

• *Strategic Plan Highlights* •

Peer Bridger Program Expanding Through Incentive Project

FY 20 Fourth Quarter

Strategy 1.2.1

Expand the Peer Bridger Project at Behavioral Health Programs

To enhance the current transition process and decrease a person's need for readmissions to a higher level of care, the South Mississippi Peer Bridger Incentive Project began development during the fourth quarter of FY20, with full implementation to begin in the first quarter of FY21.

The program aims to increase the number of people who attend follow-up appointments by incentivizing care compliance and offering peer support services through a Peer Bridger, which is a Certified Peer Support Specialist, who will serve as an outreach liaison to support people transitioning from South Mississippi State Hospital (SMSH) into outpatient care at their local Community Mental Health Center (CMHC).

The Peer Bridgers will find resources and build support networks in their communities, performing a wide range of tasks to assist people in regaining independence within the community and mastery over their own recovery process. This includes utilizing Wellness Recovery Action Plans.

The program will offer incentives in the form of vouchers for follow-up appointments that are attended. Additional vouchers may be offered for other health-related items, such as tobacco cessation.

A formal DMH incentive/voucher system is in development through a partnership with the three participating CMHCs – Region 12, Pinebelt Mental Healthcare Resources; Region 13, Gulf Coast Mental Health Center; and Region 14, Singing River Services. The goal is to improve the transition process for people returning to these communities by connecting them with local services/ supports.

Requests for Proposals were sent to SMSH and Regions 12, 13, and 14 during the fourth quarter. Proposals have been returned, reviewed, and grants will be awarded the first of July.

Additionally, an online CPSS training was held in late June, with 35 CPSSs graduating. DMH is hopeful this graduating class will include potential candidates for the project.



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Once the CPSSs are hired for each agency, the South Mississippi Peer Bridger Incentive Project will begin. The target population is adults who have been court committed to SMSH for acute psychiatric care and will be transitioning back to these local CMHCs.

The following data components will be tracked to monitor project outcomes:

- Readmissions in the first 30 days and up to one year after discharge from SMSH
- Number of first follow-up appointments attended at the CMHC
- Number of subsequent follow-up appointments attended
- Number of incentives provided
- Types of incentives provided
- Number of project participants admitted to Crisis Stabilization Units

DMH will compare the readmission rates and first follow up-appointment data from the North Mississippi Peer Bridger project with the South Mississippi Peer Bridger Incentive Project that will include the incentive program.

At the conclusion of the project, DMH expects to see an increase in the number of follow-up appointments attended at the three CMHCs after discharge from SMSH and a decrease in the number of readmissions due to a more formal community integration and transition process, as well as the use of financial incentives through measurable outcomes and data tracking.

“Our goal is for this to be a successful project that we can consider replicating throughout the state,” said Wendy Bailey, Administrative Services Deputy Executive Director. “We know the impact CPSSs can have on the transition process and continued recovery of Mississippians. This will be an opportunity to pair that with an incentive program to see the difference in readmissions and follow-up care.”

This project is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors Transformation Transfer Initiative.

