



# Mental Health VIRGINIA

**Behavioral Health Commission Presentation**

**November 12, 2025**

*Rita Utz, Acting Executive Director*  
*Erica Bullock, Warm Line Manager*

# Mental Health Virginia

Founded in 1937, Mental Health Virginia (MHV) is Virginia's oldest mental health advocacy organization, providing advocacy and direct services that empower individuals seeking wellness. MHV is a 501(c)(3) non-profit and the Virginia affiliate of Mental Health America.

**Our vision:** All people in Virginia achieve optimal mental wellness.

**Our mission:** To educate, empower, and advocate to improve the mental health of all Virginians



# What is a Warm Line?

“A warm line is a confidential, free phone service offering mental health support. Unlike a crisis line or hotline, they are not intended for emergency situations.

Warm lines are typically staffed by volunteer or paid peers—people with personal experience with mental health disorders. They use their experience to better understand and support callers, offering conversation, emotional support and information on local mental health services and other community services when needed.

Warm lines can fill in a gap in mental health services – when someone is struggling and needs someone to talk to but is not in crisis and does not need to go to the emergency room. They can help provide support needed to help prevent a situation from escalating to a crisis.”

## Warm Lines Complement Traditional Services

- **Preventative Support:** Unlike crisis hotlines, we offer support before a person's condition escalates to a crisis, providing a safe space to discuss feelings of fear, anxiety, or loneliness.
- **Accessibility:** Available via phone, text, or chat, we offer remote support, accessible to any Virginia resident with a phone or computer, seven-day-a-week support.
- **Peer Connection:** Staffed by individuals in recovery, warm lines offer unique, mutual and relatable support. Our Peer Recovery Specialists provide a sense of hope that traditional services may not fully offer.
- **Resource Connection:** Our Peers can also provide information about community mental health resources, connecting individuals to appropriate services when needed.
- **Reduced Stigma and Isolation:** By providing a non-judgmental space and fostering community integration, warm lines help combat the isolation, loneliness, and stigma associated with mental illness.

## The Work of MHV's Warm Line

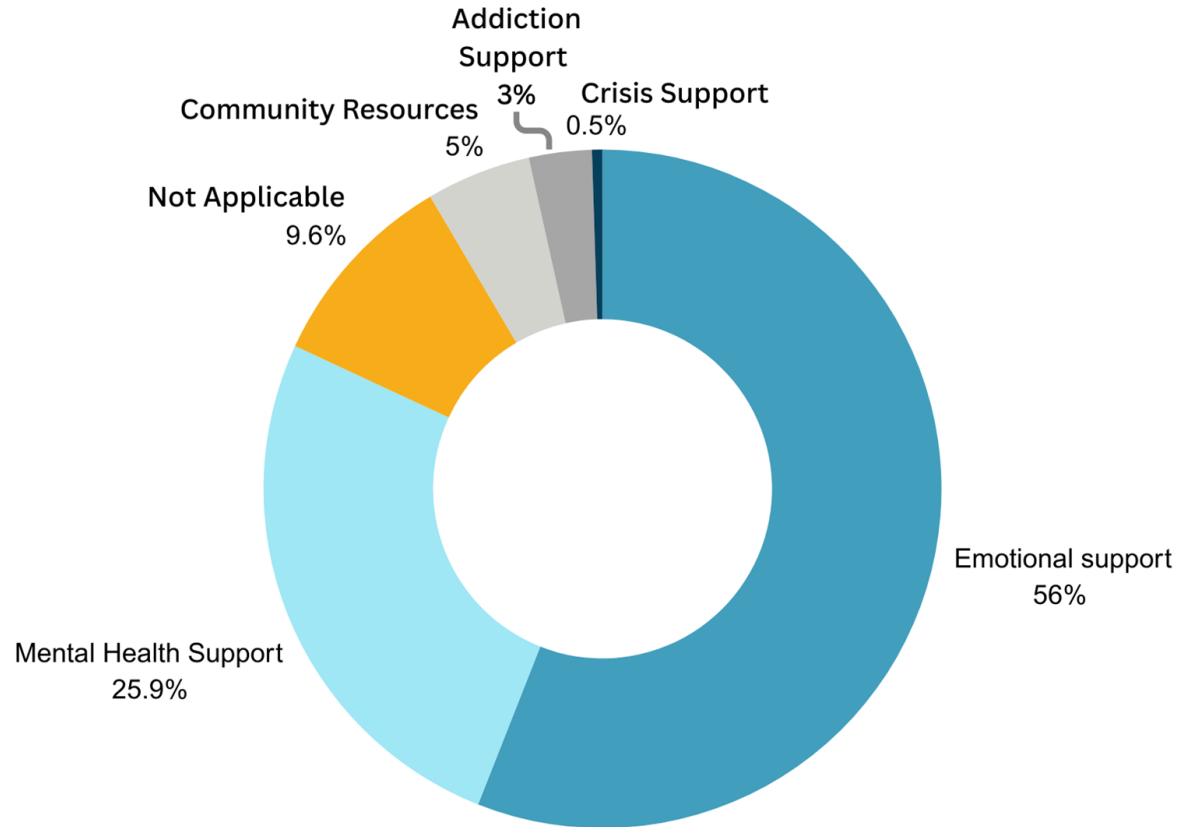
- MHV's Warm Line is available via telephone call, text, and chat service
- Callers receive support from trained Peer Recovery Specialists
- A **Peer Recovery Specialist** is an individual with lived experience of mental health and/or substance use who uses that experience to support others in recovery
- Free, anonymous and confidential
- Attentive listening grounded in compassion and non-judgemental support
- Exploring coping strategies, available support resources, and ways to maintain wellness
- Callers often work with the Peer Recovery Specialist to identify their support networks and create self-care plans

