

## **MENTAL HEALTH HARM REDUCTION:**

# **PEER RUN RESPITES FOR CONNECTICUT**

### **PEER RESPITES:**

A peer-run respite is a voluntary, short-term program that provides 24/7 community-based, non-clinical (non-medical) mental health crisis support as an alternative to inpatient hospitalization.

It is operated in a home-like environment by peer support specialists, who have lived experience with mental distress, crisis, and life altering challenges. Peer Support is recognized by the U.S. Center for Medicaid & Medicare Services (CMS) as an evidenced-based model of care.

**15**

15 other states have peer-run respite programs, Connecticut currently has none. This needs to change.

### **ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH DISPARITIES:**

How can Connecticut support mental health? Create 8 peer run respites in Connecticut, including three affinity-specific respites for Black and Brown, Transgender, and Spanish speaking communities in order to best support mental health in a voluntary, person centered, and culturally informed manner.

Further, CT can create a technical assistance center to support CT's peer respites and other peer services in program implementation and training.



UPDATED JANUARY 2024 BY KEEP THE PROMISE COALITION  
CONTACT [JORDAN@KTPCOALITION.ORG](mailto:JORDAN@KTPCOALITION.ORG) TO LEARN MORE

ADVOCACY AND ACTION FOR CONNECTICUT'S MENTAL HEALTH



# PEER RESPITES **NOW!**

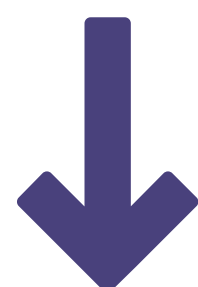
People are nearly **100x more likely to die by suicide** following discharge from psychiatric hospitalizations. (1)

## This is unacceptable.

In contrast, **peer respites lead to a decreased risk of suicide** compared to inpatient clinical settings.

- 92% of guests reported improvements to their emotional health,
- 62% reported improved coping skills. (2)

Most peer respite guests return to the community following their stay, **resulting in fewer hospitalizations long-term:**



**70%**

The odds of using any inpatient or emergency services were 70% lower following a respite stay. (3)



**94%**

Return home or to family or friends after staying at a peer run respite. (4)

## **HARM REDUCTION:** WHY PEER RESPITES WORK

In traditional mental health services, conversations about suicide and self-injury often result in forced treatment.

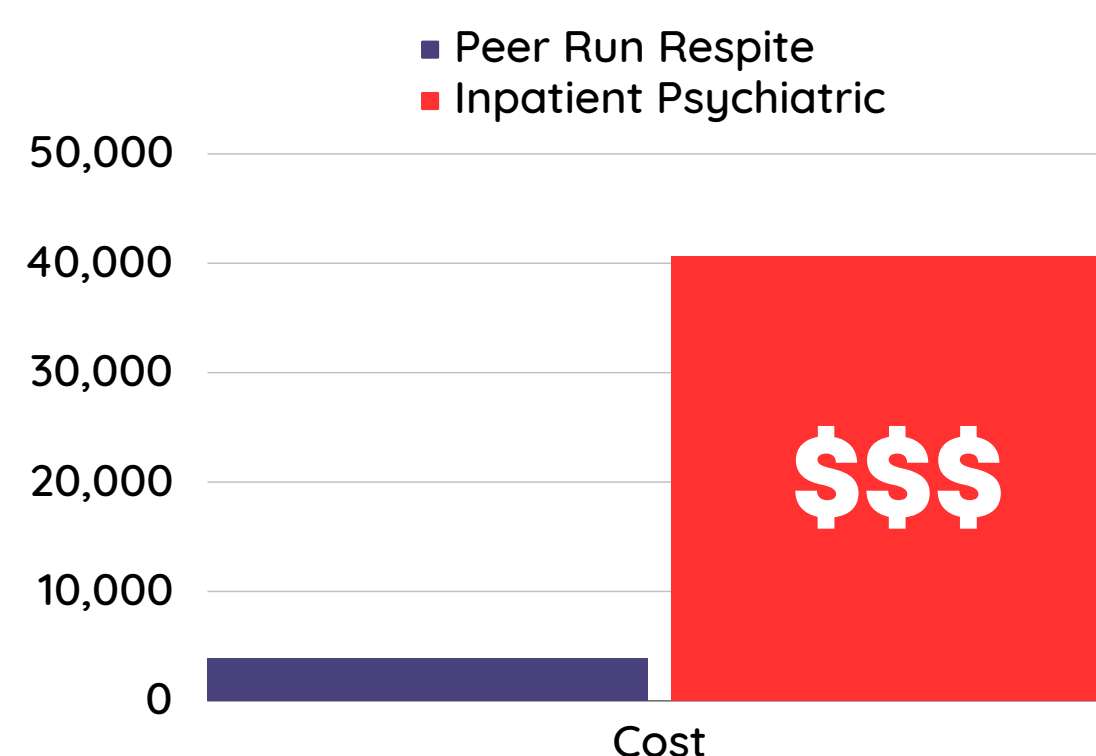
**This causes many people to avoid services altogether.** (5-6)

In contrast, support offered at a peer respite is consensual and person-centered, even if conversations turn to suicide or self injury. This builds trust with community, and encourages people to seek support in difficult times.

Contrary to popular belief, allowing for open discussions about suicide and self-injury actually **decreases the likelihood of suicide.** (7)

**This is considered a harm reduction approach,** as it seeks to support individual as they navigate this distress.

## THE COST OF CARE IN CT



Our current mental health crisis services are overwhelmed and costly. (8) Peer-run respites are less costly and often more effective than the alternatives.

**The median inpatient psychiatric stay in the CT costs \$40,611** and lasts 7 days (9). In comparison, the same length stay at Afiya, a respite in Massachusetts is \$3,196.

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