

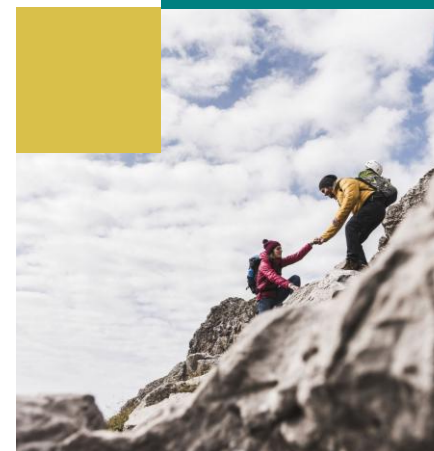
New Hampshire's Recovery-Oriented Step-Up Step-Down Pilot Program

A Story of System Transformation and
Model Overview
12/3/2025



Department of
**HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES**

Division for
Behavioral
Health



Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions
- What is Peer Support
- History of Peer Support
- Step-up Step-down (SUSD) Defined
- Program Utilization & Data
- Guest Testimonials
- Question & Answer



Presenters

Ayla Kendall, Administrator of Peer and Family Support at the Department of Health and Human Services

David Blacksmith, former Executive Director of On The Road to Wellness Peer Support Agency and Step-up Step-down Program

Fred Poisson, Executive Director of Connections Peer Support Agency and Step-up Step-down Program



What is Peer Support?

"When I saw people recovered, it gave me hope that I could too"- Corinna

12/3/2025





What is Peer Support?

Peer Support is the practice of individuals with lived mental health experiences offering professional support to individuals experiencing mental health challenges as they move towards their goals.

- It is a model of giving and receiving support that focuses around 4 key tasks:
 - Establishing connection
 - Understanding worldview
 - Creating mutuality
 - Moving towards instead of moving away



What is Peer Support?



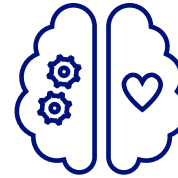
• Connection

- Walking with people in their recovery and wellness journey.
- Connection to community supports, activities and events.



• Hope

- Inspire hope that people can and do recover.
- Through empathy and listening.



• Knowledge

- Dispel myths about mental health and substance use disorders.
- Provide self-help education and link people to tools and resources.



• Support

- Provide support for people in identifying their goals, hopes and dreams as well as creating a roadmap to get there.



What is Peer Support?

- A peer support worker is someone with the lived experience of recovery from a mental health condition, substance use disorder, or both. They provide support to others experiencing similar challenges.
- They provide non-clinical, strengths-based support and are “experientially credentialed” by their own recovery journey (Davidson, et al., 1999).

“Because of peer support I am alive!”
—Melodie

“When I saw that other people recovered, it gave me hope that I could too.”
—Corinna

