

Pacific Clinics

Advances

Advancing Behavioral Healthcare

Housing
Opens New
Doors for
Consumers

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PacificClinics.org



From the President and the Chairman

As this issue of *Advances* goes to press, the United States is experiencing a crisis in home mortgage financing. Hundreds of articles appear each day about the lack of affordable housing in California and our country as a whole. Those who are fortunate enough to be working in well-paying jobs and have safe shelter might not fully understand how difficult it is to be seriously mentally ill and without the ability to pay for basic shelter.

It is estimated that as many as 70-80 percent of the homeless on the streets are suffering from mental illness with a co-occurring substance-abuse disorder. Reaching out to and engaging someone living on the streets is a time-consuming but rewarding task. Many people now use the phrase “housing first,” since attaining safety and shelter is the first step in the journey toward recovery, and a critical component for those seeking successful treatment.

Pacific Clinics has long recognized the need for access to housing and employment as elements essential to recovery progress for adults and transitional age youth. Our agency, however, has never been identified with providing significant housing or employment services. But these are a specialty of Portals, our newest division. Portals has a 50-year history in the Los Angeles area of providing psychosocial rehabilitation along with employment and housing services, some of which include residential programs. Pacific Clinics merged with Portals last summer in large part to benefit from its expertise in the area of housing.

Strengthened by this merger, we look forward to the future. We anticipate that as revenue from the Mental Health Services Act continues to grow there will be additional funding for housing in recognition of its role as a link to maintaining stability in the community.



Susan Mandel, Ph.D.
President/CEO



Lary Mielke
Chairman of the Board

This issue of *Advances* highlights the range of housing services now available to Pacific Clinics consumers through all of its divisions, including Portals. You will read about programs offering varying levels of shelter — from emergency accommodations to long-term independent living in apartments scattered throughout the community. Along with those various types of placements, Pacific Clinics staff can be found offering support, guidance, treatment and even 24-hour on-call availability to our consumers. Pacific Clinics and Portals continue to have slightly different ways of providing the treatment services that reintegrate our consumers into society. The Clinics offers treatment at its outpatient offices or community sites; some of Portals residential programs provide it on-site.

We who have housing may take it for granted. But someone with mental illness never takes it for granted, and when it is secured you will usually see that person beginning the journey to recovery. We look forward to working as a combined organization to bring additional affordable housing to our consumers and their families and hope that you will find this issue of *Advances* informative toward that end. Anyone who wishes to support our programs is encouraged to use the enclosed envelope to make a contribution — or simply call us. And if you know of residential opportunities for Section 8-assisted housing that might be available, or appropriate buildings for sale, please contact us about that too. We are very interested in growing in the housing arena and in meeting our clients' needs. We'd like to consider you a partner.

“I think I can do this on my own now”

Pacific Clinics Housing Services Advances the Behavioral Health of Consumers

Having a safe place to call home is crucial for mental health and recovery. That’s why Pacific Clinics intensified its housing efforts more than two years ago and since then has placed an astounding 1,000 individuals and family members in homes of their own. Yet the agency’s consumers require much more than just four walls and a roof.

“These are people who struggle with all types of abuse, are deeply wounded and frightened, young and inexperienced or hardened from living on the streets for years,” explains David Garcia, Corporate Director at Pacific Clinics’ Housing Services. “We wrap services around them ... to bring them home.”



Virginia Reyes found a new home and a new life at the Hadley House in Whittier.

Housing Services’ staff of only 10 people cover half of huge L.A. County – continually looking for suitable places for the homeless in emergency, transitional and permanent housing. After housing is secured, the focus shifts to sustainability. “Housing Services is much more than finding a bed,” as Mr. Garcia says.

In partnership with Pacific Clinics’ therapeutic programs, Housing Services provides a range of support services. The aim: to help the newly housed remain in their dwellings and thus make progress with their recovery. These sustainability services include case management, money management, budgeting, landlord-tenant mediation, employment assistance and social events for consumers.

