

Memorandum

To: Senator Lyons and Senator Westman
From: Chadd Viger, CEO, Recovery House, Inc.
Date: April 6, 2020
Re: Substance Use Disorder and COVID-19

I am writing to you as the CEO of Recovery House, Inc., a member of the substance use treatment provider community. We provide substance use disorder residential treatment through Serenity House and Grace House. Recovery House, Inc. has been serving Vermont residents for the past 48 years. While the treatment services we provide are vital to the wellbeing of individuals, families, and Vermont community, they also act as a prevention tool for individuals and their families.

Over the past month, Recovery House, Inc. has been navigating through a series of challenges due to COVID-19. Here is a list of our needs at the moment:

Additional Nursing Staff to Resume Detoxification Services

Our Serenity House program has had to discontinue alcohol, benzodiazepine, and opioid detoxification services due to a reduction in nursing staff – related to COVID-19. This situation occurred quickly, with less than 24 hours' notice. Our response has been swift – immediately searching for full time, per diem, and traveling nurses. We have made one hire and have additionally interviewed a traveling nurse. Our goal is to hire two (2) traveling nurses, both for 8-week contracts, in order to quickly resume detoxification services for those most in need. Hiring traveling nurses will allow for time to continue our search for full-time nursing staff.

Financial Assistance due to Reduction in Census/Staffing

Due to reduction in staffing and the need to provide recommended spacing/isolation options for clients, Serenity House has also seen a reduction in overall census. Our estimates place Serenity House down \$95,460.00, in Medicaid reimbursement between mid-March through April. We have requested funding through an AHS Medicaid Retainer, specific to COVID-19, but the requested amount is for Medicaid revenue lost, and immediate monies for traveling nurses. This is likely not enough.

We are also going to ask for an appropriation through the budget process. Additional funds will allow us to increase our nursing staff from 2 to 6, our support staff from 4 to 6, and our counseling staff from 4 to 5. We would plan to keep all of these hires, with the exception of traveling nurses, as we stabilize post-COVID-19 and return to our goal census.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Lastly, we have made several requests for PPE's for our staff, in order to provide safe care. We do not typically carry a stock of them, due to our limited medical scope. I have made requests through ADAP, VDH, and DAIL. I understand that we are on the list for distribution, but I want to ensure that the addiction providers are not forgotten in this fight against COVID-19.

Thank you.