

# The "R&R House": *MHA's Peer-Run Respite for Wisconsin Veterans*

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*Director of Prevention Services*  
Mental Health America of Wisconsin

## Presenter Background

- ▶ Milwaukee Native
- ▶ UW-Milwaukee, BBA Marketing - Entrepreneurship
- ▶ Notre Dame Law School, JD
- ▶ Milwaukee Pro Bono Assistant District Attorney: 2012 - 2013
- ▶ Legal Aid Society, Staff Attorney: 2013 - 2018
- ▶ MHA, Director of Prevention Services: 2018 - present; PRR-V Program Director

## Summary

- ▶ Introduction to Mental Health America of WI (MHA)
- ▶ Background of Veteran-specific mental health issues
- ▶ State Opportunity for Peer-Run Respite for Veterans (PRR-V)
- ▶ Project and Proposal by MHA
- ▶ Questions/Comments

## Introduction to MHA

- ▶ Mental Health America of Wisconsin (MHA) is an affiliate of the nation's leading community-based non-profit dedicated to helping all Americans achieve wellness by living mentally healthier lives.
- ▶ Focused on prevention, early intervention and screening, integrated care and treatment, and education and stigma-reduction to clear the path to recovery.
- ▶ Nearly 20% of Adult population lives with mental health diagnosis

## Programs and Services of MHA

- ▶ Suicide Prevention
  - ▶ Coalition Building - Prevent Suicide Wisconsin
  - ▶ Clinical Quality Improvement - Zero Suicide training collaboratives
  - ▶ Community Engagement - Local Health Department learning communities
- ▶ Wellness Clinic
  - ▶ Provides outpatient treatment and substance use counseling to youth and adults
- ▶ Strong Families Healthy Homes
  - ▶ Intensive case management for parents living with mental illness.
  - ▶ In-home mentoring to improve parenting skills and strengthen family relationships.
- ▶ Information and Assistance
  - ▶ Hub of information for community service referrals.
  - ▶ Provides public with constantly updated directory of service providers, as well as topic/symptom specific literature.

## Background Serving Veterans

- ▶ Targeted programming at Legal Aid Society to address civil legal issues of veterans.
  - ▶ Consumer Matters/Debt Collection
  - ▶ Housing Issues
  - ▶ Public Benefits
- ▶ Outreach
  - ▶ Free legal clinic at Dryhooch
  - ▶ National Guard semi-annual Stand Down for Homeless Veterans
  - ▶ Veterans Legal Clinic at Zablocki VA
- ▶ Veterans Health Coalition
  - ▶ Chair of Governance Board
  - ▶ Executive Committee Member, 2014 - 2016, 2019 - Present
  - ▶ Community Veteran Engagement Board representative

## Veteran Mental Health Needs

- ▶ Veterans and PTSD
  - ▶ At least 20% of veterans treated for PTSD, but underreported due to stigma, ineligibility for VA services, or obsolete treatment and diagnosis at time of separation (i.e. poor screening and treatment for Vietnam-era veterans)
- ▶ Military Sexual Trauma - MST
  - ▶ Nearly 25% of females report sexual assault during their military service
  - ▶ Over 50% of females report sexual harassment during their service
  - ▶ Male service members also experience high rates of sexual harassment (38%) and are unlikely to report incidences of MST

[https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common\\_veterans.asp](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common_veterans.asp)

## Veteran Mental Health Needs

- ▶ Suicide
  - ▶ Approximately 20 veterans die every day from suicide nationwide
    - ▶ Of those 20, only 6 are receiving VA care
  - ▶ Veterans account for approximately 20% of suicides in Wisconsin
  - ▶ Female veterans more than twice as likely as civilian females to die by suicide, and 33% more likely to attempt using a firearm
- ▶ Substance Use and Addiction
  - ▶ More than 20% of veterans with PTSD also have substance use disorder
  - ▶ Veterans suffered from overprescription of opioids and painkillers, both during service and after separation, leading to higher rates of addiction
  - ▶ Not accessing MH treatment leading to self-medication

## What is a Peer-Run Respite?

- ▶ Peer-run respite is a low-level crisis diversion house which allows someone who is experiencing an increase of mental health or substance use stressors to have a safe space to connect with peer support, engage or reconnect with treatment services, and to avoid the use of emergency services such as hospitalization or law enforcement and criminal justice resources.
- ▶ Open and staffed 24/7 by individuals with lived experience who have been trained to provide peer support services in a residential setting.
- ▶ Stays are short-term, limited to 5-6 nights, and all services are provided at no charge to guests.
- ▶ Publicly funded through state budget allocations and county government.

