

## Request for Applicants: Peer-Run Crisis Respite Program Development

Vermont Psychiatric Survivors and the Vermont Futures Peer Support Program Development Workgroup is seeking applications from an individual or organization to complete a comprehensive and detailed development plan for the creation and operation of a peer-run crisis respite program to enhance Vermont's community-based mental health care system and reduce reliance upon the Vermont State Hospital (VSH). The development of this plan will be based on previous work completed by the Futures Peer Support Program Development Workgroup.

### Background

In 2006, the Vermont Mental Health Futures Plan called for the transformation of Vermont's mental health service system towards a consumer-directed, trauma-informed, and recovery-oriented mental health system. This plan was developed through an inclusive, statewide planning process that brought together multiple stakeholders. Work groups were formed to address many parts of the Futures Plan, including the critical issue of how best to enhance the ways in which people with the lived experience of mental illness (peers) are involved in providing direct support to people with serious mental illness. *The Futures Plan proposed new Peer Programming to offer effective, recovery-oriented supports targeted to individuals who use VSH.* The Governor's Administration has proposed that approximately \$ 230,000 be available each year to support the development and maintenance of this new peer programming, and a Futures Peer Support Program Development Workgroup was formed in the fall of 2006 to create recommendations how these funds should be used. Specifically, the workgroup was asked to:

- 1) identify what types of peer services could be supported with these resources
- 2) develop a recommendation about what service(s) should be implemented; and
- 3) recommend who and how the service(s) should be staffed and operated

In January 2008 the workgroup recommended that the Department of Mental Health and State Legislature support and fund a Peer-Run Crisis Alternative House. This House will provide an evidenced-based option for people experiencing psychological distress to engage in principles of recovery and peer support. The intended outcome is for individuals both to avert hospitalization and to emerge from crisis with wisdom and skills for living well. Such an option is an important alternative to the existing network of crisis services.

The Peer-Run Crisis Alternative House will operate within a different paradigm that values mutually supportive relationships between staff and guests, is pro-choice on use of psychiatric medication, uses non-medical language, provides a flexible structure and homelike environment, encourages personal responsibility, offers self-empowerment

resources and a peer warm line, and approaches crisis holistically as an opportunity to grow, shift, and change.

The House will serve up to 5 individuals at a time, for no more than 2 weeks at a time. It will accept anyone in crisis who is willing to abide by basic safety guidelines, who has a residence to return to, and who willingly desires to approach crisis in a non-traditional way. The House will operate as its own entity, utilizing Vermont Psychiatric Survivors as a non-profit source for administrative tasks, and will work independent of but in collaboration with Vermont's current mental health agencies. It will be operated and staffed entirely by people who have experienced psychological crisis who meet and display all of the criteria necessary for practicing intentional peer support.

The Peer-Run Crisis Alternative House will help reduce the overall need for the Vermont State Hospital by providing an alternative, community-based place for people in crisis to work through their distress in a humane and compassionate manner. We believe that a peer support approach reduces the likelihood that an individual will become aggressive and dangerous, thereby reducing – though not entirely eliminating – the need for beds in a locked state facility. A Peer-Run Crisis Alternative House not only provides Vermonters with much-needed options for their mental health, but is also aligned with federal initiatives to transform the mental health system to a more recovery-oriented approach that values peer services across the country. “The vision of the peer recovery crisis program is to create a safe and empowering house for people in psychological distress to engage in principles of recovery and peer support and to help people to emerge from crisis with wisdom and skills for living well.”

#### Expectations

The individual or organization contracted to complete this plan would be expected to complete a detailed plan within six months of being hired. The plan would need to address the following:

- An assessment of potential locations for the program. This assessment would be based on: 1) the needs of the people who will be using the house, 2) availability of facilities, 3) community support for this type of program, and 4) zoning or other regulatory issues which might support or hamper the creation of this program
- An assessment of the need to rent, lease, purchase or build a facility
- Plans for how the physical space would need to be arranged to meet the needs of the program and its potential inhabitants
- A detailed budget both for the creation of the program and for the ongoing operation of the program
- An assessment of how the program should be licensed and insured
- A detailed staffing plan, which would include number of full time equivalent staff and volunteers needed, costs associated with hiring and maintaining staff,

- supervision structures, and a training plan to be used both at the creation of the program and for the ongoing operation of the program
- Creation of draft operating program and operations manual(s), which would include mission, philosophy, governance structure, house rules, procedures and policies (e.g. drug and alcohol use policy), admission criteria, and guidelines for the provision of support and treatment
  - Plans for 1) referral processes and 2) coordination with other agencies and providers while maintaining independence of vision and supports offered.

The individual or organization completing this development plan would be expected to use recommendations previously developed by the Peer Support Development Workgroup and report regularly to the workgroup on the development of this plan for feedback and input. A final draft of the plan will need to be approved by the workgroup.

The individual or organization completing this plan will also be expected to access other resources (e.g. other peer respite programs) and consultation both instate and out of state to assist in the development of the plan.

#### Qualifications

The individual(s) completing this project development would need to have the following qualifications:

- Ability to work with the Futures Peer Support Program Development Workgroup as a steering committee
- Demonstrated writing ability
- Familiarity with mental health recovery
- Familiarity with budget process
- Ability to work well with diverse types of stakeholders (treatment providers, peers, community members, state officials)
- Computer and internet skills
- Familiarity with issues about psychological trauma
- Familiarity with consumer/survivor/ex-patient movement
- Knowledge of developing innovative programs
- Experience in program development or program start-up

It is anticipated that after completion of this work a separate Request for Proposals for program start-up will be offered.

Applicants will be asked to propose a budget for the completion of this work in a six-month timeframe. Salary/payment for the development of this plan will be negotiated by Vermont Psychiatric Survivors based on the applicant's past experience and

estimates of work to be completed. Proposed budgets to complete the specified work may not exceed \$39,000.

Interested applicants may submit a letter of interest by July 11th, 2008 to: Linda Corey, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors, 1 Scale Ave, Suite 52 Building 14, Rutland, VT 05701. Questions regarding this RFA may be directed to Linda Corey at [vpsinc@sover.net](mailto:vpsinc@sover.net) or (800) 564-2106.