



## Talking Points LD 540 - "An Act to Establish Peer Respite Services for Adults with Mental Health Challenges in Maine."

This bill directs DHHS Office of Behavioral Health to RFP (Request for Proposal) for two adult peer respite centers in Maine. They should be based in geographically diverse locations and should align with the higher usage areas based on DHHS crisis usage data. They should be completely run by peers with lived mental health challenges utilizing the Intentional Peer Support Model.

- Peer respite is a voluntary, short-term, overnight program that provides community-based, non-clinical crisis support to help people find new understanding and ways to move forward. It operates 24 hours per day in a homelike environment.
- These programs do not replace traditional clinical services, rather they provide alternatives and choices for individuals.
- These programs are managed and staffed by people with lived experience and are trained peer support specialists.
- Maine had peer respite in Brunswick (paid by DHHS) from 2002-2017 after that the provider did not renew their contract.
- Programs like these reduce usage of the emergency room and crisis stabilization unit visits while allowing peers to stay in their community.
- Complementary to our overwhelmed psychiatric crisis services, peer-run respites are less costly and often more effective than the alternatives. The average inpatient psychiatric stay in the US costs **\$7,100** and lasts 6.4 days. In comparison, the same length stay at the Afiya Respite' in Massachusetts is **\$2,594**.

### Peer-Run Respites are Unique.

- Support is offered consensually, without coercion or force, creating a more respectful and warmer environment.
- Peer-run respites offer training in Alternatives to Suicide or Wellness Recovery Action Planning.
- Guests at Peer-run respites report high satisfaction.
- In contrast, forced treatment has poorer results and drives some people away from the mental health systems.

From: [DMHAS Peer Respite Town Halls - Advocacy Unlimited](#)(CT 2022)

Successful peer respites are currently operating in California, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Wisconsin. Maine used to offer this service.