



For immediate release:  
June 13, 2017

It is regrettable that at a time when New Hampshire is in the middle of a health crisis of historic proportions that HOPE for New Hampshire Recovery must take time away from getting people well to address several inaccurate statements published in a recent story regarding our organization.

These inaccuracies are hurtful to our staff as well as our members, and distract from the demonstrable success and progress our organization has made. As a factual matter, no state organization has opened more recovery centers across our state to help save lives. No organization has helped more New Hampshire residents find hope and achieve recovery. We look forward to responding to the complaints filed against a staff member that were referenced in the story. We believe that these allegations will withstand neither scrutiny nor the facts. We are also troubled about the timing of these complaints, the timing of this story, and the motivations of the sources (both cited as well as those not identified) given that it would appear to be a concerted effort to denigrate HOPE in an effort to deny funding for the work that we do.

Our organization is anchored in shared experience. To that end, we hire people in recovery. We have had two employees experience a recurrence of use. Addiction is a chronic disease. These employees were given the support and help that they needed, just as we would hope any employer would do for an employee. We have policies and procedures in place to deal with addiction in our workplace as should any responsible business, especially during this time of crisis for New Hampshire.

In response to the assertion that HOPE has had growth challenges, that is true, as is the case with any rapidly growing and successful organization. Our staff works hard every day to improve, while delivering authentic peer recovery services. Our members needed centers, not planning sessions, not roundtables, not talk. Our social media statistics speak for themselves. HOPE has over 6,000 Facebook "likes", a 4.9 rating on Facebook, and 100 positive reviews. This is where our members and their families make their voices heard. They are stating loud and clear how our services compare to any other organization in the state doing comparable recovery support work. We have close to 40 past and current employees that have had (and continue to have) a positive experience working with and for HOPE. It is unfortunate that the individuals sought out for the article are the small fraction of this number, with the commonality of having their employment with HOPE terminated. We will rely instead on the voices of our members, their families, and of our committed staff to speak for this organization.

The article posits that pressure via financial support for legislators was utilized to achieve our organization's agenda. The truth is that people are dying. HOPE continues to seek support from anyone, regardless of political affiliation, including both public and private entities, that can provide financial support for these vital centers. This support has meant helping literally thousands of people throughout the state. We will not apologize for our efforts to obtain funding from all available sources to continue to get people well, and to prevent more deaths.

The claim that HOPE centers have received more money than any other recovery center is simply false, and should have been fact-checked by the author independently. Harbor Homes was given \$1.5 million dollars to help open recovery community centers. Fedcap was given \$1.2 million before they even had one center open. HOPE was given a total of \$495,000 for six existing centers, largely to pay for staff. We encourage legislators, residents, and clients of HOPE to look closely at the allocations made and compare them to the number of people helped. HOPE is the hands-down leader.

HOPE continues to provide exactly what it has promised. From the day this organization opened in a modest 900 square foot apartment on Market Street to what are now six fully operational centers serving members and communities statewide, including what could possibly be the largest center of its kind in the nation – the Manchester center of over 9,000 square feet. This center alone makes possible recovery for more people than

any other center in the state.

We support people in their recovery. We help them learn how to live and have fun again in a substance-free environment. We continue to fill the serious gaps that exist along the continuum of care. Our involvement with Safe Station, Amber's Place and the Police Partners Program was instrumental in bridging these gaps. We provide recovery support, not clinical services. We have tremendously effective working relationships with many licensed clinical professionals and treatment organizations that we refer to daily. Clinicians and treatment organizations are our partners, not our adversaries.

We have been very clear in all communications that visitor counts in our centers reflect center activity and foot traffic through the door. We maintain a separate database for our member data. Members are defined as anyone who takes the next step in their recovery by completing a member packet and engaging in our coaching services. We have also tracked "coaching units" for internal purposes. The most salient fact is that not a single revenue source, public or private has ever been tied to member counts, traffic counts or any other similar metric. The assertion that any numbers were inflated for insurance billing purposes is simply false.

The claim that HOPE does not take sexual harassment complaints seriously is completely false. The individual referenced in the article was fired shortly after the complaint was filed. We have a zero-tolerance policy for these behaviors. We would point out that the same individual quoted relative to the sexual harassment claim resigned during a suspension period. Her termination was being discussed by management due to this former employee's racially inappropriate remarks made to another employee. Again, in this instance, the complaint was immediately acted upon. Credibility matters.

HOPE does not employ persons in very recent recovery to provide coaching. HOPE does however believe in and hire people in recovery. These opportunities enable those working on recovery to build their skills while also assisting others via shared experience. People in recovery can be some of the best and most loyal employees an organization will ever have. Our organization will never apologize for hiring people in recovery. Perhaps the apology should come from those who would not.

It is important to point out what a recovery community center model is. The community itself oversees the meetings and activities that take place in the centers, in a nonclinical setting. The fact that each center has its own community identity is a source of strength, not a weakness. HOPE as an organization does not require its staff to be CRSW certified, nor does our organization benefit from these certifications via contracts or state funding. While we do provide training for CSRWs, this was at the request of a state agency. We do not receive a "per head" fee for individuals that we train. If we hire a coach for an Emergency Department program that itself has that requirement, we are mindful to hire someone with a CRSW certificate to service these hospitals.

HOPE for NH Recovery stepped up to open centers, to help people, with \$5,000 in the bank and a generous grant from the Bean Foundation. From this modest start, we have had the privilege of watching thousands of recovery miracles happen. We stand by the fact that our members are the most important aspect of what we do. It is WHY we do what we do. People need a safe place to regroup and find their footing on their recovery path. Has the growth that has come with success been perfect? No. That said, HOPE has always had a clear business plan. That plan has been executed and updated continuously. HOPE never set out to create another government agency. These already exist, and we look forward to continuing our successful

partnerships with a variety of state agencies. Six fully operational and successful centers cannot be created without sound management, judgment, and planning.

Holly Cekala has been an invaluable resource to the state of NH and to the HOPE for NH Recovery organization. The state of NH had ZERO recovery community centers open the day she loaded a couch onto her truck and answered the call to come to a state that was desperate for answers. Because she has showed us how to do it in a meaningful data-driven manner, the state now has close to twelve centers run by different organizations. We are forever grateful to Holly for moving her family to NH to show us how to build this incredible network of recovery community centers.

We commenced a nationwide search for an Executive Director several weeks ago. Our incredible staff will continue to execute on the mission of HOPE, a mission that supports authentic peer recovery support services in a nonclinical setting. We are more focused than ever on continuing to deliver on our promise to our members - to help them to give themselves the gift of recovery.

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