



Recovery Navigator Program — Funding Request to Lewis County Commissioners

Meeting Date: Monday, July 7, 2025 — 9:00 a.m.

Purpose

We respectfully request \$100,000 in county funding to sustain and strengthen the Recovery Navigator Program (RNP) in Lewis County following a 20% state funding reduction. This funding ensures continued support for our county's most vulnerable residents while maintaining positive outcomes and partnerships.

What Is the Recovery Navigator Program?

The Recovery Navigator Program provides a credible alternative to legal system involvement for individuals whose criminal activity stems from unmet behavioral health needs or poverty.

It is a field-based, voluntary, participant-driven program that meets people where they are — physically and emotionally — and works to build trust, foster stability, and reduce reliance on law enforcement and emergency services.

RNP prioritizes those who are at risk of arrest or incarceration because of substance use, mental health conditions, homelessness, and related challenges. The program blends lived experience with professional expertise to help participants identify their own goals and make meaningful progress in recovery.

Our Impact in Lewis County

Since its inception, the Lewis County RNP has:

- Supported at least 378 unique individuals through 419 total referrals.
- Maintained an active caseload of 104 participants as of July 3, 2025.
- Received 6 new referrals in the first three days of July alone.
- Helped 54 individuals graduate, with program durations ranging from 39 to 503 days, averaging about six months to achieve their goals.
- Delivered over 290 referrals to additional services, including housing, treatment, mental health support, employment assistance, and more.

We have received referrals from a wide network of 39 community partners and counting, including all four major law enforcement agencies — Centralia Police Department, Chehalis Police Department, Napavine Police Department, and the Lewis County Sheriff's Office — which have been crucial partners, making a significant proportion of referrals to the program.

A Truly County-Wide Program

This program serves individuals in all corners of Lewis County, including the twin cities of Centralia and Chehalis, as well as the rural and remote communities of:

- Napavine
- Ethel
- Toledo
- Morton
- Winlock
- Mossyrock
- Randle
- Packwood
- and even Ashford, south of the Nisqually River.

Wherever the need arises in Lewis County, RNP is there to provide support and solutions.

What Our Partners Say

Our Lewis County partners describe the Recovery Navigator Program as indispensable:

- *"I will say it's always been a pleasure working with you and your program is invaluable."* — **Undersheriff Kevin Engelbertson, Lewis County Sheriff's Office**
- *"Destination Hope and Recovery has been a very willing partner... DHR and their employees have worked right alongside us as our officers go out into the community to serve people in crisis... We know that if we make a referral to DHR they will do everything they can to meet the person and stay in contact with them through their recovery. DHR has the full support of the Centralia Police Department."* — **Dave Clary, Interim Commander, Centralia Police Department**
- *"The behavioral health programs provided by Destination Hope and Recovery in Lewis County have connected individuals with essential recovery resources... DHR services remain a crucial intervention... These interventions reduce impacts on our community's already strained emergency response system."* — **Meja Handlen, Director, Lewis County Public Health & Human Services**
- *"DHR and Cascade have built a collaborative relationship that supports mutual clients... There has been a concentrated effort to remove barriers... helping them further their recovery efforts."* — **Erika L. Marshall, BS, SUDP, Director of SUD & Supportive Employment**
- *"We are immensely grateful to have a program like the Recovery Navigator Program to support Mental Health Court Program participants in early recovery... we are creating lasting positive impacts within our community. This success is a testament to the power of teamwork and shared vision."* — **Sophia Limacher, Lewis County Mental Health Court Program Coordinator**
- *"DHR has hit the ground running... has done tremendous work developing a very successful Recovery Navigator Program... The way DHR has quickly formed community and law enforcement partnerships has truly been instrumental."* — **Chief Chris Sweet, Lewis County Sheriff's Office**

Success Stories & Testimonials

Our participants have achieved inspiring milestones — from independent housing and family reunification to employment and education — thanks to consistent support and care.

Stories of Transformation:

- One participant, once living in the woods and without identification, worked step by step to secure a driver's license, find housing, and get stable employment.
- Another overcame a long cycle of relapse and incarceration, eventually maintaining sobriety, securing a job, and transitioning to a better home.
- One young parent, initially at risk of losing their child, stabilized through the program, gained custody, and leveled up to a better-paying job.
- A participant who once overdosed in the drug court office and resisted treatment now sends pictures of their thriving family to staff, grateful for the support that got them there.
- Another went from disengaged and unemployed to becoming a full-time student, a tutor at their college, and living independently.

In Their Own Words:

"You helped me keep moving forward by showing me the next logical step and helping me accomplish it. Without you, I wouldn't have been able to do this."

— Client testimonial

"You helped me stay clean and get my license back for the first time in ten years. You gave me a friend and a major influence that kept me going when I was lost."

— Client testimonial

Staff have described seeing clients:

- Move "from hopeless to housed, employed, and reunited with their children."
- Transition "from jail and homelessness to full-time work and active roles in recovery communities."
- Complete treatment, maintain sobriety, and even step into leadership roles, such as house managers and peer mentors.

These outcomes ripple outward — not just benefiting the participants, but strengthening families, improving community health, and reducing strain on law enforcement, emergency services, and public resources.

Why Support Is Needed

The Recovery Navigator Program has quickly become the county's frontline response to the intersection of behavioral health, poverty, and public safety. It provides an effective, humane alternative to jail, improves outcomes for individuals, and makes our community safer and stronger.

Your support will ensure that this vital work can continue without interruption, preserving the trust and momentum we have built with participants, families, and partner agencies throughout Lewis County.