Often coming from the streets, consumers may need help in re-learning how to wash clothes, shop, cook, pay bills, save, get along with neighbors and the landlord, report a repair, deal with complaints and become ready to work. “TAY” consumers (transitional age youth ages 16-25) often need more attention because they may lack the relevant life experience and parental training in the first place. Pacific Clinics’ Hestia House, home to eight young people in Pasadena, is a successful example of transitional housing.

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A Quick Look at Common Housing Terms

In addition to its network of shelters for emergency and transitional housing, Pacific Clinics contracts with federal, state and local agencies to provide housing and services for the homeless.

Shelter Plus Care (SPC)

- Provides rental subsidy for those with physical, mental or chronic substance-abuse disability
- Participants get up to five years of support (renewable), pay up to 30 percent of their income in rent
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provides the remaining 70 percent through funding to human services agencies such as the Clinics by way of contracts with local governmental entities such as the County and the City of Los Angeles
- Support services include: case management, therapeutic services, psychiatric treatment and medications, employment services, group counseling sessions

Homeless Section 8

- Voucher-based, no time limit, doesn’t require agencies to offer or match services
- Focuses on finding affordable housing and willing landlords
- Homelessness must be proved; tenants pay up to 30 percent of their income from SSI, general relief or employment
- Vouchers are accessed through the Los Angeles County and City housing authorities

Other Types of Subsidized Housing

- Based on income, individuals can receive government support for housing for which Section 8 designation has been granted
- No proof of homelessness required; long waiting list
- HUD also subsidizes non-Section 8 buildings, which don’t require certificates or vouchers but require tenants to contribute up to 30 percent of their income



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How It Works

The Housing Services team draws up a housing plan for each consumer, from emergency shelter to transitional or permanent residences. Each newly housed person is visited once a week for the first month and once a month thereafter. “Our consumers are scared and have forgotten how to live on their own. We watch for signs of loneliness, depression and substance abuse and report them to the proper team so that appropriate services are provided. Consumers know they can call us at 2 p.m. or 2 a.m. ... and services will be provided,” says Mr. Garcia. Landlords also know that they too can call on Housing Services whenever a problem with a consumer arises.



David Garcia (at left) and Amber Roth with Hestia House residents Dewithe Good, David Gangitano, and Alan Bach (also at top).

Typically it takes two to five years for most consumers to become independent. The homeless are ‘institutionalized’ by the streets, Mr. Garcia says, sometimes forgetting how to do things others take for granted, such as cleaning, hygiene, paying bills and maintaining relationships. “It takes a long time to overcome multiple issues they have been dealing with for years,” he says. “Isolation and hardening by the streets can slow progress in individual treatment and housing stability.”

To facilitate reintegration into the wider community, consumers are placed whenever possible in apartment buildings with a variety of tenants. “It is important that consumers feel they are not isolated,” Mr. Garcia says. Quarterly social events also help establish relationships. Participation of neighbors and landlords builds community support, understanding and rapport. “They all tend to look out for one another.”

Housing Services also reaches out to local community and faith-based organizations, landlords, property managers and other agencies. “We research neighborhoods and introduce ourselves and our services to establish a comfort zone that furthers neighbors’ understanding and acceptance of our consumers,” says Mr. Garcia. “Landlords and property owners are heartened by how we assure tenant safety and compliance and have a 24-hour, 365-day-a-year on-call service. It reduces the stigma and the NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard) fears.”

Successes and Challenges

In the two and a half years that Mr. Garcia has headed Housing Services, only one tenant has been evicted. The majority of those who move off the streets to permanent housing return to school, seek jobs, volunteer, attend church and otherwise engage in community life. “One of my greatest pleasures is to see the children’s faces light up when we introduce them to their new home,” Mr. Garcia says. “Their shrieks of joy are worth the hard work, the bumps in the road and obstacles. You can see the delight in the adults’ eyes too.” The best part, he says, is when a consumer is able to say, “Thank you. I think I can do this on my own now.”

“We wrap services around them ... to bring them home.”

The greatest challenge remains finding affordable housing in a tight rental market, especially in light of strict HUD and local housing authority guidelines and reporting. “We accomplish this with the help of landlords who often reduce security deposits or arrange a payment plan; they appreciate the support Housing Services provides, and are willing to step up to the plate. Considering all that Housing Services does to keep all the parts moving, it works. It does work.”

