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January 16, 2026

To: Governor Glenn A. Youngkin
The Honorable L. Louise Lucas, Chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations
The Honorable Luke E. Torian, Chair, House Appropriations Committee

From: Nelson Smith, Commissioner, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services

RE: Item 296 L.1, 2024 Special Session I Appropriations Act

Item 296 L.1 of the 2024 Special Session I Appropriations Act requires that the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services to report annually on the distribution and use of funds for grants provided to the members of the Virginia Association of Recovery Residences (VARR) for recovery support services. The language reads:

L.1. Out of this appropriation, \$1,950,000 the first year and \$1,950,000 the second year is provided to make grants to members of the Virginia Association of Recovery Residences (VARR) for recovery support services. The association must ensure that members accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Peer Recovery Support Services (CAPRSS) receive a share of these funds. VARR will comply in a timely manner with all requirements of the agreement entered into between VARR and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services as a result of this appropriation. Any violations of the agreement shall be reported to the Chairs of House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees within thirty days of their occurrence. VARR shall report monthly to the Department of Behavioral Health and Development Services providing financial and operational documentation for services provided, including documentation and services provided by Oxford Homes. The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services shall report annually to the Governor and the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees by August 1 on the distribution and use of the funds authorized in this paragraph.

Cc: The Honorable Janet V. Kelly, Secretary of Health and Human Resources



Annual Report on Grants to the Virginia Association of Recovery Residences (VARR)

(Item 296 L.1 of 2024 Special Session I Appropriations Act)

December 1, 2024

DBHDS Vision: A Life of Possibilities for All Virginians

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Introduction

In FY 2024, the Virginia Association of Recovery Residences (VARR) utilized \$1.7 million in funding allocated by the Virginia General Assembly. This report provides information about the initiatives supported by this funding, including the Peer Navigator Program, Recovery Corps, and GET HELP.

A summary of the 2024 expenditures is found in the chart below. This report outlines information provided directly by VARR on the programs that were funded with this allocation.

Summary of FY 2024 General Fund Expenditures

| Expenditure Category | Amount | Percentage of Total Expenditure |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Peer Navigator Program | \$1,015,650 | 59.74% |
| Recovery Corps | \$450,000 | 26.47% |
| GET HELP Platform & Technology | \$100,000 | 5.88% |
| Administration | \$134,350 | 7.90% |
| Total | \$1,700,000 | |

In an effort to track resident data and financial disbursements associated with the FY 2024 funding stream, VARR uses the Advanced Recovery Management System (ARMS). In ARMS, financial subscriptions are assigned to residents to track utilization of funding in real-time and allow VARR to filter resident data sets specifically by the funding stream with which they are associated. Also located in ARMS is the Recovery Capital (REC-CAP) instrument. Residents are guided through REC-CAP by trained navigators at their recovery organization. Recovery residence operators and their trained navigators utilize the REC-CAP evaluation to assess and measure an individuals' recovery capital. The scored evaluation results are used to create informed recovery care plans to help residents resolve barriers to recovery and unmet service needs and grow recovery strengths and increase recovery capital.

Distribution and Use of Funds

Peer Navigator Program - \$1,015,650

VARR Peer Navigators play a vital role in providing increased staff capacity to deliver recovery support services to persons with SUD. Their primary responsibility is to implement recovery planning with residents, utilizing the REC-CAP (recovery capital) assessment and the Measure-Plan-Engage model. In FY 2024, Peer Navigators were placed at 18 different organizations. Combined, these organizations have capacity to serve roughly 988 residents on any given day and served over 2,500 new admissions to recovery residences in FY 2024.

The VARR Peer Navigator Program funded peer staff at recovery residence organizations for a one-year contract term. Recovery residence organizations had the autonomy to hire peers they selected and were responsible for supervising them. During this time, VARR hosted a monthly REC-CAP Community of Practice for Peer Navigators to attend which created a space for shared learning. Monthly Community of Practices featured Dr. David

Best, the Recovery Outcomes Institute, and experts in the field of recovery capital research, all of which helped to facilitate discussions and drive continued learning.

Further, the Peer Navigator positions provided employment opportunities to peer recovery specialists (PRS) and other individuals interested in working as a peer supporter. As a result, these peers gained valuable peer support field experience and continued development, which will help them progress in their own careers while contributing to the growth of Virginia's peer workforce.

In total, VARR created over 30 peer workforce jobs at 18 different recovery organizations, totaling 49 Peer Navigators employed during FY 2024. This includes 14 Peer Navigators hired during the first year of the Peer Navigator Program that were retained by residences for the second year. The first year of the program was funded through the Substance Abuse Block Grant (SABG) in FY 2023.

Recovery residence organizations have reported that many of their Peer Navigators have transitioned upward into new peer support jobs at their organization, a different recovery organization or a state agency.

REC-CAP Data

According to the data, Peer Navigators at recovery residences were well engaged in the REC-CAP model. VARR certified recovery residences admitted 2,917 residents through the Advanced Recovery Management System (ARMS) during FY 2024. 2,818 residents engaged in the Measure-Plan-Engage model, REC-CAP assessments, and recovery goal planning (N=2,548, 90.42 percent) during this timeframe.

