

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1544

To authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Director of the Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, to award grants to facilitate the funding of community-based mental health and substance use disorder services and peer support programs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 3, 2021

Mr. CÁRDENAS (for himself and Mr. TONKO) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Director of the Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, to award grants to facilitate the funding of community-based mental health and substance use disorder services and peer support programs, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Virtual Community
5 Support Act of 2021”.

1 **SEC. 2. GRANT FOR COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH**
2 **AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER SERVICES**
3 **AND PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 15 days after the
5 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health
6 and Human Services, acting through the Director of the
7 Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse
8 and Mental Health Services Administration, shall estab-
9 lish a program (in this Act referred to as the “Program”) to
10 facilitate the funding of community-based mental health
11 and substance use disorder services and peer support pro-
12 grams.

13 (b) GRANT AUTHORITY.—In carrying out the Pro-
14 gram, the Secretary shall award a grant in accordance
15 with this section.

16 (c) ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS.—The Secretary may
17 award a grant under the Program to an eligible recipient
18 determined by the Secretary to be authorized and capable
19 of carrying out a project described in subsection (d).

20 (d) ELIGIBLE PROJECTS.—Grant funds awarded
21 under the Program may be used to—

22 (1) identify and coordinate care between pro-
23 grams that provide access to community-based men-
24 tal health and substance use disorder services for ju-
25 veniles and assist in the coordination of such serv-
26 ices;

1 (2) identify and coordinate care between pro-
2 grams that provide access to community-based men-
3 tal health and substance use disorder services for
4 adults and assist in the coordination of such serv-
5 ices;

6 (3) obtain technology required to provide a
7 community-based mental health and substance use
8 disorder services virtually;

9 (4) compensate a healthcare provider or a peer
10 specialist for the provision of community-based men-
11 tal health and substance use disorder services;

12 (5) provide education assistance to an indi-
13 vidual seeking certification as a peer specialist;

14 (6) provide for workforce development, recruit-
15 ment, and retention activities, to train, recruit, and
16 retain peer specialists;

17 (7) transition a network of in-person, peer spe-
18 cialist facilitated behavioral health support services
19 to a virtual platform for such behavioral health sup-
20 port services; or

21 (8) expand or improve virtual, peer specialist
22 facilitated behavioral health support services carried
23 out by the entity prior to the date of enactment of
24 this section.

1 (e) APPLICATIONS.—To be eligible for a grant under
2 the Program, an eligible recipient shall submit to the Sec-
3 retary an application in such form, at such time, and con-
4 taining such information as the Secretary determines to
5 be appropriate.

6 (f) GUIDANCE.—Not later than 15 days after the
7 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall issue
8 guidance on the requirements an eligible recipient shall
9 take to provide community-based mental health and sub-
10 stance use disorder services.

11 (g) SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.—Federal funds
12 paid to an eligible recipient pursuant to the Program must
13 be used to supplement, but not supplant, any other Fed-
14 eral, State, or local funds available to such eligible recipi-
15 ent.

16 (h) REPORT.—

17 (1) INTERIM REPORT.—Not later than 90 days
18 after the date on which funds are distributed under
19 the Program, the Secretary shall submit to Congress
20 a report on the Program that includes—

21 (A) the number of grants awarded under
22 the Program;

23 (B) the location of each grant awarded
24 under the Program; and

1 (C) the amount requested and amount
2 awarded for each grant under the Program.

3 (2) REPORT.—Not later than 30 days after the
4 end of the COVID-19 emergency period, the Sec-
5 retary shall submit to Congress a report on the Pro-
6 gram that includes—

7 (A) the number of grants awarded under
8 the Program;

9 (B) the location of each grant awarded
10 under the Program; and

11 (C) the amount requested and amount
12 awarded for each grant under the Program.

13 (3) PUBLICATION REQUIREMENT.—On the date
14 on which a report is submitted under paragraphs (1)
15 or (2), the Secretary shall publish such report sub-
16 mitted on the website of the Department of Health
17 and Human Services.

18 (i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
19 authorized to be appropriated to carry out the Program—

20 (1) during the COVID-19 emergency period,
21 such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal
22 years such emergency period is ongoing; and

23 (2) after the COVID-19 emergency period,
24 \$5,000,000 for each of the five fiscal years begin-

1 ning after the termination of the COVID-19 emer-
2 gency period.

3 (j) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

4 (1) COVID-19 EMERGENCY PERIOD.—The term
5 “COVID-19 emergency period” means the public
6 health emergency declared by the Secretary of
7 Health and Human Services on January 27, 2020,
8 with respect to the 2019 novel coronavirus.

9 (2) ELIGIBLE RECIPIENT.—The term “eligible
10 recipient” means—

11 (A) a department of health or a depart-
12 ment of public health, in coordination with a
13 State;

14 (B) a behavioral health program that pri-
15 marily serves individuals with mental health or
16 substance abuse disorders;

17 (C) community-based nonprofit, that is a
18 consumer-controlled and is certified in accord-
19 ance with applicable State law to deliver peer
20 specialist support services at a State or local
21 level; or

22 (D) an institution of higher education pro-
23 viding service learning and civic-engagement
24 courses for peer specialist training.

1 (3) HEALTHCARE PROVIDER.—The term
2 “healthcare provider” mean a certified provider who
3 provides behavioral health services.

4 (4) PEER SPECIALIST.—The term “peer spe-
5 cialist” includes—

6 (A) a certified peer specialist;

7 (B) a peer recovery support specialist; and

8 (C) a recovery coach for behavioral health.

9 (5) STATE.—The term “State” means a State
10 of the United States, the District of Columbia, or
11 any commonwealth, territory, or possession of the
12 United States, or an Indian tribe.

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