# Topics of Conversation

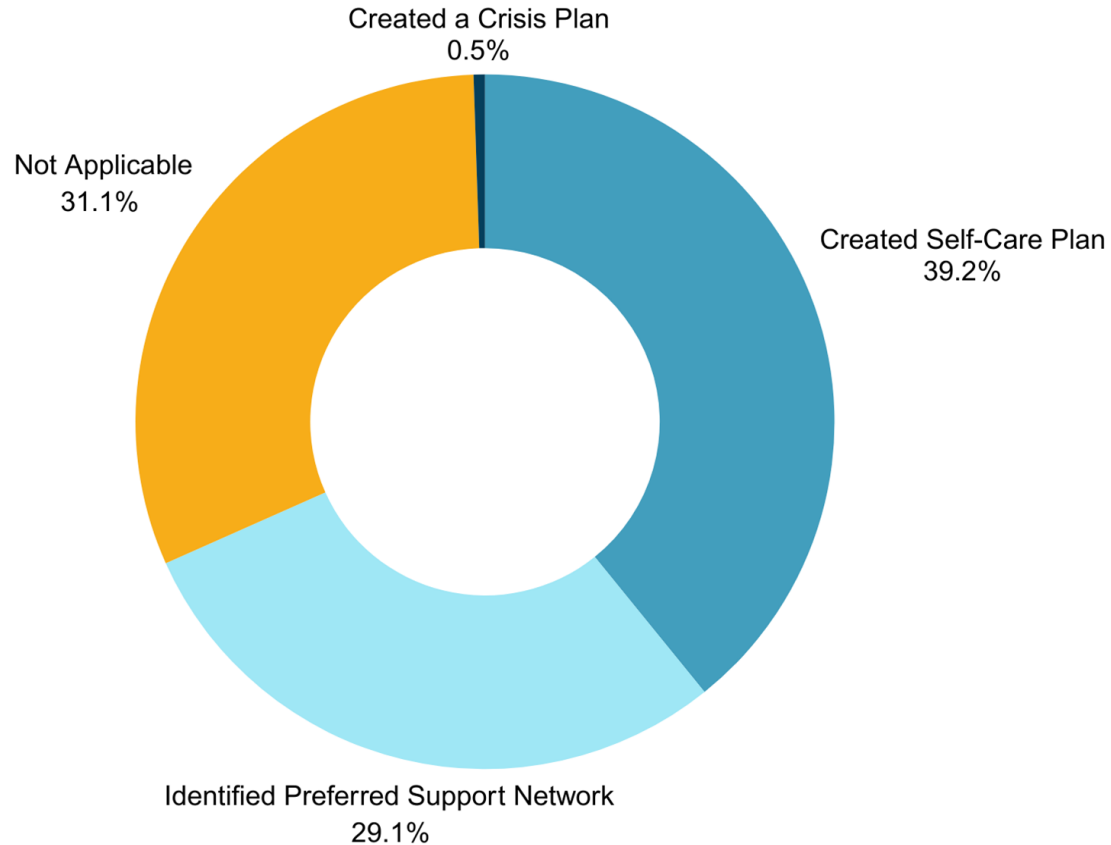
**Callers are welcome to discuss any topic (within respectful limits), including:**

