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<p>North Country Peer Support</p>	<p>Barbara Payer, alcexecutivedirector@gmail.com 603-447-1765</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recruited a new executive director.</li> <li>▪ Developed a new board of directors.</li> </ul>
<p>Stepping Stone &amp; Next Step Peer Support Centers</p>	<p>Susan Seidler, susan.seidler@steppingstonenextstep.org 603-543-1388</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Experienced staffing shortages.</li> <li>▪ Decreased daily attendance.</li> <li>▪ Built accessibility at Next Step.</li> <li>▪ Dealt with rising utility and supply costs.</li> <li>▪ Reached out to the community.</li> <li>▪ Fundraised.</li> <li>▪ Several board members approached term limits.</li> </ul>
<p>One Peer To Another</p>	<p>Michelle Ladue, michelle@onepeer.org 603-528-7742</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rebranded from Lakes Region Consumer Advisory Board to One Peer To Another.</li> <li>▪ Hired and trained a new Program Director and Peer Support Specialists.</li> </ul>
<p>Monadnock Peer Support</p>	<p>Stephen Tavella, stephen@monadnockpsa.org 603-352-5093</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Established a culture in which members and participants feel more empowered and less dependent on traditional mental health care.</li> </ul>
<p>H.E.A.R.T.S. Peer Support Center of Greater Nashua</p>	<p>Ken Lewis, kenl@heartpsa.org 603-882-8400</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Served an increasing number of individuals who are homeless and face substance misuse.</li> <li>▪ Experienced a workforce shortage.</li> <li>▪ Hired staff members for all programs.</li> <li>▪ Funded sustainably—beyond State funding.</li> <li>▪ Recruited and retained board members.</li> </ul>

<p>On the Road to Wellness</p>	<p>David Blacksmith, manchester@otrtw.org 603-623-4523</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Planned for succession: Executive Director, Board and Business Manager.</li> <li>▪ Faced workforce shortages: peer staffing, volunteerism, administrative staff members and community outreach.</li> <li>▪ Paid attention to membership by dealing with a transient culture; keeping current members engaged and increasing outposts.</li> <li>▪ Developed added funding streams by campaigning for capital and relocating under-one-roof.</li> </ul>
<p>Connections Peer Support Center</p>	<p>Fred Poisson, fred@connectionspeer support.org 603-427-6966</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Experienced significant illness with Warmline staff.</li> <li>▪ Dealt with a staffing shortage at Step-Up/Step-Down location, especially a House Manager.</li> <li>▪ Covered shifts and overtime worked by key personnel.</li> <li>▪ Sought additional funding streams.</li> </ul>
<p>Infinity Peer Support</p>	<p>Carole Otash, Acting Executive Director, carole@infinitypeersup port.org 603-948-1036</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Changed our brand from Tri-City Consumers' Action Co-Operative to Infinity Peer Support Cooperative (dba Infinity Peer Support).</li> <li>▪ Dealt with a majority of members who experience a co-occurring disorder (i.e., a mental health condition and substance use disorder).</li> </ul>

## Future Opportunities

Peer Support Agency	Executive Director	Future Opportunities
North Country Peer Support	Barbara Payer, alcexecutivedirector@gmail.com 603-447-1765	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Build a welcoming atmosphere at the agency.</li> <li>▪ Recruit board members.</li> <li>▪ Review and ratify By-Laws.</li> <li>▪ Develop a Strategic Plan.</li> <li>▪ Launch a Spring Open House at all four sites.</li> </ul>
Stepping Stone & Next Step Peer Support Centers	Susan Seidler, susan.seidler@steppingstonenextstep.org 603-543-1388	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fill vacant positions.</li> <li>▪ Increase daily attendance.</li> <li>▪ Complete building-accessibility project at Next Step.</li> <li>▪ Increase collaboration with community stakeholders.</li> <li>▪ Develop a Communication Plan, Outreach Plan and Fundraising Plan.</li> <li>▪ Increase board membership.</li> </ul>
One Peer To Another	Michelle Ladue, michelle@onepeer.org 603-528-7742	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase the number of board members.</li> <li>▪ Create a more robust online presence: set up social media, a new web site and LinkedIn profiles for staff.</li> <li>▪ Restore the exterior of the Laconia Center.</li> <li>▪ Establish a Fundraising Committee.</li> <li>▪ Relocate the Concord Center to a more suitable and accessible location.</li> <li>▪ Continue to outreach to the community.</li> <li>▪ Continue to grow membership by developing programs to support members.</li> </ul>

Monadnock Peer Support	Stephen Tavella, stephen@monadnockpsa.org 603-352-5093	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to partner with local non-profits and businesses to help better our community and the Monadnock Region.</li> <li>▪ Continue to provide a continuum-of-care with Monadnock Family Services and Keene Serenity Center under our roof.</li> </ul>
H.E.A.R.T.S. Peer Support Center of Greater Nashua	Ken Lewis, kenl@hearts-psa.org 603-882-8400	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to work together as a community.</li> <li>▪ Continue to partner with other Peer Support Agencies, Greater Nashua Mental Health Center, National Alliance on Mental Illness NH, local providers, state providers, especially the Bureau of Mental Health Services.</li> </ul>
On the Road to Wellness	David Blacksmith, manchester@otrtw.org 603-623-4523	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to work on succession planning.</li> <li>▪ Continue with peer-staffing, volunteer, administrative and community-outreach projects.</li> <li>▪ Keep current members engaged and increase outposts.</li> <li>▪ Continue to meet the needs of our transient culture.</li> <li>▪ Continue to develop funding streams (e.g., capital campaign).</li> <li>▪ Continue to consider under-one-roof relocation.</li> </ul>
Connections Peer Support Center	Fred Poisson, fred@connectionspeer support.org 603-427-6966	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthen connections with other community resources and providers.</li> <li>▪ Increase and diversify membership (e.g., targeting younger members).</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop an organizational development plan.</li> <li>▪ Seek additional funding streams.</li> </ul>
Infinity Peer Support	Carole Otash, Acting Executive Director, carole@infinitypeersupport.org 603-948-1036	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to work on branding, reaching out and relationship-building in the community.</li> </ul>

***“The center has helped me come a long way in all aspects of my life.” Anonymous Member***

Respectfully,  
Ken Lewis, Chair  
NH Mental Health Peer Alliance  
March 10, 2025