Please see profile of exemplary landlords, pg. 15

Sustaining Consumers in New Homes Essential to Success

The 23-year-old man with a two-month-old child and girlfriend to support had just lost his job and was now three months behind in his rent. With eviction looming, the future looked grim.

That is, until Amber Roth came to the rescue. “Our consumer was extremely nervous and afraid,” says the Pacific Clinics Housing Services Supervisor. So she got to work, doing what she does so well: compassionately but clearly explaining the realities of the situation to the consumer, advising him on what he needed to do – and mediating effectively with the exasperated landlord. She offered solutions, such as a payment plan and subsidized retroactive reimbursement from the local housing authority.

She was even able to satisfy the unpaid security deposit by bartering the consumer’s handyman skills to do repairs and repaint the apartment. “It has been a huge success,” she says, “and the consumer was able to retain his housing, which is so important in his struggle to get on his feet.”

Cultivating Landlord Relationships

Ms. Roth and her housing team work with about 55 landlords throughout Los Angeles County in the all-important search for sustainable housing. Because of their good relationships with local housing agencies, the team is able to expedite all paperwork and inspections so that landlords do not lose time and money. And they help landlords with the considerable paperwork involved. “Our landlords, especially those unfamiliar with Section 8 requirements, really appreciate having that burden taken care of.”

“It is a joy to watch them blossom as they become integrated back into the community.”

Before a qualified consumer is moved into a unit, Housing Services acts to ensure a successful stay. For example, since a unit must pass the housing authority’s inspection before occupation, the team conducts a pre-inspection tour of the proposed Section 8 unit to reduce the risk of its not passing. They point out to the landlord what needs to be fixed, such as plumbing, windows, outlet covers and toilet paper holders. Ever practical, she says, “sometimes we just fix simple things ourselves!”

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Israel Rivera, Amanda Brown and their family in their new home

Housing Services' successful landlord relationships are also based on continual contact – meeting them for lunch, remembering them at holidays and calling regularly to see how things are going. Ms. Roth says that landlords are greatly relieved to have a help line they can call anytime, with immediate response. “By the same token,” she says, “they are our eyes and ears. They let us know when something’s amiss with an individual, important behavioral clues we pass on to the treatment team.” This nurturing relationship also encourages landlords to share valuable information about vacancies in other buildings.

call on housing agencies for “eviction-prevention money” to bridge the gap until the situation is resolved. “Bringing consumers and landlords together,” she says, “creates a partnership and understanding, which secures and preserves consumers’ housing.”

Keeping Consumers in Place

As difficult as it is to find permanent housing for Pacific Clinics’ homeless consumers, it is even more challenging to ensure that the consumer is equipped to sustain the new housing.



Ernie Hill is comfortable in his new Section 8 home in Pasadena.

Housing Services also takes a very proactive role here. Because this is the first time for many to live in long-term housing after moving off the streets and from shelters, the team rounds up the basics: furniture, household and kitchen supplies, food and hygiene products, and other move-in assistance. “Thanks to furniture and appliance donations from private donors, faith-based and community [groups] and Pacific Clinics’ Board and staff, our consumers start off on a solid foot,” says Ms. Roth.

The Housing Services team also regularly visits consumers to make sure they are managing their money, paying the rent on time, performing daily tasks such as shopping, cooking and cleaning, and developing healthy relationships with their neighbors and landlords. “Educating our consumers as to their renters’ rights and responsibilities,” she says, “helps them feel more secure in their new surroundings and remain in a living situation essential to their progress and well-being.” The team also hosts social events, arranges community integration opportunities, assists with jobs and coordinates Pacific Clinics’ case management and treatment services.

When Problems Arise

Trained in mediation skills, Ms. Roth and her team step in when serious situations develop. She cites the consumer-tenant who kept forgetting his keys, began drinking heavily and damaged the unit. “We averted eviction proceedings, expensive for the landlord and damaging to the consumer’s credit and housing.” She explains that once a consumer is evicted, he is disqualified for other housing subsidies and cannot reapply for a minimum of seven years. “It’s not easy the second time around.”

“...our consumers start off on a solid foot.”