“Peer support allowed me to feel ‘normal.’”
—Jean

SAMHSA, What is Peer Support Infographic, 2022



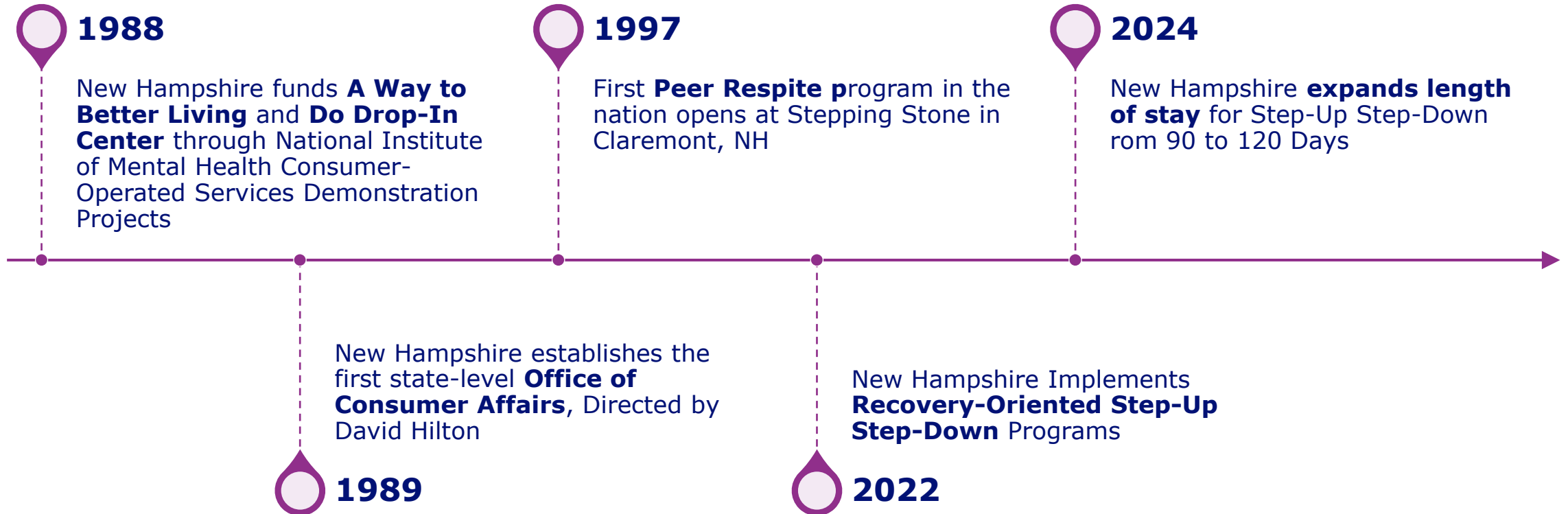
History of Peer Support in NH

12/3/2025



History of NH Peer Support and SUSD

Our state has played a leading role in establishing peer support programming and promoting lived experience.



History of NH Peer Support and SUSP



Certification & Training

- NH developed Certified Recovery Support Worker (CRSW) and Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPSS) certifications to set professional standards.
- Training addresses unique Peer needs, including language and minimizing labels.



Policy & Organizational Support

- Administrative rules requiring integrated services
- Peer workforce Advancement plan
- 10-year Mental Health Plan



Step-Up Step-Down Defined

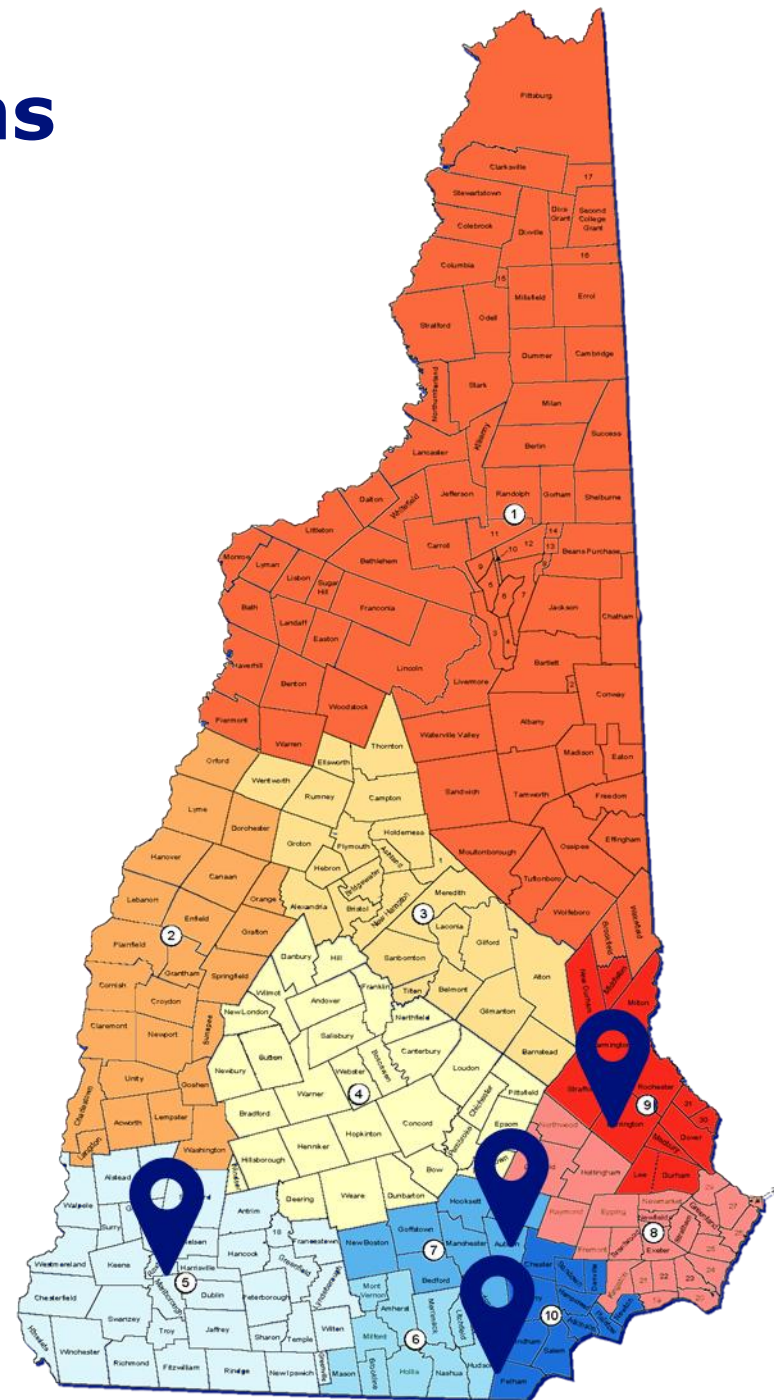
A Residential Program Rendered Through
The Lens of Peer Support

