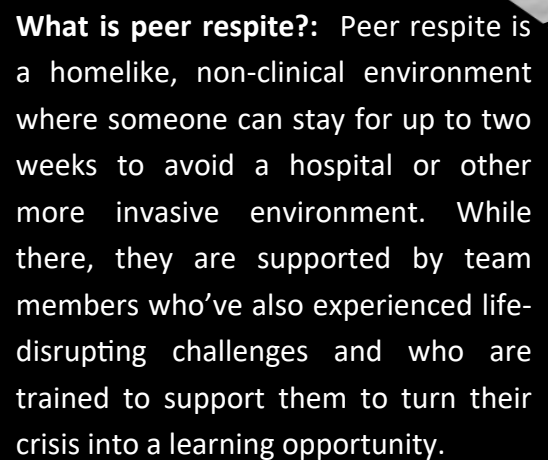


FOR MORE INFO:
tinyurl.com/PRinfo23

Support Peer Respite in Massachusetts

Many people are stuck cycling in and out of the mental health system with a lack of real choices and alternatives. The result is ineffective care at high costs. People going through crisis are frequently traumatized by this care and the loss of power that goes with it. Consequently, they often experience worse outcomes including increased suicide risk and shortened lifespans. The risk of harm is even greater for people who identify as LGBTQIA+, with trans people experiencing especially high rates of bullying, intimidation, and discrimination. Peer respites are an opportunity to offer support guided by the wisdom gained from people who've 'been there', and to develop respites that limit harmful power imbalances, and focus on health, healing, and personal growth.

S.1238/H.3602, 'An Act establishing peer-run respite centers throughout the Commonwealth' is sponsored by Senator Jo Comerford and Representatives Lindsay Sabadosa and Smitty Pignatelli. It would establish at least one peer respite per each of 14 counties in Massachusetts including the first two LGBTQIA+ peer respites in the world (one of them to be based in Western Massachusetts).



What is peer respite?: Peer respite is a homelike, non-clinical environment where someone can stay for up to two weeks to avoid a hospital or other more invasive environment. While there, they are supported by team members who've also experienced life-disrupting challenges and who are trained to support them to turn their crisis into a learning opportunity.

TESTIMONIALS

"This stay made such a difference. I'm hoping to be able to come back and work here when I'm ready, and give back to others some of what I was able to get."

"It's a huge difference from the hospital. There's no way to really fully put that to words."

"I had trouble trusting this place because I knew it was still funded by the same sources, but not by the end. I knew I could trust them by the end and trust changes everything."

ADVANTAGES OF PEER RESPITE:

- Life changing and life saving
- Helps people break cycles
- High potential for cost-saving both in the short and (particularly) the long-term
- Shown to reduce use of psychiatric hospitals and emergency rooms, and increase community connection
- Can play a key role in diverting people from ED boarding
- A growing body of evidence proves they work (Afiya House has gained international recognition by WHO as an exemplary model of non-coercive, alternative crisis)
- Are already supported by the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)