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HOUSE BILL 537

49TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2009

INTRODUCED BY

Nathan P. Cote

FOR THE LEGISLATIVE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

AN ACT

RELATING TO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH; ENACTING THE SAFE HOUSE ACT;
ESTABLISHING THE SAFE HOUSE AND CRISIS FUND; MAKING AN
APPROPRIATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

Section 1. SHORT TITLE.--This act may be cited as the
"Safe House Act".

Section 2. PURPOSES.--The purposes of the Safe House Act
are to:

A. offer early intervention services to ensure that
a person who needs behavioral health support but does not need
hospitalization has access to an appropriate level of such
support; and

B. ensure that persons with behavioral health needs
are cared for in the least restrictive environment.

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1 Section 3. DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Safe House Act:

2 A. "department" means the human services
3 department;

4 B. "early intervention services" means services
5 designed to provide a person, who has behavioral health
6 disorders and who is experiencing symptoms, a safe, supportive
7 and affirming home-like residence where the person may
8 integrate the meaning of what the person is experiencing and
9 regain equilibrium and the ability to relate effectively to
10 other people. "Early intervention services" includes peer
11 support with an emphasis on relationship-building;

12 C. "peer support specialist" means a person who has
13 previously experienced urgent behavioral health needs and has
14 recovered and who has successfully completed training
15 qualifying that person to work with a resident;

16 D. "resident" means an adult who has experienced
17 urgent behavioral health needs but does not require
18 hospitalization and who voluntarily resides in a safe house;
19 and

20 E. "safe house" means a home-like environment that
21 offers early intervention services by housing no more than six
22 voluntary residents who engage in routine activities of daily
23 living and learn about tools for recovery through experience
24 and peer support.

25 Section 4. PEER SUPPORT TRAINING.--The department shall

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1 provide by rule for training and credentialing of a peer
2 support specialist; provided that each peer support specialist
3 shall personally have experienced urgent behavioral health
4 needs and shall be certified as completing training in de-
5 escalation techniques, cultural competency, race relations, the
6 recovery process and avoidance of aggressive confrontation
7 prior to working at a safe house.

8 Section 5. SAFE HOUSE PROGRAM--ELIGIBILITY.--

9 A. The department shall administer two safe houses,
10 one in an urban setting and one in a rural community.

11 B. A safe house authorized by this section shall
12 offer early intervention services that:

13 (1) serve residents who are eligible and not
14 eligible for federal medical assistance programs;

15 (2) are staffed twenty-four hours a day by one
16 or more peer support specialists;

17 (3) employ a licensed clinician full time and
18 a psychiatric consultant at least part time;

19 (4) include peer support in helping residents
20 perform daily public living skills and reentry into independent
21 living;

22 (5) offer a mix of therapeutic services,
23 including nontraditional tools for wellness and traditional
24 behavioral health services;

25 (6) accept a resident, funds permitting, on a

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1 first-come, first-served basis;

2 (7) use interpersonal relationship and
3 connection to the community as primary modalities of care;

4 (8) base length of stay on the psychological
5 state of residents, that psychological state referring to their
6 ability and willingness to live in more independent settings
7 and to resume their desired roles in the community; and

8 (9) are a part of a system of care continuum
9 to include, but not be limited to, housing options such as the
10 behavioral health collaborative's supportive housing
11 initiatives or a local housing first program and each
12 community's array of support services, such as those provided
13 by the department's comprehensive community support services
14 program.

15 C. As early as possible, but within one week of a
16 resident's departure from a safe house, the resident shall be
17 introduced by the department to a service provider who may
18 coordinate care and otherwise provide support for the resident
19 after the safe house stay ends.

20 D. As part of the planning and development of the
21 safe houses, the department shall consult with community
22 stakeholders, including those who use the behavioral health
23 system and their family members, providers of behavioral health
24 services, whether traditional or alternative, advocates, local
25 collaboratives, the behavioral health planning council and

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1 others with subject matter expertise.

2 Section 6. SAFE HOUSE AND CRISIS FUND--CREATED--
3 PURPOSE.--The safe house and crisis fund is created in the
4 state treasury. The fund shall consist of appropriations,
5 gifts, grants and donations. Balances in the fund at the end
6 of a fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund. The New
7 Mexico interagency behavioral health purchasing collaborative
8 shall administer the fund for the purpose of providing early
9 intervention services to persons with urgent behavioral health
10 needs. Payments may be made on warrants drawn by the secretary
11 of finance and administration upon vouchers signed by the
12 secretary of health.