12/3/2025



Step-Up Step-Down Program Locations

- Region 5: Monadnock Peer Support (6 Beds)
- Region 6: H.E.A.R.T.S. Peer Support (3 Beds)
- Region 7: On the Road to Wellness (3 Beds)
- Region 8: Connections Peer Support (3 Beds)



Step-Up Step-Down Defined

- An at will program for individuals living with mental health challenges
- Offering a non-clinical homelike supportive setting
- Transitioning out of a clinical setting, needing a step down in the level of support/structure
- Or individuals in the community needing an increase in the level of support to avoid entering a clinical setting



On The Road To Wellness, SUSD Manchester



Step-Up Step-Down Defined

- Programs staffed and operated by Peers trained in non-clinical and non-medical model based on Intentional Peer Support, Wellness Recovery Action Plan, and SAMHSA core competencies.
- Providing comprehensive transitional residential services for individuals 18 and older
- 3-bed programs with a length of stay up to 120-days.
- Operating in Keene, Manchester, Nashua, and Northwood.
- Currently funded entirely by NH Department of Health and Human Services and free for participants—no insurance required.



What does it look like to Step-Up?

- An environment providing more structure than what you will find at home.
- Required check-in times
- Support groups tailored to the needs of the individuals currently staying in the program.
- Required daily tasks that support the development and maintenance of life skills.
- Access to 24/7 mental health peer support.
- Practical support both in the residence and the community.
- Transportation to appointments and community resources.



What does it look like to Step-Down?

- Gradual shift toward greater independence from the structured frameworks used in clinical care.
- Autonomy and personal responsibility for your own recovery.
- Peer support groups based around the needs of the current participants in the program.
- Morning and afternoon check-ins creating a framework for the day.
- Support with the development and maintenance of life skills.
- Transitional support



What is Transitional Support at Step-Up Step-Down?

Transitional support includes:

- Mental health resources to ease the transition and reduce anxiety caused by abrupt changes in structure.
- Practical and emotional support navigating the search for housing and employment.
- Practical and emotional support for the development and maintenance of Life Skills.



What Does **Structure** Look Like at Step-Up Step-Down?

- Required daily morning check-in to support accountability and time management.
- Required attendance for morning support groups.
- Weekly meetings with an assigned Peer Support Specialist to work on personal goals.
- Required afternoon check-in, 7 days a week.
- Required afternoon support groups 7 days a week.
- Assigned household daily maintenance tasks, both assigned and supported.
- Weekday and weekend curfews
- Sober environment



Employment Support at SUSD

Emotional and practical support...

- Mapping out a process with steps and goals.
- Identifying and reaching out to references.
- Resume and writing a cover letter.
- Identifying and gathering the required documents for employment.
- Mock interviews.
- Staying on task with employment related goals.



Life Skills Support at SUSD

- Required daily household maintenance tasks
- Budgeting groups are offered
- Scheduling support is offered
- Bedrooms are required to be kept clean and are checked daily
- Practical support and transportation require planning and notice.
- Prompts are provided for personal hygiene.
- Prompts are provided when requested for time management.



What Step-Up Step-Down Is Not



A housing program



A respite program



A substance use treatment program



Aftercare

- Current model follows participants for up to 6 months post discharge
- Weekly scheduled practical support check in available
- Alumni group allowing for continue connection to a community of support
- When requested, support includes work with family dynamics
- Ongoing support with employment and housing
- Continued support with self-advocacy





Data and Program Utilization

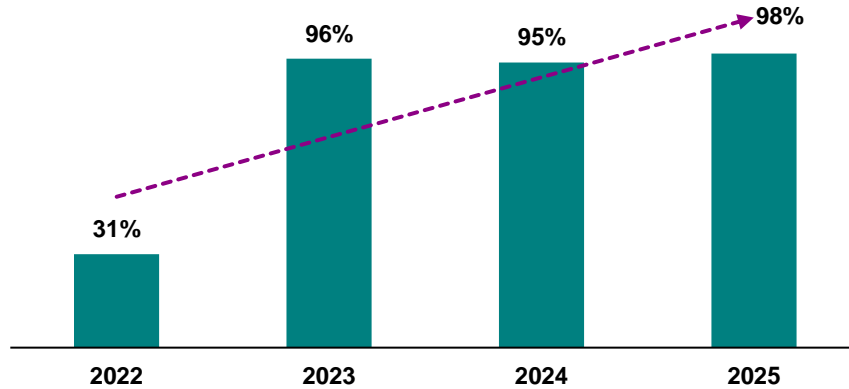
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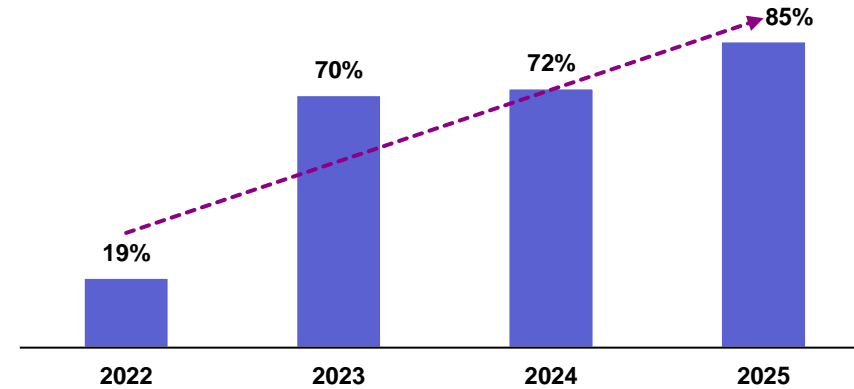
Step-Up Step-Down Bed Occupancy

