

American Rescue Plan State Fiscal Recovery Fund Recommendation Cover Sheet

Please submit this document with any recommendations for funding from Rhode Island's allocation of federal fiscal recovery funds available through the American Rescue Plan Act. This information will be made available to the public along with any detailed documents submitted that describe the proposal. It is encouraged that such documents identify clear goals and objectives and quantifiable metrics.

This is not a formal request for funds, and submission of recommendations does not guarantee a response, public hearing, or appropriation from the General Assembly.

Name of Lead Agency: Butler Hospital

Additional agencies making recommendation (if applicable): N/A

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Brief Project Description (attachments should contain details)

A solution to address the lack of capacity for mental health patients and alleviate overcrowding in ERs across RI by creating a short-stay unit.

Total request: \$ 8,000,000

One-time or Recurring Expense? One-time

ARPA Eligibility Category (check all that apply) – See link for further information

<https://www.rilegislature.gov/commissions/arpa/commdocs/Treasury%20-%20Quick-Reference-Guide.pdf>

- Respond to the public health emergency and its economic impacts xx
- Premium pay to eligible workers _____
- Government services/state revenue replacement _____
- Water/sewer/broadband infrastructure _____



ARPA Grant Application

Butler Hospital





Overview of the increasing need

Request

In support of the public health response to the behavioral health crisis, Butler Hospital seeks \$8 million for the creation of a short-stay 25-bed unit to provide behavioral healthcare services through mental health and substance misuse treatment, crisis intervention and other related services. The short-stay unit would make this possible by creating inpatient beds for those seeking help for mental and behavioral health issues, resulting in a more immediate delivery of services to those in need and, by doing so, also help to alleviate overcrowding and boarding in emergency departments (EDs) across the State for adults and a growing number of adolescents.

Butler Hospital, Rhode Island's only non-profit, free-standing psychiatric hospital, which has been treating patients for over 175 years, requests ARPA support for the construction of a new unit within the existing Riverview Building on the Butler campus. This 25-bed short-stay unit will address the widespread mental health care crisis taking place in Rhode Island by alleviating the back-up in our health systems through an innovative approach which focuses on reducing the number of community members who are boarding in emergency departments and placing them in an inpatient short-stay unit where treatment will begin immediately.

Today across Rhode Island, in large part due to increased demand created by the

pandemic, patients are seeking medical help for mental and behavioral health issues at hospital emergency departments (EDs) statewide in numbers that the current system cannot adequately manage. The unprecedented demand for these services is resulting in delayed treatment for those with mental health and substance abuse issues, as well as overcrowding in these EDs which delays access for those with injuries and illnesses that can be best treated in the ED of a non-psychiatric hospital facility. Every day in our State, there is upwards of 30 or more patients who are waiting for a bed so that clinicians can begin to address their mental health needs. The average time that a patient boards at an ED ranges from several hours to several days resulting in patients often

leaving without treatment. The new short-stay unit at Butler would reduce the number of patients boarding in other EDs by 25 to 30 patients a day and would curtail the number not receiving their necessary, and often life-saving, treatment. This unit would not be a new access point for Butler but instead would serve as a relief valve for the entire State. There is more patient volume than capacity, and the management of this unit would require close collaboration with all behavioral health providers across the community. The full capacity of behavioral health resources at all levels must be leveraged to give patients access to needed services, and this unit is a critically important linchpin in successfully managing the mental health crisis we are facing.

The proposed 25-bed short-stay unit at Butler Hospital will provide additional inpatient beds which will allow clinicians to begin to evaluate and treat patients immediately for mental and behavioral needs.

This model would be the first of its kind in Rhode Island and would offer a unique approach that, unlike a Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU), provides more immediate access to inpatient behavioral health treatment reducing the delays created by ED boarding in non-psychiatric emergency settings. As patients are evaluated in the short-stay unit, they can be properly treated while the appropriate next steps in their care are determined. Some patients will be stepped down to outpatient care and others will be moved to continued inpatient care when a bed becomes available. Their time spent in the short-stay unit at Butler will be clinically productive, which is in direct contrast to the situation as it exists today where boarders in the ED are waiting often with minimal psychiatric care and support.

