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MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF WISCONSIN'S PEER-RUN RESPITE FOR VETERANS IS NOW OPEN

The First in the Nation, the R&R House Provides Peer Support Services Exclusively to Wisconsin Veterans.

MILWAUKEE, WI –Mental Health America of Wisconsin announced the opening on January 28th of the first peer-run respite for veterans. Located in Pewaukee, WI, the [R&R House](#) is a voluntary, short-term, overnight program that provides community-based, non-clinical support to former members of the military who are living with mental health and/or substance use challenges. Open to former servicemembers of any branch of the United States Armed Forces, the R&R House welcomes veterans from anywhere in the state of Wisconsin, regardless of deployment or discharge status, VA eligibility, age, or gender/sexual orientation.

“Peer support specialists are not therapists or counselors. We’re veterans who use our own shared life experience to inspire hope in our guests. Veteran guests will be encouraged to engage with our peer support staff or other resources,” said Victor Kilpatrick, project coordinator at the R&R House. “We offer lots of activities,” he added, “but nothing is required. Some veterans may want to utilize their stay as a break from specific issues that could cause an increase of symptoms leading to a higher level of crisis.” The goal of the program is to reduce the reliance on more expensive and restrictive system resources, such as emergency room admissions or law enforcement interaction, and to help individuals develop and improve coping skills to better handle life stressors and advance their recovery journey.

The R&R House peer support staff are available 24/7 to support guests, who may stay up to seven days. Services are provided in a residential, home-like setting which allows for two guests at a time, each with their own bedroom and bathroom facilities. In addition to providing direct peer support, the R&R House offers a variety of programs and activities to promote wellbeing, including gardening, art, journaling, music, and yoga from local veteran-serving resources. Other connections and referrals across the state of Wisconsin can be made through the peer support staff, including connections to county veteran service officers, state and federal VA services and benefits, and other resources based in a guest’s home community. Consistent with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, masks are required when individuals are in common areas of the house to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, and guests are screened for symptoms before receiving an invitation to the R&R House.

R&R House peer staff also continue to operate a Veteran Warmline, which provides non-crisis phone support to individuals who identify as service members, veterans, or their families. Both the R&R House and the Veteran Warmline are accessed by phone at (262)336-9540. Callers will be directed to leave a message with their name, county, and phone number, and they will receive a call back within minutes from a trained veteran peer specialist.

All services at the R&R House are provided at no charge. The R&R House and Veteran Warmline are funded by a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. For more information about staying at the R&R House, please call (262)336-9540 or email rrhouse@mhawisconsin.org.

*The Veteran Warmline service is **not** a crisis line. For veterans and military families in crisis, please call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) and Press “1”. If you or a loved one are in immediate danger, please call 911.*

www.mhawisconsin.org