In cases beyond saving, the housing team offers the landlord the “mutual termination option,” which saves the landlord money and the consumer’s record. When consumers fall behind on the rent, they sometimes

A Calling for Life

With its relationships, passionate commitment, creativity, diligence and experience, the team is consistently placing and helping to sustain consumers in their new homes. “Everyone deserves a place to call home,” Ms. Roth says. “Permanent housing is a turning point in consumers’ lives. Once they are on stable ground, it is a joy to watch them blossom as they integrate back into the community. For me, the feeling is indescribable. I’ve found my calling.”

Portals Opens Doors for the Dually Diagnosed

Pacific Clinics' Newest Division Specializes in Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Housing

Portals is a 50-year-old nonprofit organization that became Pacific Clinics newest division in a merger last summer. Its transitional residential programs specialize in providing housing and psychosocial services to adults ages 18 to 59 who have been diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness and co-occurring drug and/or alcohol abuse — a “double whammy” according to Robert “Bink” Fiese, MFT, Portals’ residential programs director in L.A.’s Mid-Wilshire area. Consumers (called “members” at Portals) must be referred to the agency. The program does not accept sex offenders or those with recent violent behavior.

Acceptance is just the beginning. “It’s still a tough road ahead for those ready for and accepted by Portals,” Mr. Fiese says. “Our consumers have been around the block many times, and this is a lifelong commitment.”

How It Works at Portals

Prospective participants are interviewed by current Portals residents and staff to evaluate where they have been, where they are now and their capacity to be in the program. Once accepted, a new member signs a “behavioral contract,” which outlines the prospect’s personal goals and his or her willingness to abide by the rules and cooperate during the 12- to 18-month program.

The integrated treatment program offers counseling and clinical oversight in a variety of structured daytime activities and group sessions that include: a 12-step program, anger management and skill-building to manage day-to-day challenges, and vocation, job or activity planning plus individual counseling. Unlike Pacific Clinics’ other housing options, Portals offers on-site treatment at its Rampart and Twin Peaks facilities for up to 15 participants. Its nearby No-Fail program offers an additional 20 beds.



Bink Fiese (center) with Portals members Warren Dinkins (left) and Rayshawn Dixon

“Portals is not a respite,” Mr. Fiese explains, “but an open door to step through to another life.” He says Portals requires its residents to become engaged in such outside activities as school, employment or volunteerism. They are expected to set community reintegration goals for themselves and develop the skills to accomplish them, such as learning how to get to their jobs, therapy or community activities on time. “We also start treatment early,” he says, “with the long range goal of managing independent living in permanent housing.”

“Portals is not a respite but an open door to step through to another life.”

Still, there is some recidivism to the streets. There are those accepted into the program who simply don’t show up or, faced with what is required of them, drop out quickly. “Yet, for those who do become involved and engaged,” Mr. Fiese says, “the Portals programs offer a best hope for a way back.”

Many graduates of the program have obtained permanent housing and employment. These members sometimes come back to address current members in the program to show them that it is possible to succeed. In the end, it all depends on the individual and his or her commitment, Mr. Fiese says, backed up with the agency’s support for recovery, maintenance and skill development. “Once they step through our open door, we are here to help them with the tools they need to succeed.”

Outreach Convinces the Adult Homeless to “Come In”

Because homelessness is pervasive and many-faceted so must be the efforts to reach out to those without permanent shelter, many who suffer behavioral health problems.

One constant: spending as much time as possible where the homeless congregate. That’s why Kitty Galt and her Pacific Clinics colleagues can be found (especially in foul weather) handing out thousands of business cards at street corners, hospitals and shelters. “We never know what trigger moves the homeless person to decide to ‘come in,’” she says. “But they do hold onto those cards.”

Ms. Galt and her partner Ruben Gallegos are outreach specialists for Passageways, a collaborative, HUD-financed multi-service center for the homeless in Pasadena. Pacific Clinics is the fiscal agent and behavioral healthcare provider, partnering with Union Station Foundation and the Pasadena Health Department. Her Clinics colleagues include Saul Zepeda and Ralph Trejo of the agency’s Transitional Age Youth (TAY) program, which operates across the greater San Gabriel Valley.