## Peer-Run Respite in Wisconsin

- ▶ Three State-Funded Respites currently operate in Wisconsin, funded by Dept of Health Services (DHS), Division of Care and Treatment Services, and providing service since approximately 2015.
  - ▶ Iris House - Appleton
  - ▶ Solstice House - Madison
  - ▶ Monarch House - Menomonee
- ▶ One County-Funded respite in Milwaukee County opened February 2019
  - ▶ Parachute House - Milwaukee (East Side)
- ▶ All respites currently open in Milwaukee are open to serve the general population (i.e. Veteran AND non-veteran) and do not have specific guidelines about serving the veteran population.

## State-Funded Peer-Run Respite for Veterans (PRR-V)

- ▶ 2018 - DHS released announcement to fund a PRR which would serve the veteran population *exclusively*.
  - ▶ Broad definition of Veteran
    - ▶ Not all who served in the military consider themselves (or are considered by others) to be veterans (i.e. no foreign deployment, no combat experience, disabled in basic training, etc.)
    - ▶ If in uniform as enlisted individual for ONE DAY, eligible for PRR-V.
- ▶ Opportunity specific to *southeast Wisconsin*, and likely to be located in the Milwaukee metro area, but must serve veterans throughout Wisconsin.
- ▶ Anticipated to house 3-6 guests in private bedrooms at the same time, with accommodations to allow for privacy between male and female veteran guests.

## Proposal for PRR-V by MHA

- ▶ MHA applied to be Vendor for PRR-V in October 2018, and selection of Vendor was made at end of 2018.
- ▶ Contract awarded March 2019
- ▶ Staffing has begun, announcements went out early May
- ▶ Advisory Council created, with at least 51% veteran representation and including stakeholders from VA, MCW, Dryhooch, BHD, veteran-serving organizations, and veteran community partners.
- ▶ Primary focus on identifying location which is welcoming to veterans from throughout Wisconsin

## Proposal for PRR-V by MHA

- ▶ Anticipated to open by Summer 2019
- ▶ R&R = “Rest and Recuperation” or “Rest and Relaxation”
  - ▶ Name and branding informed by input from veteran stakeholders
  - ▶ “They’ll all know what that means”
- ▶ Staff 24/7
- ▶ Welcoming environment for co-ed guests and diverse demographics
  - ▶ Veteran status transcends other factors such as age, race, ethnicity, etc. “All Green”
- ▶ Engage with neighborhood through community events, pot-lucks, garden space, library activities, and sharing perspectives and resources.

## Proposal for PRR-V by MHA

- ▶ Largely modeled off success of other PRRs, with collaboration through learning communities
- ▶ Peer Support Staff to be trained as CPS, and include additional training on providing support to veteran peers recovering with PTSD
- ▶ Provide access statewide, serving all Wisconsin veterans regardless of discharge status, length of military duty, or branch of service
- ▶ PRR-V to be designed with veteran-inspired and veteran-created art and support access to complementary health techniques
- ▶ Person-centered, recovery-oriented, culturally-informed care

## Questions, Comments, Concerns

- ▶ Brian Michel, [brian@mhawisconsin.org](mailto:brian@mhawisconsin.org)
- ▶ 414-336-7961





## **HIRING ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Title: Veteran Peer-Run Respite Project Manager**

**Position Summary:** Mental Health America of Wisconsin (MHA) is seeking a qualified candidate for the position of Project/House Manager for a Peer-Run Respite for Veterans (PRR-V). The PRR-V will provide peer support services to veterans who are experiencing increased mental health, behavioral health, or substance use symptoms in a safe and welcoming residential environment. The Project Manager will be responsible for supervising the daily operation of the PRR-V, for supporting staff in the provision of peer support services, and will ensure the collection of data necessary for outcome reporting. Due to funding restrictions from the Department of Health Services through the State of Wisconsin, only candidates with prior experience in the United States Armed Forces are eligible to apply. Candidates must also be an individual with lived experience of mental health or substance use challenges, and must be a Certified Peer Specialist through the State of Wisconsin or Department of Veterans Affairs, or able to obtain certification within 2 years of hiring.