- Mental health or substance use concerns
- Family and social relationships
- Community resources
- Pre- and post-crisis support
- Personal celebrations and achievements
- Anything else on their mind

# Types of Support Provided 2024



# Outcomes of Calls 2024





# Who Do We Serve?

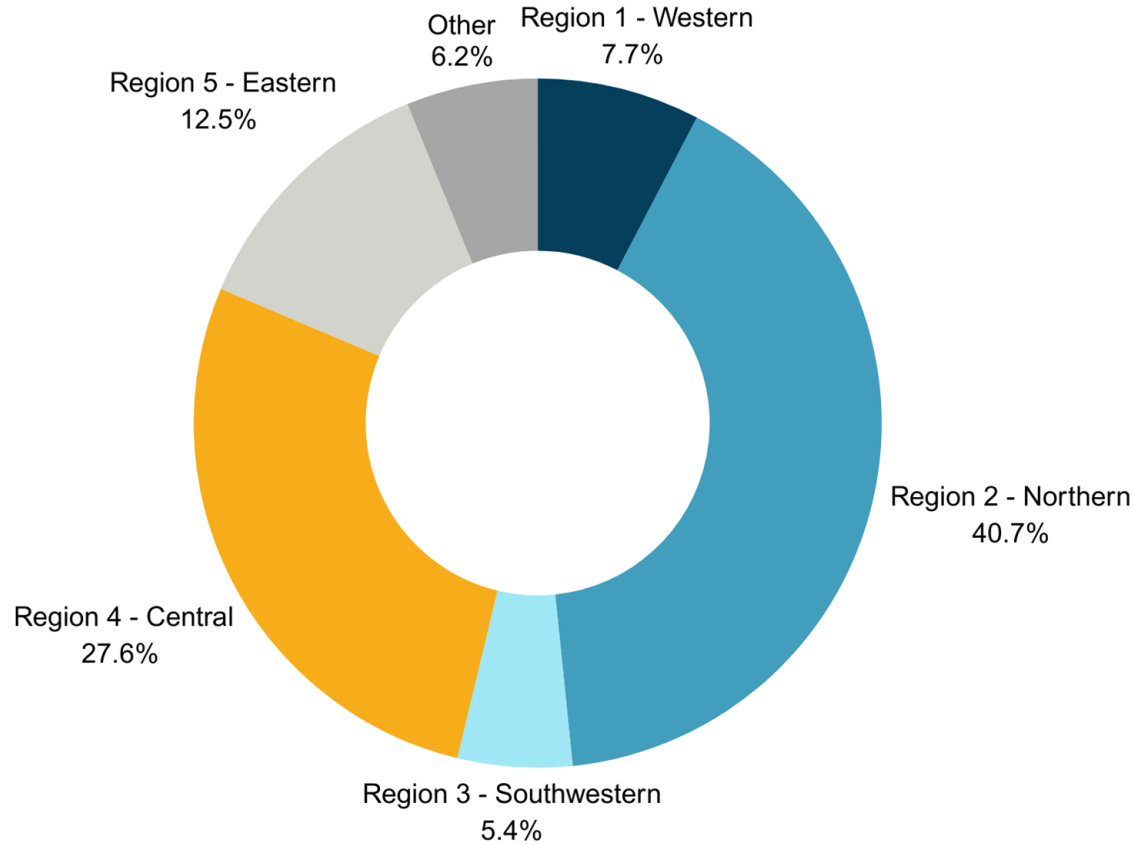
**Who Can Call:** Anyone in the Commonwealth of Virginia