Bed occupancy rates have remained consistently high since implementation in 2022.

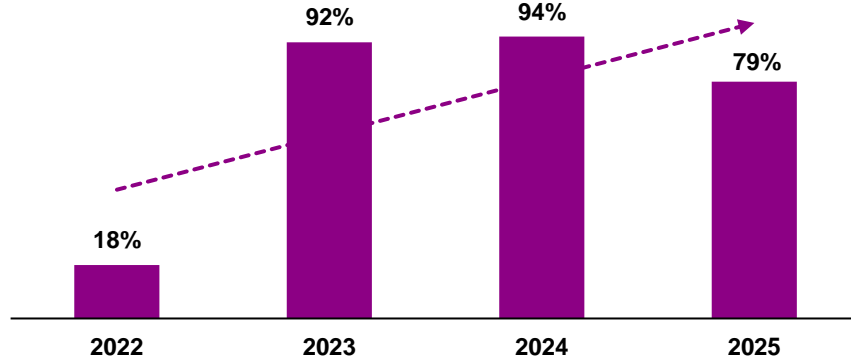
H.E.A.R.T.S. Peer Support Center
Nashua, NH



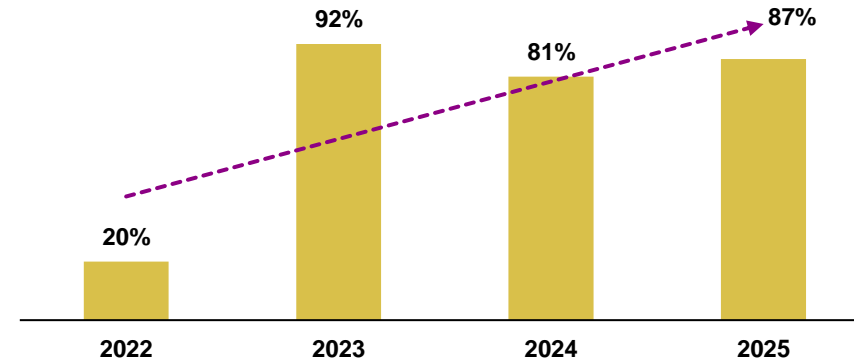
Connections Peer Support Center
Northwood, NH



