

Testimony for S. 194

By:

Tina Manning, Assist/Support Team Coordinator

Zach Hughes, Assistant Team Lead for Maple House

Penny Martin, Director of Recovery and Peer Services

“Bill proposes to establish the creation of peer – operated respite centers; and (2) establish a combined community center and peer- operated respite center pilot program.”

Washington County Mental Health Services (WCMHS), opened Maple House crisis bed in February of 2013. Maple House is a peer run crisis bed serving adults within the Community Support Program (CSP) of Washington County Mental health Services (WCMHS). Maple House staff is comprised of current or former clients. The peer staff is responsible for hiring and supervising the staff. Training is provided by WCMHS and the supervisory peer staff. Maple House is located within the main office space of the CSP building and is comprised of 1 bedroom, a kitchen, bathroom, living room and common area. The area is also shared by the Transitional bed which is a short stay bed for people who are transitioning to a new living situation. In April of 2021 Maple House moved to a new location. The new site is a two-bedroom apartment that is fully handicapped accessible adjacent to Sunrise Wellness Center. Food is provided by Maple House and staff are available to cook the meals should the guest request the assistance. Furthermore, Maple House staff assists people in gaining skills related to Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and medication management. Although, pets are not allowed Service and Support animals are welcomed.

Guests can access Maple House via multiple avenues. Someone who has presented at the Emergency Department and does not require a higher level of care may be referred to Maple House by the staff or the WCMHS Emergency Screeners (Crisis Response Team). The Screeners may also receive a call from a client who is requesting additional support, the Screener may then refer that client to Maple House. Someone who is either at an Inpatient unit in one of Vermont’s Hospitals or at Home Intervention (WCMHS crisis bed) and would benefit from a step down may be referred from either of these locations. Also, a client’s team may refer a guest. The final and most important avenue of entry is self-referral by the guest. This avenue empowers people to seek support from a peer without the involvement of non-peer staff. This is an important aspect of Maple House and highly valued by clients and staff alike.

Guests who stay at Maple house should bring their toiletries, medications, and clothes. There are intake protocols which include heating clothing in a dryer to prevent bed bug transmission, completion of the locus, and setting goal(s) for while at Maple House

Since opening, Maple House has served 260 unique individuals over 411 episodes of care. An episode of care is an admission to Maple House. 51% of all admissions were diversions from a

higher level of care (Thus more expensive.). Additionally, Maple House has maintained an occupancy rate of 70% with the highest occupancy rate of 95%. Additionally, Maple House was unique in that during the initial stages of Covid -19 Maple House remained open. Within the past two years Maple House has been taking in guests with a higher acuity level.

Although Maple House has always had a close connection with Sunrise Wellness Center which is a day program within WCMHS, in April of 2021 Maple House relocated to adjacent to Sunrise Wellness Center at 34 Barre Street in Montpelier.

Sunrise Wellness Center operates an exercise room, quiet room and offers classes in activities of daily living, cooking as well as crafts and the ability to interact with peers. In addition, 67% of the staff of Sunrise Wellness Center are peers.

Washington County Mental Health Services support the creation of peer- operated respite beds and community centers. As our organization has been operating a tandem system since 2013. The staff of Sunrise Wellness Center and Maple House invite the legislators to our site to tour our facilities. Please feel free to contact Penny Martin at (802)461-9255.