Of the 2,818 admissions that engaged in the REC-CAP, 2,117 were in a VARR network recovery residence for the first time; 423 for the second time; and 278 for at least the third time. Of these admissions, 63 percent of those admitted identified as male, 36 percent identified as female, and one percent reported a different gender identity. Race demographics of individuals admitted to recovery residences during the reporting period were as follows:

- Caucasian – 64.8 percent
- Black/African American – 28.8 percent
- Hispanic – 3 percent
- Other (Asian-Pacific Islander/Hawaii, Alaska Native, etc.) – 3.4 percent

The retention rates for new admissions were as follows:

- 1.5 months – 62.3 percent
- 3 months – 46.4 percent
- 6 months – 35.1 percent
- 9 months – 24.3 percent
- 12 months – 17.1 percent

Recovery Corps - \$450,000

Through a partnership with VARR, Recovery Corps has expanded the capacity of recovery organizations across Virginia. Trained AmeriCorps members serve as Recovery Navigators and Recovery Project Coordinators. Through their service, members provide much needed capacity to public agencies and recovery nonprofits. The program is part of Public Health

AmeriCorps — an innovative new partnership from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and AmeriCorps. Recovery Corps is managed by Ampact, a national nonprofit that incubates and scales evidence-based AmeriCorps programs.

The program is now completely statewide with 28 sites, up from 13 at the beginning of the fiscal year. Recovery Corps is continually seeking to expand the program to more areas of great need, especially southwestern Virginia.

Recovery Corps Data provided by VARR is as follows:

- 87 members AmeriCorps members enrolled across 28 service sites.
- 60 members still serving as either Recovery Navigators or Project Coordinators.
- More than 1,200 participants served during the fiscal year. More than half of the participants have met formally with a Navigator multiple times.
- 95,000 service hours total.

Organizations participating in Recovery Corps include:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • 10-7 Farms | • Roads to Recovery |
| • Atlantic Outreach Group | • Spirt Works Foundation – Warrenton |
| • CARITAS Recovery Residences | • Spirit Works Foundation – Williamsburg |
| • Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Healthcare | • Strength in Peers |
| • Chesterfield Recovery Academy | • That Zen Life Wellness Foundation |
| • Faith Recovery | • The Chris Atwood Foundation |
| • Harrisonburg-Rockingham Community Services Board | • The UP Foundation |
| • Imagine the Freedom Recovery Foundation | • The Virginia Association of Recovery Residences |
| • Journey House Foundation | • Virginia Commonwealth University |
| • New River Community College | • DBHDS Office of Recovery Services |
| • Piedmont Community Services | |
| • REAL LIFE | |

GET HELP Platform & Technology - \$100,000

VARR reported that the Get Help Platform provides a Digital Continuum of Care Platform™ with an Association Management System (AMS) and Search Widget. This provides state National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR) affiliates and members coordination of real-time bed availability, referrals, and use of recovery residences, and other social services, including recovery community organizations. It also provides a customizable certification management system to VARR. Current and future VARR members can establish and manage their certification in the system, as well as perform functions necessary to meet requirements of certification. Features include storing all documentation required for certification, facilitating and documenting internal system communications related to certification, and streamlining a clear

process of certification for new and existing members.

GET HELP established prioritized and direct lines of communication for VARR to assist with their needs. VARR receives assistance retrieving data reports, technical assistance, and training for their members using GET HELP products. The platform maintains a searchable statewide registry of certified recovery residences and allows VARR members to claim and manage their organization's profile. GET HELP also maintains and continues to develop the Advanced Recovery Management Systems (ARMS) platform utilized by VARR. They accommodate VARR and their members by routinely updating and modifying the platform to fit their specific needs and dedicate multiple staff to a weekly customer success meeting with VARR staff.

GET HELP is actively investigating further enhancements to the public-facing bed board widget. These enhancements involve redesigning the user interface and experience to align with an organization-first perspective on the availability of certified recovery housing in Virginia. After careful research into the time and resource requirements of this request, we concluded that more time and effort are needed to complete this significant shift in user interface and experience. Additionally, stakeholder involvement in the design process is necessary to ensure the effective presentation of information for all potential users of this resource.

Administration Fees - \$134,350

VARR provided a statement that the amount used for administration and support of programs is 7.9 percent of the allocation. The total is within the allowable administrative limit under the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of 10 percent. This serves as an indirect cost rate to administer, support, and report on the programs that are funded. SAMHSA requires extremely detailed budget reporting that accounts for all dollars spent as part of its grants to help ensure grantees do not use funds awarded under a federal grant for a non-allowable purpose, but VARR has not provided further details on administrative expenditures despite repeated requests from DBHDS. For example, according to [SAMHSA budget guidance](#), federal grant recipients are restricted from using funds awarded under a SAMHSA grant, cooperative agreement, or applicable contract to pay the direct salary of an individual at a rate in excess of the Executive Level II of the Federal Executive Pay Scale.

Conclusion

This report encompasses year two of funds for members of the VARR recovery support services. DBHDS remains supportive of recovery residences as a critical element of Virginia's continuum of services for people with substance use disorders. DBHDS is also committed to ensuring services that use state general funds are used in an efficient, accountable manner and will continue to work with VARR to provide more detail on the uses of funds in this appropriation moving forward.