

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

PROGRAM MISSION

The mission of the Community Outreach Program is to provide former Transitional Living Program clients as well as other adults with serious mental illness or co-occurring disorders (mental illness and substance abuse) access to supportive services that help them advance and maintain their recovery through socialization and recreational opportunities, community living supportive services and counseling, and crisis intervention.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The COP provides pathways to sustained mental wellness. The original program began in 1988 when it became evident that clients in the Transitional Living Program (TLP) needed support beyond the TLP's one year of service. Serious mental illness is often a lifelong, chronic disease with isolation and inadequate on-going support being significant triggers for relapse. COP has developed a diversified array of services to help address isolation and other relapse triggers while providing opportunities for life-long support. Program components include structured activities and drop-in services. Focus is on helping people accept the realities of mental illness, advance their recovery, and find ways to increase each individual's sense of serenity, well-being and life joy while living interdependently in the community.

A new pilot project launched in January 2015 is the TH Wellness Project. The addition of this project has expanded the people and manner in which we can serve the community. The vision is to improve the understanding of the components of personal wellness while increasing healthy life style behaviors. This project is geared towards people in the community and university students who are either at risk and/or interested in learning new ways to advance personal wellness and healthy behaviors.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

COP provides on-going socialization/recreational opportunities, support, and crisis intervention through Structured Activities and Drop-In Services. Services include: supportive counseling, crisis intervention, grocery shopping, and community living support. For some, this means support through individual meetings with staff either in person, via phone or internet. Others receive support through structured group activities including trips to the store, community outings, music wellness, TLP groups, and special events. The COP provides ongoing, long term, consistent support helping people through the many challenges that are part of recovery. Outreach clients have access to the Drop-In Center, a space for mental health clients to "drop-in" for support, participate in groups, activities, play, socialization, and have a safe place to be. Staff also advocate for persons with mental illness and to train clients in self-advocacy.

A new pilot program added to the COP in January 2015 is the TH Wellness Project. The Project is a 16 week series of Roundtable Discussions combining the lessons learned at TH with the works of Dr. Brene Brown and others to explore barriers to holistic wellness, self-care and life joy. The vision is to improve the understanding of the components of personal wellness while increasing healthy life style behaviors.

PROGRAM SIGNIFICANCE

According to clients, TH helps people change and save their lives. Focus is on addressing core problems instead of symptoms, reintegrating people into society, transforming people on an individual basis, providing long term support as needed, reducing shame, and empowering wellness through a variety of tools. Homelessness, crime, public and tax payer costs for the public institutions and prisons, uninsured health costs, etc. are symptoms. Unmanaged mental illness is the problem. TH believes that providing pathways for sustained mental wellness is the solution. Part of our advocacy is understanding mental illness is ongoing, for many a life long illness. With some diseases, periods of wellness are referred to as 'remission' or 'recovering' – there isn't a cure or point when you're done. There isn't a finish line with mental illness. The significance of TH programs is seen in individuals perpetuating managed mental wellness to live serene and joy-filled lives. That directly and positively impacts individuals and our community. TH's pairing of the TLP with the COP is important. The TLP provides the initial support, housing and training for clients leaving in-patient treatment, the COP is available to provide on-going support that helps to reduce/prevent relapse, increasing long term effectiveness of TLP.

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Clients report the COP provides them with a sense of security, support and hope that they need to live interdependently in the community. They have on-going opportunities to learn or relearn skills needed to manage their mental illness and their life which helps them maintain their focus on life-long recovery. The COP provides people with support and opportunities to maintain and change as needed, tools for growth, and a chance to be heard and supported as they move past the initial challenges of recovery - the pain, loneliness, stigma, and isolation that is a significant part of mental illness. Through the COP, people feel a sustained sense of security. On-going support is available as they work to further develop or maintain their safe housing, income and/or benefits, and as they continue learning new ways of life with healthy choices. They are supported as a part of the community rather than seen as a burden on society. Many report COP helps them maintain their independence with a renewed sense of hope and joy for life. Some COP clients serve as mentors for TLP clients indicating an increased sense of empowerment related to their recovery that they are willing to share.

PROGRAM STRATEGIES

Our approach is to address core problems through collaboration. TH contracts, works with, and is accountable to Oklahoma's Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS) and others to ensure service delivery is innovative while in compliance with standards. TH utilizes aspects of nationally recognized Recovery and Sanctuary models, and works from Dr. Brene Brown. These focus on client centered care, recovery, improved understanding of vulnerability, courage, worthiness, and shame, and development of shame resilience. Strategies include client empowerment, creation of safe environments and safety plans that promote healing and wellness for people in recovery from trauma, and education to increase understanding of challenges while developing new coping tools. Emphasis is on flexibility, personal responsibility / accountability, and support without enabling and/or punishing. Staff receive consultation to ensure best practices are maintained. The COP is unique, originally designed to address on-going needs of TLP clients. While client connections typically begin with the TLP, long term effectiveness is best maintained when at risk clients utilize COP opportunities. A prevention / intervention strategy used is building healthy relationships which encourage supportive connections to reduce isolation. The Wellness Project provides prevention opportunities for those who might be at risk for mental illness.

BENEFITS OF THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM:

On-going support:	Projected Outcomes:
Structured Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced isolation • Increased ability to budget time and money • Increased routine contact provides opportunities for early intervention of problems as they arise • Increased awareness of community free/inexpensive recreational/social opportunities
Continued Socialization and Recreational skill development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced isolation • Opportunities are increased for healthy relationship development • Improved mood and sense of well-being • Increased sense of belonging • Increased peer support system
Music Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress reduction; Illness Prevention & Early Intervention • Increased sense of belonging and being a part of a productive group • Development of a healthy form of self-expression, anger management, and coping
Drop-In Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic needs can be met through easy access to phones, office equipment such as copier, fax machine, computer, etc. • Staff provides early intervention and support as needed which reduces recidivism • Clients feel a sense of consistency in support services as they need them • Clients feel a sense of belonging and "home"
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces stigma • Helps clients access decreasing mental health services • Provides needed support that might otherwise not be available • Teaches clients to advocate for themselves