There is undeniably an increased need for mental health and substance abuse treatment. The stressors related to the COVID-19 pandemic have affected the citizens of Rhode Island in a

multitude of ways, from social distancing, fear of illness, loss or illness of loved ones, high unemployment rates, impacts on childcare and other basics needs, such as limits on travel and transportation, which have all taken a toll. The numbers of people struggling with mental health issues, suicide ideation, substance abuse, and other behavioral health issues has increased dramatically. There has also been a significant increase in the number of overdose deaths in Rhode Island, reaching record numbers in 2020. A review of the statistics on the Rhode Island Department of Health website shows that in the first six months of 2021 there was a 13% increase in the number of overdose deaths in Rhode Island compared to the same time period in 2020.

For those who were struggling with mental health or sobriety issues prior to the pandemic, it has been an increasingly challenging and difficult struggle. There also continues to be new at-risk populations, for example adolescents, who have had a

myriad of challenges with the social and academic changes forced upon them due to the pandemic. This population of children ages 13-18 have had a staggering increase in the demand for treatment.

The solution to this public health crisis, which is threatening lives every day in alarming numbers, lies, in part, with improved access to additional beds in an environment of care where evaluation and treatment can begin in a timely manner.

The Growing Community Need Requires the Addition of the Proper Resources.

The new unit would be built out in an existing floor of the Riverview Building, directly above the Patient Assessment Services Department (PAS) where state-of-the-art resources for evaluation are in use, thereby allowing for more streamlined and faster access to care. Butler has the expertise and experience in providing adults, seniors, and adolescents with specialized assessment and treatment for all major psychiatric illnesses and substance abuse. The new



unit would also house nurse's stations, an area for dining, and a community space for activities and socialization. As well, this setting can be used to develop a closer collaboration with BH Link which would help increase the appropriate diversion of patients who do not require inpatient care and could provide ready access to treatment for anyone presenting to BH Link with symptoms requiring immediate higher-level treatment and support.

Butler Hospital, which is a teaching affiliate of the Warren Alpert School of Medicine at Brown University, has a robust residency program in psychiatry. This new facility will also be an environment for education as medical residents will gain experience and exposure to patients in this unit.

Summary

It is critically important to provide immediate assistance to a person who is in crisis by providing intervention and connecting them with care and treatment. The current situation in Rhode Island delays—and often denies entirely when patients leave without treatment—this service to those who often wait hours in EDs to be seen. It is not atypical for a person seeking help to have even their most basic treatment delayed due to a lack of available hospital beds. The overcrowding in the ED with mental health patients is creating a barrier to service for others who are presenting in the ED for injury, illness, and other conditions.

The impact that the 25-bed short stay unit would have on this bottleneck for service is that it would allow evaluation and treatment to begin immediately by addressing the bed shortage for the growing number of those who are seeking medical help for mental health and substance misuse issues. This can result in a more expeditious determination of the next phase of treatment, be that admission as an inpatient, or discharge to outpatient services or other resources. Additionally, as these patients move from EDs across the State to Butler, the barrier created for patients with conditions that are better treated at an emergency department, have the resources they need freed up. Once inpatient beds become available, patients would transfer to continue their inpatient care or be stepped down to an appropriate ambulatory, community or outpatient disposition if appropriate.

Long term recovery begins with getting the right treatment, at the right time, and at the right place. Butler's inpatient short-stay unit would allow for efficacious delivery of care in the right environment, which is with mental health experts, and at the right time, which is as soon as possible. This new brief stay unit would collaborate closely with other behavioral health providers to identify the best disposition possible.



**BUTLER
HOSPITAL**