Monadnock Peer Support
Keene, NH



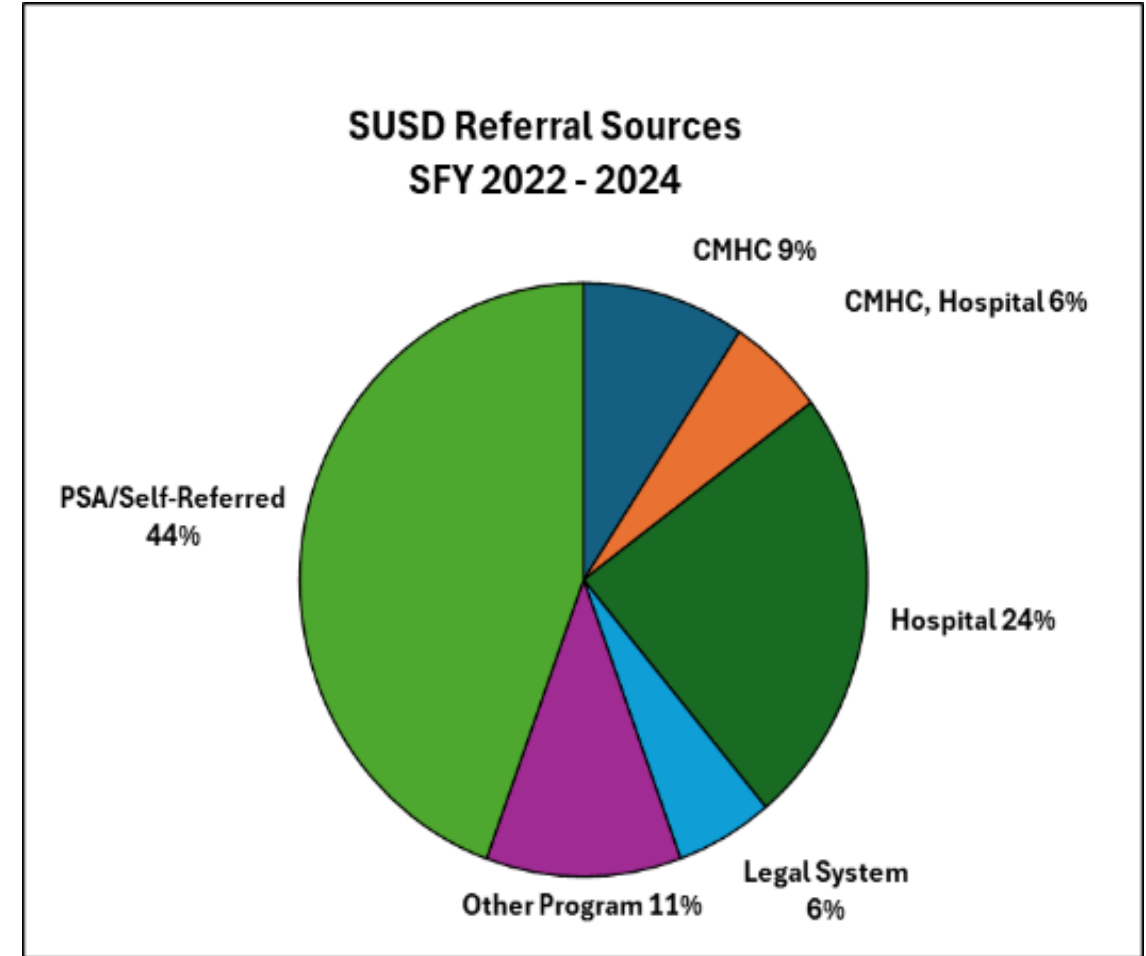
On the Road to Wellness
Manchester, NH



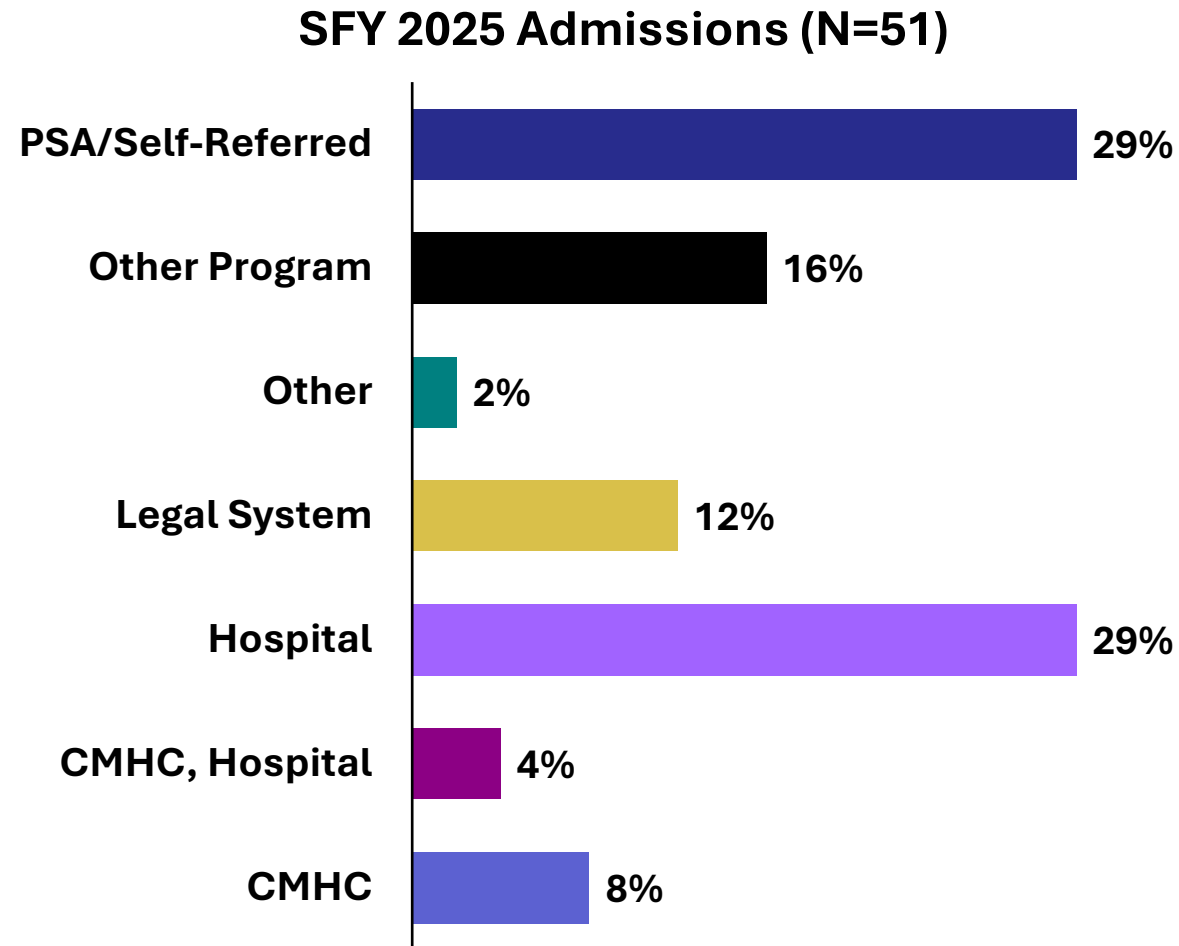
2022-2024 Referral Sources

