

Opioid Peer Support Networks Act of 2018

Senator Collins and Shaheen

The significant gap in treatment for individuals with substance abuse disorders is well documented. Nearly 20.5 million Americans suffer from a substance use disorder yet only 1 in 10 receive treatment. Unfortunately, there is also a gap in recovery care that is not as widely recognized. Far too often individuals suffering with addiction—estimated to between 40 and 60 percent—relapse. Peer-to-peer and community support networks are currently operating across the country to address this void in the system. These recovery community organizations utilize counseling and positive peer influences to encourage individuals to stay in recovery.

This bill would establish a new competitive grant program to support peer networks to build an infrastructure for substance use disorder recovery. Peer support networks are a group of two or more independent nonprofit organizations that provide long-term non-clinical recovery support for substance use disorders. At least one organization in the network must be run by “peers: individuals in recovery who reflect the community served.”

The Opioid Peer Support Networks:

- Build connections to behavioral health providers, primary care providers and physicians, employers, housing services, educational and vocational schools, the criminal justice system, child welfare agencies, and other recovery support services that facilitate recovery from substance use disorders;
- Conduct outreach to help families and communities support individuals struggling with addiction, reduce the stigma associated with substance use disorders, and support long-term recovery.

Technical Assistance Center:

- The bill would establish a National Peer Run Training and Technical Assistance Center for Addiction Recovery Support, through a SAMHSA grant. This Center would provide the Peer Support Networks with training, technical assistance, evaluation, research, translation, and capacity building products, as well as annual guidance on best practices.

Reporting Requirements:

- Grantees would submit annual reports describing programs and activities and outcomes including in housing, employment, health, and wellness; and
- HHS would submit a report to Congress evaluating the programs and identifying outstanding challenges and barriers, particularly issues specific to peer support.

Grants would be awarded for up to three years, and the Secretary would be required to take into consideration the relative proportion of awards among rural and urban areas, with at least 50 percent of grants provided to rural areas. The bill would authorize \$25,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2019 through 2022.