



Interoffice Memorandum

September 18, 2023

TO: Mayor Jerry L. Demings
-AND-
County Commissioners

FROM: Carrie Mathes, CFCM, NIGP-CPP, CPPO, C.P.M., Manager II,
Procurement Division

CONTACT: Donna Wyche, Manager, Mental Health and Homelessness Division
407-836-7608

SUBJECT: Approval of Federal Subrecipient Agreement Y22-2414, Providing Peer
Respite Services to Orange County Residents Experiencing Mental
Health Stressors

ACTION REQUESTED:

Approval of Federal Subrecipient Agreement Y22-2414, Providing Peer Respite Services to Orange County Residents Experiencing Mental Health Stressors, between Orange County and Peer Support Space, Inc., in the not-to-exceed amount of \$427,451.63.

Request delegation of authority to the Procurement Division Manager or designee to execute such Federal Subrecipient Agreement on a form approved by the Orange County Attorney's Office and the Risk Management Division.

PURPOSE:

This subaward is issued from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (the "Recovery Fund") allocation received by the County on May 18, 2021.

This agreement will establish a peer-led respite center to provide orientation, overnight respite services, aftercare and other peer-led services requested and deemed appropriate for the individual seeking support. Additionally, this agreement will expand access to address the growing mental healthcare needs of Orange County, Florida. All services will be provided at no-cost to the individual using them. The subaward period of performance is August 1, 2023 through July 31, 2024.

DISCUSSION:

In accordance with the Code of Ordinances, Part I, Chapter 17, Article III, Section 17-286 – Application and Exclusions, agreements between the Board and nonprofit organizations are excluded from competitive procurement requirements.

Experts have predicted a "tsunami of psychiatric illness" in the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic (Tandon, 2020). The mental health effects of COVID-19 are expected to last many years past the pandemic. Increases in psychiatric disorders and suicide are expected to increase in post-pandemic time. The COVID-19 pandemic has created and exacerbated a public health need for increased access to mental health services that decrease feelings of isolation and

support long term whole person wellness including physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Further public health needs include psychosocial support resources, early intervention, assistance in resource navigation and services that decrease barriers to care including mental health stigma, affordability, lack of transportation, and strict criteria for service eligibility. In a world where mental health stigma often keeps individuals from reaching out for help until they are at a point of crisis, it is important to be proactive and provide approachable, culturally appropriate and accessible care for a growing community of individuals that need support. Additionally, it is important to be intentional in how these services are provided so that no community is left behind.

Data has always shown that loneliness and isolation are major concerns for people seeking help for their mental health. In 2020, 71% of individuals in Mental Health America's screening reported that loneliness or isolation was one of the top three things contributing to their mental health problems. Additionally, 50% of individuals with disabilities will be lonely at any given time. According to the CDC, in a late June of 2020 study of adults living in the U.S., 31% of respondents reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, 13% reported having started or increased substance use, 26% reported stress-related symptoms, and 11% reported having serious thoughts of suicide in the past 30 days. This is nearly double the rates expected before the pandemic.

A peer-led respite center is a voluntary, home-like, non-medical space where people can get support from trained peer professionals. Filling the gap between inpatient and outpatient services, it is an opportunity to get away (seek respite) before reaching a point of crisis or a stopping point after crisis before going back home, focusing on preventative care and sustainable wellness. The program is designed to provide voluntary, short-term, community-based, non-clinical, non-carceral support for those needing a break from hardship. Peer respites have been proven as an effective tool for hospital diversion. This both saves the community and individuals money while also avoiding individuals from having to have disruptive or potentially traumatizing experiences.

Peer respites are rooted in choice and self-determination, individuals are empowered to find what works for them while having support to do so. The peer-led respite center will have three beds and allow for stays up to eight days. Overnight stays may be from one to seven days. During their stay, individuals will have access to spiritual, nutritional, physical, and emotional wellness options. Activities done during their stay are voluntary. Individuals are also allowed to simply rest and connect with others. Peer professionals are equipped to help those interested in holding space, resource navigation, creating a crisis plan, exploring their support system, and more. Program participation continues past overnight stays as individuals are connected to one-to-one and group peer support through Peer Support Space, Inc. (PSS) as well as other community traditional and holistic resources. As recovery is not linear, individuals may return to the peer-led respite center 30 days after their last stay. The program is expected to serve an average of 150 individuals in a full year of operation. Additional individuals will be supported through group and one-to-one peer services.

Peer services are an innovative, community-centered solution that can prevent mental health crises and promote holistic wellness as the impacts of the pandemic continue. Supporting the launch of a local peer-led respite in Central Florida provides immediate support while ensuring

long term assistance is in place as the community's mental health continues to take a toll during the post pandemic era.

Peer Support Space, Inc. is a grassroots organization that was founded in February of 2019. PSS's mission is to build and be a central hub for diverse, peer-led recovery communities. PSS was founded as a peer-led organization that exists outside of the current system, where lived experience is used to support and hold space for one another. PSS assures that nobody has to navigate their unique journeys with life struggles, mental illness and/or substance use challenges, neurodivergence, disability, grief, trauma, or other obstacles to mental wellness alone. The organization uses, and helps others use, the power of lived experience to support, educate, and guide one another while providing additional, free options for mental wellness.