Since inception of SUSD in 2022 through 2024 referral sources were:

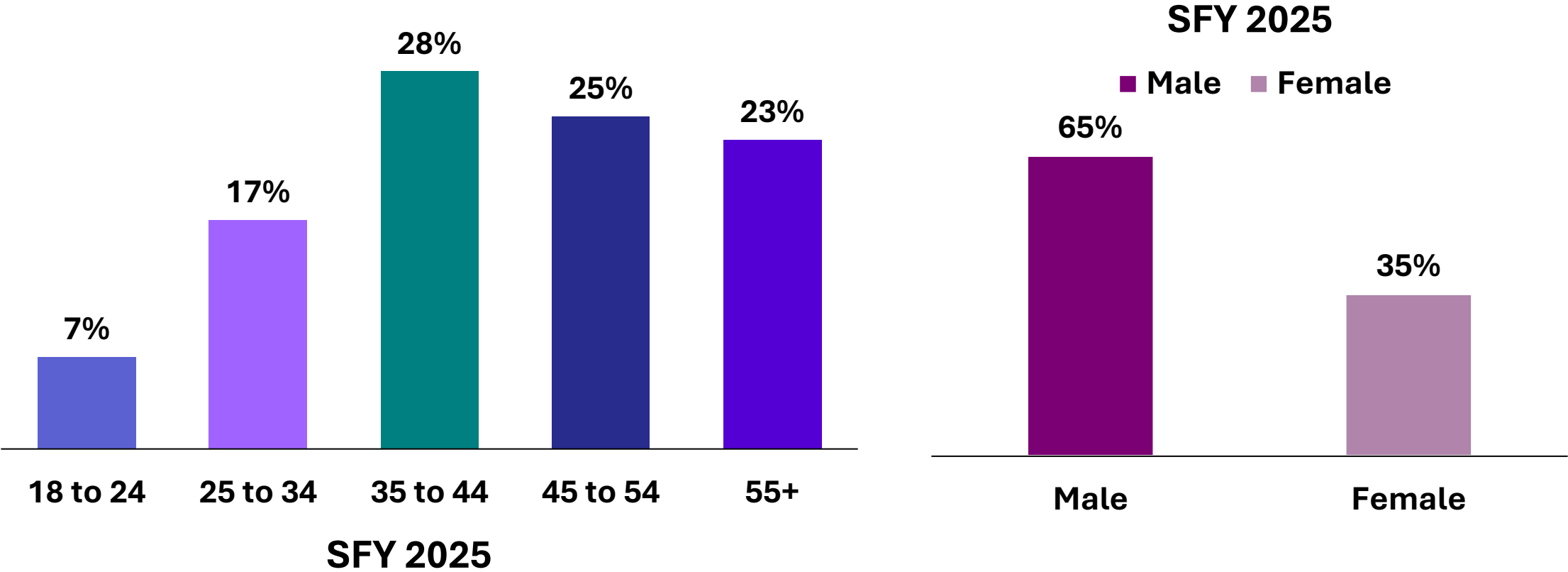
- 44% PSA/Self
- 24% Hospital
- 11% Other Programs
- 9% Community Mental Health Center (CMHC)
- 6% CMHC-Hospital
- 6% Legal System



