



For January, February, and March 2020, Vol. IV

www.rockingrecovery.org

Over the last year, we took several steps forward in the recovery community. One of those steps was seeing the passage of the mental health parity law. We celebrated the 70th anniversary of Mental Health Awareness Month. For Ripple, it was the year we created a fresh start for this organization, successfully published our quarterly newsletter, and relaunched our website RockingRecovery.org.

Over the last year, our community also lost some very good friends, and as we enter this new decade, we carry their memories with us. We watched the opioid crisis explode, and the suicide rate among our youth and young adults continue to climb...

What the future holds for us is anyone's guess, no one knows for sure what is over that next horizon. Every day brings the opportunity for both joy and sorrow, but if 2019 showed us anything, it was that we will continue to face all of those things together. The path ahead is hard and the jobs to be done are numerous. There will be advancements and setbacks, successes and failures, but we will move forward. When this community, this collective of peers come together and work toward a common goal, nothing is impossible. Welcome to a new tomorrow.



Happy New Year!!
2020

As we enter another new year and a new decade, RIPPLE is thinking about our direction, goals, priorities, improvements, and new ideas to make a positive impact on our community.

Things that will happen in 2020

- Ripple will obtain its 501(c)(3) non profit status.
- Ripple will have a seat at the table during the upcoming discussions on passing a law to require insurance companies to cover the services provided by certified peer recovery supporters.
- Ripple will continue to advocate for reform in Connecticut state prisons, specifically the treatment of those living with mental illness.
- Ripple will increase the number of educational presentations by at least 20% in 2020
- RockingRecovery.org will continue to grow its resource list for the benefit of the community as a whole.
- RockingRecovery.org will begin a period of community promotion to make both peers and providers aware of the service it provides.



Ripple had one last article published before the close of 2019. It was published on November 6th on thehour.com and titled, Opinion: Pass legislation for mental health peer support services: By Jeffrey Santo... In July, the citizens of Connecticut witnessed a victory for those living with mental illness and addiction. Gov. Lamont signed the mental health parity bill into law. With suicide rates among children up 73 percent in the last decade, and the opioid crisis taking life after life, this new legislation could not have come at a better time. One disappointment in the last session was the second straight failure to pass a law requiring insurance companies to cover services provided by certified peers. Why are peers important?

A peer is unique on a person's treatment team, having lived experience with mental illness or addiction; it creates trust between themselves and the person they are trying to help. A traditional mental health treatment team has several professionals; these may consist of a talk therapist, a psychologist, a psychiatrist, and so on. It is often against policy that any professional disclose experiences they might have had with mental illness or addiction with their client. A peer will share their story with whoever they are working with and use it as a tool creating common ground. It generates hope by demonstrating that recovery is possible. Peers have been using these methods for decades.

Alcoholics Anonymous started back in 1935; it's an organization of people from all walks of life who come together in self-supporting groups all over the world. Thousands have found encouragement and hope from people just like them, people who knew what it was like to fight addiction. This method, peer to peer support, is proven to help in other areas of life as well. From grief support groups to trauma survivors and victims of sexual assault, it is a basic need to be in a safe space with people who understand you.

The bill that failed was HB 5270, titled: "An Act Concerning Peer Support Specialists and Requiring Health Insurance Coverage for Outpatient Peer Support Services Provided By Certified Peer Support Specialists." Being a short legislative session in 2020, peer support services might not be readdressed and could be tabled until 2021. Why can't we afford to wait? Once this law passes, doors open to services not yet available in Connecticut, as an example, a Peer Respite. A respite environment is similar to what's found in a bed and breakfast. It's a warm homelike setting, non-threatening and welcoming.

Respite are methods of diversion redirecting a person from a psychiatric hospital to a short-term voluntary program staffed by certified peer supporters. Anyone experiencing a decline in their mental well being can sign themselves into a respite, they typically stay 3 to 5 days, and clients are free to come and go as they please. Today, in Connecticut, a person experiencing psychosocial stressors only has hospitalization as an option. A traditional hospital costs an average of \$2,000 per night. A person brought in through the ER adds about \$5,000 to their bill. A respite could cut the per night cost in half, and ER fees are eliminated.

With thousands of hospital stays every year, it is easy to see how costly the old way of doing things can be. In an April 2018 article, the Connecticut Mirror reported a yearly cost of more than \$560,000 per patient per bed at the Connecticut Valley Hospital. What do you need to know? First, peer support is evidence-based and proven with years of success. Second, it's cost-effective and will save more money with every peer added to the workforce. Third, there is a shortage of mental health professionals across the country. In Connecticut, there are more than 1,100 trained Peer Specialists who could enter the workforce immediately. Lastly, the state believes in the effectiveness of a peer system. The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services continues to fund the organizations tasked with the training and certification of these peers.