**Typical Callers:** Mostly adults; occasionally teens

**Common Reasons for Calling:**

- Mental health concerns
- Substance use concerns
- Feeling stressed, upset, or lonely
- Possible crisis (*de-escalated within PRS scope of practice*)
- Needing recovery tools or practices
- Seeking information or community resources

# Callers by DBHDS Region 2024



# Who Staffs The Warm Line?

## **Staff Composition:**

- State-certified Peer Recovery Specialists and Peer Recovery Specialist Interns
- Warm Line Manager (full-time)
- 3 Team Leads (part-time)
- 4 On-Call Support Persons (part-time, contract)
- 4 CPRS Daytime Warm Line Operators (part-time, contract)
- Up to 10 Peer Recovery Specialist Interns (volunteers)

**All Warm Line staff work remotely from home**

# The MHV PRS Internship Program

## Benefits for PRS Interns:

- Earn the 500 experience hours required for state certification in peer support
- Receive individual coaching, 1:1 mentoring, and team supervision
- Prepare for the Virginia PRS Certification Exam
- Gain hands-on training and workforce readiness in behavioral health
- Since January 2022, over 30 interns have completed their 500 experience hours through MHV's Warm Line
- Since October 2024, 9 interns have successfully completed their 500 hours
- Every intern who took the Certification Exam has passed and become a Certified PRS
- All but two interns have secured employment as a CPRS
- Ultimately, this supports the growing and currently unmet needs of the mental health workforce in Virginia

# Warm Line Stats 2024-2025

Warm Line Contacts		
	2024	2025 (Jan-Oct, excluding April)
Total Calls	5,387	5,465
New Callers	1,372	1,121
Texts/Chats	249/53	545/406
Spanish Speaking Callers	23	31
Average Calls Per Day	15	20

## Working With 988: The Impact Of MHV'S Warm Line In Virginia

- **118 callers** reported they were referred to MHV's Warm Line from 988 in 2024
- **535 callers** have reported they were referred from 988 in January-October 2025

## The Impact Of MHV'S Warm Line In Virginia

- **Reduced Crisis Service Use:** Studies show that warm lines can lead to a decrease in the use of crisis services, suggesting that they are effective in diverting people from escalating situations.
- **Enhanced Recovery and Community Integration:** Users of warm lines report increased optimism, improved community integration, and a greater sense of connection.
- **Filling Service Gaps:** MHV's Warm Line is particularly valuable for providing support during evenings, weekends, and holidays, when traditional mental health services may not be available, addressing a significant gap in care.
- **Economic Benefit:** Peer services, including warm lines, can be a cost-effective way to provide support, demonstrating the value of integrating peer-run programs into the broader mental health system.

# Voices of Our Callers

💬 “I asked a caller today what they liked about the warmline after all these years (I have been supporting them for five years now) and they said:

*‘It helped them to have someone to talk to when otherwise they could spend an entire day without talking to anyone, and that was not good for their mental health.’”*

*~ Warm Line Team Lead*

💬 “You guys kept me out of the hospital. Thank you!”

*~ A Repeat Caller*

❤️ “I appreciate you and people like you.”

*~ A Warm Line Caller*

🙌 “Thank God you remember me and it feels so great to be validated.”

*~ A Repeat Caller*

“Today marks one year home from mental and behavioral health hospitalization. I am reflecting on what has helped me in the past year. I wanted you to know that the MHV Warmline was part of the support I used, and I appreciate the work you do.”

*~A Warm Line Caller*



# How To Reach Us

**Mental Health**  
VIRGINIA

PEER SUPPORT.  
HERE WHEN YOU NEED US.

**Call our Warm Line**  
**866-400-6428**

Call or text for nonjudgmental & confidential mental health support.

Office Address: 2008 Bremo Rd Suite  
#101, Richmond VA 23226

Email: [info@mentalhealthvirginia.org](mailto:info@mentalhealthvirginia.org)  
Website: [mentalhealthvirginia.org](http://mentalhealthvirginia.org)  
Phone: 804.257.5591

**CALL, TEXT or CHAT**

Monday - Friday  
9 AM - 9 PM



**WEEKENDS & HOLIDAYS**  
5 PM - 9 PM

**SPANISH CALL SUPPORT**  
Monday - Friday  
1 PM - 5 PM