Number of Admissions by Referral Sources



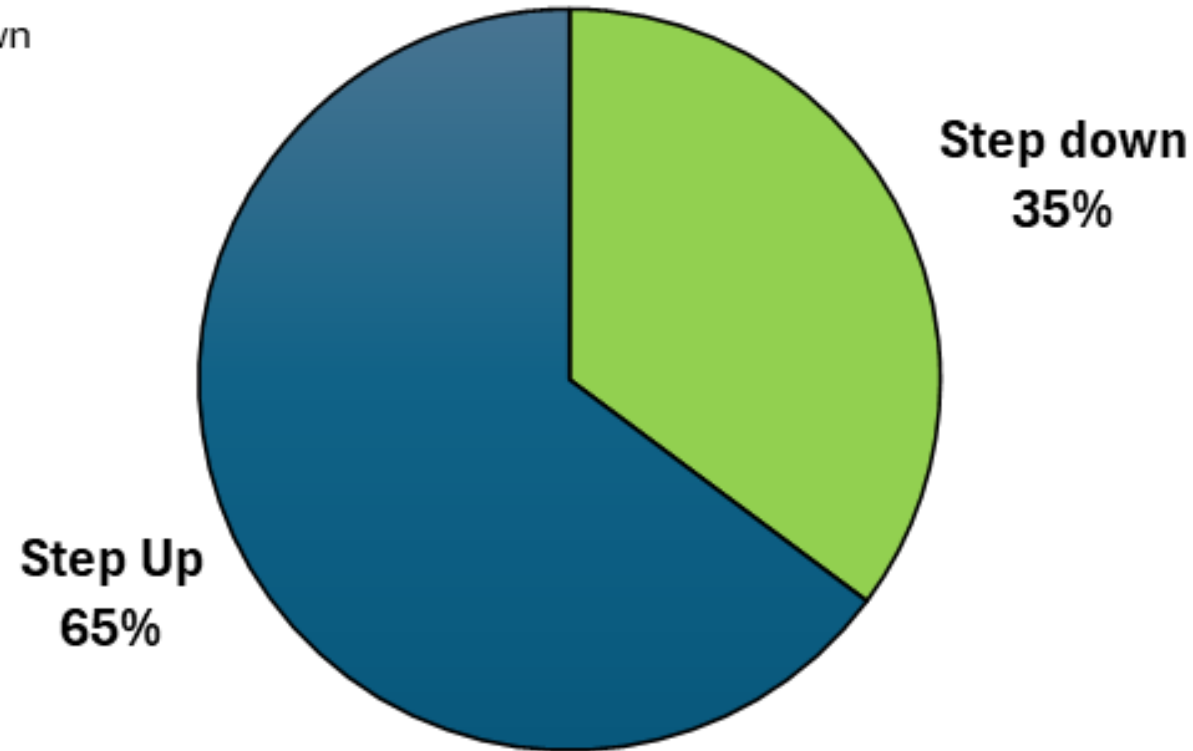
Step-up Step-down Demographics from SFY 2025



Step Up vs Step Down Admissions SFY 2022 to SFY 2025 (YTD)

