

News

[Politics \(/News/Topic/Politics/\)](#) | [Health \(/News/Topic/Health/\)](#) | [News \(/News/Topic/News/\)](#)

Oregon Bill To Provide 'Peer Services' To Mentally Ill Gets First Hearing

by [Kristian Foden-Vencil \(/contributor/kristian-foden-vencil/\)](/contributor/kristian-foden-vencil/) [Follow](#) OPB | Feb. 2, 2017 2:42 p.m. | Portland

People in the mental health community are pushing a bill in Salem this session to mandate “peer services.”

The phrase “peer services” sounds wonky. But for someone who’s mentally ill, it basically means having someone at their side who’s been through what they’re experiencing.

The model is used by Alcoholics Anonymous, combat veterans and breast cancer patients.

The bill would put peer support services into the Medicaid contract of Oregon’s Coordinated Care Organizations. And while there’s some concern it might increase costs, Kevin Fitts with the Oregon Mental Health Consumers Association said that’s not necessarily the case.

“Peer services make a difference in helping reduce costly psychiatric services, incarceration,” he said. “It helps individuals promote natural systems of support, which reduce the high end cost of psychiatric hospitalization.”

In addition to costs, some in Salem question the research and benefits of peer services.

The bill, HB 23-04 had its first committee hearing Wednesday.



Peer services means providing mentally ill people with someone who's been through what they're experiencing.

Alex Proimos

([https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/proimos/4199789866/in/photolist-7p82d7-4B91sA-pUWJtf-aAoHjH-aDa4AY-bFDxFr-aF3MR3-nnT4zQ-dAqXgQ-dSvA8C-6WUDrM-bsJFdj-fbXS7C-k2zYFA-ezVoT8-jCjVob-fvEZDN-dQacqK-nCu36D-eEEwSE-ezXFrr-kraAnk-auDmhN-dQfTxo-nt7m4B-oT6a35-9eKt4C-ezMRDA-8mpnm4-ddFb9s-a6uPzb-c19VK7-ds88u7-jTs7KA-8uE6sr-fvqJbP-gx18T4-bsJFzw-k1JM8z-ot1Umc-nYPvzY-8uE7GR-koNejz-8uGX3L-frW46d-aWghTR-79mZQ8-jCjVEd-jTqxP6-atwrmF)/Flickr (<a href=))