The Project Manager is a full-time position, with most duties occurring in the residential facility where the PRR-V operates. The Project Manager reports to the Program Director of the PRR-V, is expected to maintain weekly updates regarding regular operations of the PRR-V, and collaborate with other PRR-V staff and its Advisory Council. The Project Manager is responsible for direct supervision of peer staff at the PRR-V, including handling scheduling, delegation of housekeeping, and maintaining a safe and welcoming environment for all potential guests and visitors of the PRR-V. The Project Manager is also expected to engage in continued professional development through webinars, trainings, and conferences, expenses to be covered by MHA. The Project Manager should be an individual with high levels of compassion and empathy while also demonstrating excellent organizational skills and the ability to coordinate multiple duties simultaneously. Successful candidates will also have knowledge of resources and social services programs available to veterans and their families to assist with developing referral process for guests.

**Time and Compensation:** The Project Manager is a full-time position, with duties estimated at approximately 35-40 hours per week. The Project Manager is a salaried position at \$40,000, plus benefits including healthcare and PTO.

**Essential Duties and Responsibilities:**

- Supervise and provide leadership to peer staff at the PRR-V.
- Maintain schedule and staffing levels of PRR-V to ensure a safe and welcoming environment.
- Demonstrated ability to work with autonomy utilizing exceptional critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Delegate maintenance and housekeeping duties to maintain a sanitary home for guests and visitors, including lawn/snow maintenance, stocking housekeeping essentials, and regular safety checks.
- Attend regular meetings with Program Director and Advisory Council to address operations of PRR-V.
- Represent PRR-V positively and constructively in community engagement and networking opportunities.
- Inspire capabilities of peer staff to engage with guests and maintain relationships to improve guest recovery outcomes and follow-up contacts.

**Qualifications and Skills:**

- Candidates must identify as a person with lived experience of mental health or substance use challenges, **and** must have served in the United States Armed Forces.
- Candidates must have strong understanding of recovery principles and if not already a Certified Peer Specialist with the State of WI or DVA, must be able to obtain certification within 2 years.
- Bachelor's Degree in relevant field, or equal professional experience, strongly preferred.
- Candidates must have the ability to work collaboratively with a range of personality types and build a team toward a shared goal.
- Candidates should project the values of recovery and recognize the importance of culturally appropriate, consumer-driven, trauma-informed care.
- Candidates must pass a caregiver background check.

Interested candidates may send applications (resume and cover letter) to:

Brian Michel, Director of Prevention Services  
Mental Health America of Wisconsin  
600 W. Virginia Street, Ste. 502  
Milwaukee, WI 53204

Applications may be sent electronically to [brian@mhawisconsin.org](mailto:brian@mhawisconsin.org). Please submit by 5/31/19.



## **HIRING ANNOUNCEMENT**

### **Title: Veteran Peer Support Specialist (Full-Time and Part-Time)**

**Position Summary:** Mental Health America of Wisconsin (MHA) is seeking qualified candidates for the position of Peer Support Specialists for a Peer-Run Respite for Veterans (PRR-V). The PRR-V will provide peer support services to veterans who are experiencing increased mental health, behavioral health, or substance use symptoms in a safe and welcoming residential environment. The Peer Support Specialists will be responsible for interacting with potential and welcomed guests at the PRR-V and provide caring, competent, and recovery-oriented support throughout their interactions with guests. Peer Support Specialists will engage in pre-arrival phone conversations with potential guests to determine the fitness of the PRR-V to meet the needs of the guest at that time, support guests during orientation to the PRR-V, provide peer support services in a residential environment, and engage in follow-up to gather feedback data from guests following their stay. Additionally, Peer Support Staff will be responsible for ensuring the PRR-V operates in a safe, sanitary, and welcoming environment.

Due to the mission of the PRR-V, candidates with experience as members of the United States Armed Forces are strongly preferred. Candidates must also be an individual with lived experience of mental health or substance use challenges, and must be a Certified Peer Specialist through the State of Wisconsin or Department of Veterans Affairs, or able to obtain certification within 2 years of hiring.

The Peer Support Specialists are available for both full-time and part-time positions, with most duties occurring in the residential facility where the PRR-V operates. The Peer Support Specialists report to the Project Manager. The Peer Support Specialists are expected to work collaboratively with other peers in the house to encourage and support the recovery capabilities and wellness of guests at the PRR-V. This may include conducting group activities, engaging one-on-one with guests, conflict-resolution, team-building, and motivational interviewing. Successful candidates will also have knowledge of resources and social services programs available to veterans and their families to assist with developing referral process for guests.

**Time and Compensation:** The full-time Peer Support Specialist has duties estimated at approximately 35-40 hours per week. The part-time Peer Support Specialist has duties

estimated at approximately 20-25 hours per week. Both positions start at \$16.50/hour, with benefits and PTO available.

