

Budget Justification for SFY '17:

Name: Peer Services for Young Adults

Level of Funding Requested: \$300,000

Previous Work to Sustain This Program: DMH has already secured \$90,000 in funding to sustain this programming.

Justification:

With funding from a five-year Mental Health Transformation Grant, The Wellness Co-op in Burlington and Another Way in Montpelier have found the key to successfully connecting with young adults and other hard-to-reach populations such as individuals grappling with co-occurring issues who have not accessed or responded favorably to other available services.

In fiscal year 2015, over 750 unduplicated individuals visited the programs on over 10,000 occasions to engage in peer support, secure employment, access educational opportunities and participate in a range of holistic, person-centered wellness activities and creative expression endeavors.

Based on data through April 2015 from a sample of individuals who have remained with the program over time:

- *More individuals are working*
 - 65% of peers (30 of 46) experienced stable or improved employment and/or educational status
 - 57% of peers (12 of 21) not employed or in school when entering the program were employed or in school after participating in the program
- *Fewer individuals are experiencing mental health hospitalizations*
 - Upon entering the program, 15% of peers (6 of 40) had a recent mental health-related hospitalization; none were hospitalized for mental health reasons within 6 months of reassessment
- *More individuals are obtaining housing in the community*
 - 57% of peers (8 of 14) who were homeless when entering the program were no longer homeless after participating in the program
 - 86% of peers (19 of 22) who owned or rented their housing at baseline continued to do so at reassessment
- *More individuals are enjoying positive social connections*
 - 67% of peers (8 of 12) without positive social connections at baseline reported positive social connections at reassessment
 - 67% of peers (14 of 21) without satisfactory family relationships at baseline reported satisfactory family relationships at reassessment

By eliminating barriers to seeking and receiving support, reducing the stigma often associated with receiving support, utilizing staff with lived experience, offering person-centered support and giving individuals a voice in deciding what's best for them, these two programs provide an alternative approach that fills a gap in the current system of care and more importantly improves

the lives of young adults. Staff at both sites have lived experience with mental health challenges, addiction, and trauma, and a willingness to openly reference these experiences throughout the therapeutic relationship. This is a key component of this innovative approach. Replication of both the substance and success of these services is dependent upon utilizing individuals with lived experience to create, staff, and oversee programs of this nature.