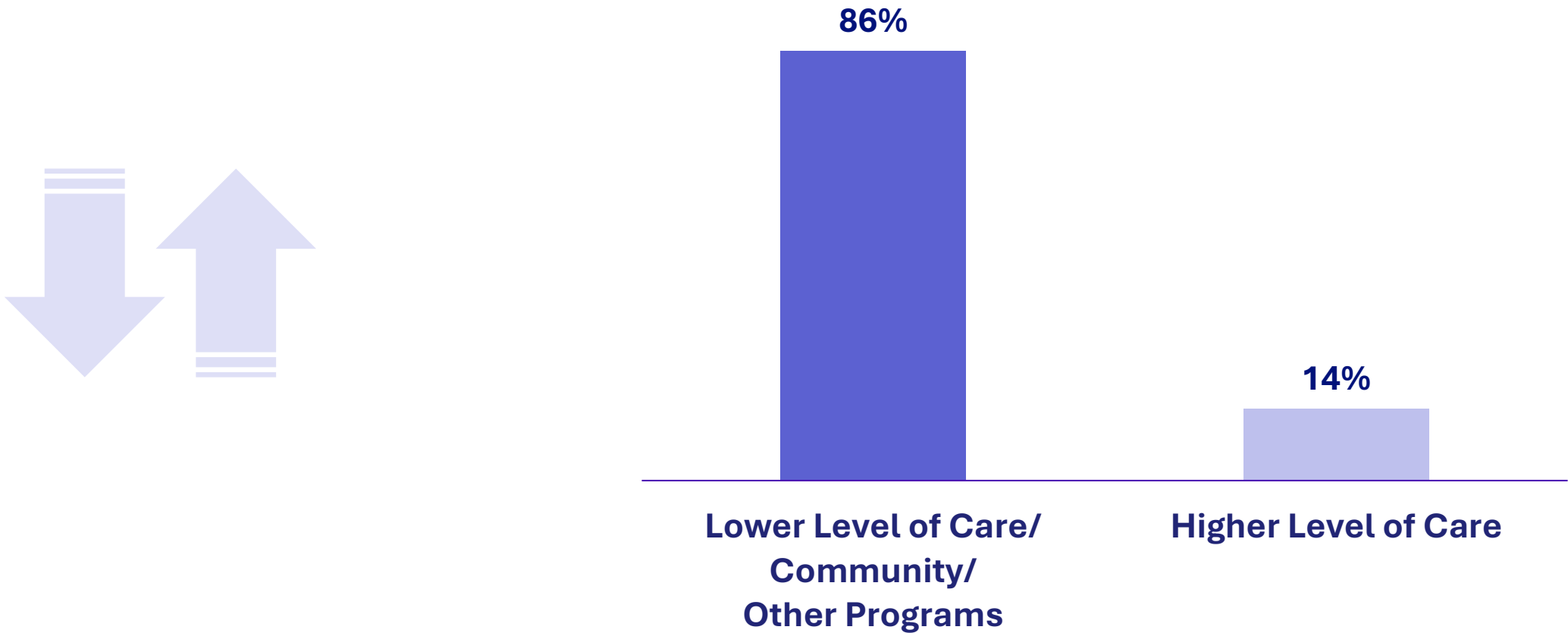
■ Step down

■ Step Up



Hospital Diversion in SFY2025:

Are individuals returning to the community when they leave SUSP?



Testimonials

A participant in Northwood spoke to how this program changed their perception of Peer Support after their brother had a negative experience with the modality

“This program has left me feeling empowered and more open to seeking the support that I need.”



Testimonials

Another participant in the Northwood program spoke to how other programs have not worked for them, they had either left of their own accord or been asked to leave. This program has been different for them and they are seeing real progress in their recovery.

“It made a difference that there was mutuality, that the staff was also learning and growing as part of the process. It was sort of perfect as far as what I needed. The space has been held for me even more than I could have expected.”



Testimonials

Participants in the Manchester program the feedback:

“They have offered me significant support with learning boundaries. Before coming here I was letting everyone take advantage of me. They have been pushing me to do the necessary work. It is allowing me to feel healthier.”



Testimonials

“I feel secure and safe here. I feel secure working with Jay and he has challenged me to go into social settings I wouldn’t have been comfortable with before. He comes with me and supports me through the anxiety. I am more and more ready to address bigger and bigger issues.”



Testimonials

“The smaller groups allow for more focus on what’s best for you, a more targeted and individualized approach. I feel more comfortable discussing what is going on with me in this setting”

“I had always been social until a my husband passed. I have been locked into my own grief stricken world. This program has allowed me to reopen communication with people in a way that I never anticipated. It has allowed me to actually begin to heal.”





Recovery Oriented Step-Up Step-Down (SUSD) Program

A Voluntary Peer-Run Residential Mental Health Program



At SUSD

We believe every person has within them the strength to grow, the courage to heal, and the power to live with purpose. This isn't just a place to stay—it's a place to begin again.



What is SUSD

Step-Up Step-Down is a peer-led, recovery-focused residential program that offers individuals up to 90 days of support, healing, and hope. Our mission is to create an environment where people can thrive mentally, emotionally, and physically—with the support of those who've walked the journey before them.



Why SUSD?

It is a safe haven rooted in hope and respect. You will develop empowerment through choice and personal responsibility. SUSD is a bridge between where you are and where you're going. It is a place where you are encouraged to dream again—and take the first step to recovery.



What to expect at SUSD

A private room to rest and reflect. Shared spaces for connection and community with others on the same journey to wellness. You are free to work, study and live life and grow at your own pace, taking ownership of your journey in a Peer-led residence.

Peer Support Agencies with SUSD

On the Road to Wellness

Manchester /Derry

603.232.6250

Connections Peer Support

Northwood

603.942.6023

Mondock Area Peer Support

Keene

603.352.5093

H.E.A.R.T.S. Peer Support Center

Nashua

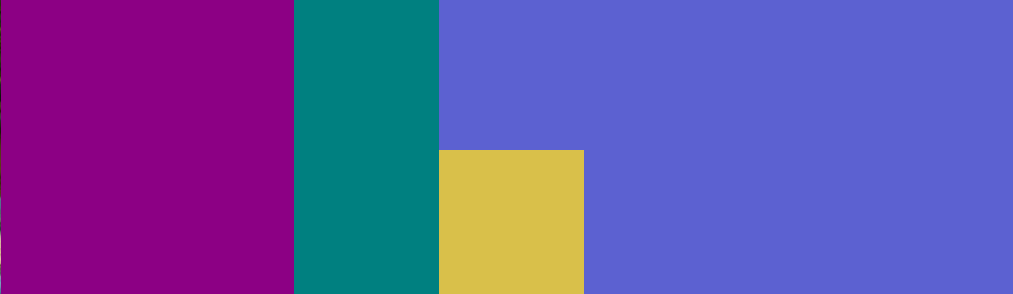
603.521.8372



Around-the-clock care from Certified Peer Support Specialists who understand—because they've been there.



Questions



Thank you.

Contact us:

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