Mental health is important. It's necessary to provide the best services possible to those who need it. One in every five people in the United States lives with mental illness. As a community, we can't wait until 2021 to bring this resource online. If you believe in what peer support can bring to the table, I encourage you to write your state representatives and senators today. Ask them to support and pass the legislation to get Certified Peer Specialists into the field as soon as possible. The next legislative session starts on Feb. 5, 2020. Don't let another year pass without action from our leaders in Hartford.



Crisis Cards are still available from Ripple. For more information visit:

<http://rockingrecovery.org/services/crisis-card/>

Out on the town...



2019 gave us some wonderful opportunities to go out and talk a little about the importance of peers supporters in areas of mental health and addiction recovery services. Some of our presentation topics included effective peer support, prison to community re-entry, suicide prevention, intro to RockingRecovery.org as well as several others. The number of invitations are starting to increase which is very exciting for everyone here. Our last presentation of the year was at the Wheeler Clinic in New Britain in mid-December and seemed to be very productive. Before leaving, it was suggested that we return soon to present again for staff members that were not able to attend the day we were there.

If you or your organization would be interested in having a Ripple presenter at a meeting or event, please let us know. A projector with an internet-connected computer and a small table to set up our informational flyers on would be extremely helpful.



We have a simple belief, the more traditional treatment professionals see peers in the field, the more likely they will be willing to work with us. The skillset that Peer Recovery Coaches and Recovery Support Specialists bring to the table is unique. Once service providers see how certified peers can be intergraded onto a treatment team or into an agency, it will open more doors and opportunities for professional peers. We have done so little in scratching the surface when it comes to fully utilizing the vast peer resource here in Connecticut.

We are aggressively pushing for another go at a bill like HB 5270 on the floor for a vote in Hartford as soon as possible. One of the biggest reasons to get peer services covered by insurance is that it will open the door to eventually having peer-run respite here in our state. There are too many stories about hospital stays gone wrong. So many people want help but do not want to go inpatient. This is a service gap peers could literally fill overnight if they had the resources to do so.

www.RockingRecovery.org



Ripple's site, RockingRecovery.org continues to grow! We officially launched as a community resource on May 1st, 2019, and since that time, it has taken on a life of its own. The most visited section of this site is the CT RESOURCE LINKS page where we have hundreds of programs and services for people in Connecticut who need help. As of the publication of this newsletter, there are 40 categories leading to over 840 agencies and providers who offer a combined 1,200+ resources within the state. This section of the site is icon-driven, which allows you to quickly scan through the services and find the help you need.

Over the last few months, several people have told us how impressed they are with the website, people who are involved with peer education have mentioned that they use it in their classes. We are both gratified and humbled that this is proving to be useful by the community, but we have a confession to make. The work and ideas being put into this website are not ours alone. Much of the creative influence of this site has come from people just like you.

Without the stories our peers have shared with over the last year, the site would be a lot more sparse. We not only understand the power of sharing our stories; we know the power of listening to yours. As a community, it is easy to see, the more we share, the more we grow.

One of our philosophies is you only need three things to help someone, hope, time, and compassion. It is our goal to show others out there that Connecticut offers a vast network of organizations, services, and programs for people living with mental illness and addiction... That they are not alone, and that people are willing to support them in their recovery.

Ripple's mission is simple, as people with lived experience in the mental health and substance abuse services system, we seek to empower our peers. To use our voices to educate, inform, and inspire new leaders in our community. We will bring new and innovative ideas to the recovery processes for the benefit of all. RockingRecovery.org is one of the tools that will help is be successful in that goal.

This website is made up of over 90 pages and has taken over 435 hours of work to get to where we are now. Currently, we are aware of more than a dozen agencies using our site to better serve their clients. RockingRecovery.org has become a useful tool to help their clients get connected to outside services that improve the quality of their lives. We hope this will be picked up by more providers in the area and it can bring more help to those who need it.

A note from the webmaster:

RockingRecovery.org is a lot like a person's recovery journey; it does not happen all at once, and at some points, it won't go exactly as planned. We will hit obstacles and have setbacks, but with enough time, we will see our way clear and be able to move forward. It is our goal to create the most useful site possible for our community and peers. We will be continuously adding the CT Resource Links section and expect that it, just like recovery itself, will always be a work in progress.



Powered by Peers....

And a lot of coffee!

