



Peer Assisted Relief Through Networks of Empathetic Resources and Supports (PARTNERS) Act

The PARTNERS Act establishes a National Peer Support Warmline Program, creating a single, toll-free telephone number for people across the United States to call when experiencing mental health distress, including but not limited to depression, anxiety, or grief. Callers would be connected to a peer to receive empathetic support and resource referrals.

Endorsing Organizations: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Mental Health America (MHA), American Psychological Association (APA), National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD), National Association for Rural Mental Health, Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare (AABH), American Association on Health and Disability, Lakeshore Foundation, National Eating Disorders Association, Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness, Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, SMART Recovery, Anxiety and Depression Association of America, American Association of Suicidology, American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work

Cosponsors: Reps. Grace Napolitano, Judy Chu, Katie Porter, David Trone, Mikie Sherrill, Alan Lowenthal, Eddie Bernice Johnson, Mark DeSaulnier, Barbara Lee, Alcee Hastings, Tony Cardenas

The Problem

Over 1 in 5 Americans are living with mental health issues each day and often experience long waits when seeking out assistance.

For those experiencing immediate mental health crises or have suicidal ideations, there is currently a National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL), a national network providing free support to those who are in immediate crisis.

However, there is no equivalent resource for those in need of mental health assistance but are not in immediate crisis. People thus are dependent upon a disparate network of "warm lines," which provide local peer support. Many also contact the NSPL, adding additional strain to the critical lifeline.

The Solution

To meet this under-addressed need, we must create a single, centralized resource that is easily identifiable with a single phone number. This resource would serve as a "first stop" for those seeking assistance to receive timely support. It would also serve as a connector to specialized resources, including non-profits and care services.

The PARTNERS Act

The PARTNERS Act creates a National Peer Support Warmline under the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). SAMHSA would partner with private and non-profit entities across the country to establish regional hubs to field any calls and provide peer-assisted resources for those seeking aid.

Callers would receive timely support from trained peers with similar lived experiences. They could also be connected to organizations providing specialized aid – including LGBT+ or veteran support, or referral for professional services.

Specifically, the legislation would do the following:

- Authorize \$55 million in FY20 and \$50 million for FY21 and FY22 to create/operate the line.
- SAMHSA would create five regional "Centers of Excellence" to respond to calls, which would geographically cover the entire US.
- Commissions a report from the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, to study and establish best practices and protocols for warmlines to follow, reported to Congress.