**Essential Duties and Responsibilities:**

- Conduct pre-arrival interviews, orientation, and departure planning with guests at PRR-V.
- Provide recovery-oriented, person-centered peer support services to guests at PRR-V.
- Maintain a safe, sanitary, and welcoming environment at the PRR-V.
- Demonstrated ability to work with autonomy utilizing exceptional critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Recognize and respect the lived experience of all guests at the PRR-V.
- Attend regular meetings with Project Manager and Program Director as needed.
- Represent PRR-V positively and constructively in community engagement and networking opportunities.
- Inspire capabilities of peer companions to engage with guests and maintain relationships to improve guest recovery outcomes and follow-up contacts.

**Qualifications and Skills:**

- Candidates must identify as a person with lived experience of mental health or substance use challenges.
- Candidates with prior experience as a member of the United States Armed Forces **strongly preferred**.
- Candidates must have strong understanding of recovery principles and if not already a Certified Peer Specialist with the State of WI or DVA, must be able to obtain certification within 2 years.
- Bachelor's Degree in relevant field, or equal professional experience, strongly preferred.
- Candidates must have the ability to work collaboratively with a range of personality types and build a team toward a shared goal.
- Candidates should project the values of recovery and recognize the importance of culturally appropriate, consumer-driven, trauma-informed care.
- Candidates must pass a caregiver background check.

Interested candidates may send applications (resume and cover letter) to:

Brian Michel, Director of Prevention Services  
Mental Health America of Wisconsin  
600 W. Virginia Street, Ste. 502  
Milwaukee, WI 53204

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## **HIRING ANNOUNCEMENT**

### **Title: Veteran Community Engagement Specialist – Part Time**

**Position Summary:** Mental Health America of Wisconsin (MHA) is seeking qualified candidates for the position of Veteran Community Engagement Specialist (VCES) to support MHA's Peer-Run Respite for Veterans (PRR-V). VCES will ensure the visible and constructive presence of the PRR-V program among the veteran community and community at large. The position will be responsible for identifying potential outreach opportunities and engaging with relevant partners, individuals, agencies, and others in Southeast Wisconsin and Statewide to promote the establishment and operation of the PRR-V. The position requires specialized knowledge of benefits and resources targeted to veterans, including resources available through Department of Veterans Affairs, Wisconsin DVA, and other public and private entities which focus on serving the veteran population and their families. Other valuable qualities include strong communication skills, the ability to respond appropriately to questions from the community, and high levels of initiative.

VCES is a contract-funded salaried position. The VCES reports to the Program Director of the PRR-V, and must work collaboratively with other PRR-V staff. Duties include maintaining accurate Outlook calendar appointments, scheduling outreach meetings, representing the mission and values of the PRR-V in community events and policy discussions, assisting with location search and community development for the PRR-V, and leveraging existing networks to expand the reach and visibility of the PRR-V in Wisconsin. Some travel throughout the State of Wisconsin will be expected. Eligible candidates must have a valid driver's license and proof of insurance.

**Time and Compensation:** The duties of the VCES are estimated to account for 10-15 hours per week and may include occasional evening and weekend duties. Compensation will be on a salaried basis at \$300.00 per week. Travel expenses will be reimbursed by MHA.

**Essential Duties and Responsibilities:**

- Identify weekly opportunities to inform and educate community providers about the PRR-V.
- Maintain Outlook calendar to allow for event sharing with Program Director.
- Assure intentional inclusion of the mission and goals of the PRR-V in appropriate meetings with policymakers, stakeholders, community providers, and veteran-serving networks.
- Develop promotional strategy in collaboration with Program Director to ensure supportive messaging surrounding the PRR-V in the community.
- Represent MHA's PRR-V project in meetings and committees as assigned.
- Work with PRR-V Advisory Council to ensure consistency of information shared with community providers and potential guests.
- Meet at least bi-weekly with Program Director to update on successes and challenges of promoting PRR-V.

**Qualifications and Skills:**

- Minimum of Bachelor's Degree in related field, or equivalent professional experience in community engagement.
- Ability to translate the mission of the PRR-V into community engagement, conversation, and support through outreach.
- Demonstrated knowledge of veterans benefits programs, including disability benefits and discharge rating upgrades, substance use treatment services, and specialized behavioral health services.
- Experience collaborating with veteran-friendly community service organizations.

Interested candidates may send applications (resume and cover letter) to:

Brian Michel, Director of Prevention Services  
Mental Health America of Wisconsin  
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