Who Are the Homeless?

According to Ms. Galt, 73 percent of the homeless have mental health or behavioral conditions, although many are intelligent and educated. Most are men and aged 50 or older; many are veterans. Women, however, are harder to get an accurate count of. They tend to isolate themselves more, move in temporarily with a new relationship, or otherwise hide or disguise their homelessness, such as the “shadow women” who live in their cars, dress reasonably well and are savvy about using department store bathrooms.

The reasons for adult homelessness are as varied as the individuals themselves. One, a former college baseball star and altar boy, was overcome by mental illness and substance abuse. Another, a former professor at an Ivy League school, went into a major tailspin after a brutal divorce. Yet another: a mother adrift on the streets with her children after the father left.

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Kitty Galt reaches out to a homeless veteran in the streets of Pasadena.

A Look at One of Our Housing Consumers...

Housing Helps to Regain the Strength to Carry On

A victim of domestic violence and abuse, the divorced young mother suffered a lack of work skills as well as the anger, fear and misbehavior of her children, a legacy of living on the streets for two years. In a shelter for months, she felt trapped, frustrated and overwhelmed. Once Pacific Clinics was contacted, Housing Services found this broken family a place to call home, supported by other services. The family outlook is much brighter these days, and Mom is managing better.



Ruben Gallegos and Kitty Galt coordinate their street work with the homeless from their rolling “office” — the Passageways van.

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Sowing the Seeds

Street outreach is the first opportunity to meet people, to let them know help is available. “While our long-term goal is to provide whatever assistance they need,” says Ms. Galt, “our first rule of engagement is to meet them where they are and accept them. It is a lengthy process of familiarization with us, so we patiently build trust. Even so, it sometimes takes a medical or psychiatric crisis or seeing their associates come in that finally brings them to ask for help.”

“It is what happens over a period of time that contributes to long-term success.”



Mr. Gallegos and Ms. Galt chat with Officer Victor Cass of the Pasadena P.D.’s H.O.P.E. Team.

The outreach teams continually sow the seeds by making regular stops throughout the area in white vans that have become recognizable to the population. They sometimes remove a van’s Passageways signage to encourage anonymity and reduce the stigma of seeking help. “Some are very damaged people,” Ms. Galt says, “with horrific stories and very wary of services. The longer they have been on the streets, the harder it is for them to come in.”

Referrals and Support

Outreach teams accept referrals from hospitals and police who pick up homeless individuals but cannot hold them. The team also works with a network of shelters and local churches, including Union Station and the Pasadena Church of the Covenant.

Once the individual is ready to accept services, the outreach team is backed by Passageways’ more than 25 specialists, including intake staff, case managers, social workers and psychiatric professionals. They try to obtain Shelter Plus Care or Section 8 certificates for housing for the consumers. They also work with a landlord if problems arise. “Our work extends well beyond engagement,” Ms. Galt says. “It is what happens over a period of time that contributes to long-term success.”

Seeking Out What Works

Sometimes engagement fails and the consumer heads back to the streets. “We evaluate and try again,” says Ms. Galt, “or try a different tack, always keeping in touch, to find what will work for the individual.”

After being the primary sponsor of the Passageways Homeless Fair in Pasadena for several years, the staff joined in October 2007 with other Pasadena-based human service agencies for a similar effort. This time it was one of several homeless resource events being held across the nation and called the Homeless Connect Day Fair. The Fair at the Salvation Army site resulted in bringing 22 people off the streets and into shelters or programs. “There are so many issues involved in homelessness that we continually seek new solutions and opportunities to help.”

Now Ms. Galt’s group seeks to emulate model programs in New York and San Francisco, which emphasize housing first and provide services that taper off as the consumer becomes able to live independently and make progress in resolving their challenges. “Ultimately, there is no one solution for all,” she says. “We triage, try different options and see what works. Meanwhile, we concentrate on engaging the individual, move them to willingness and service acceptance with all our available resources.”



Saul Zepeda jots down notes from contact Jason Clayton.

Saul Zepeda takes special care to connect with the homeless youth he meets in shelters, parks and other outdoor spaces. A veteran of the streets himself, he is unusually familiar with their needs and fears.

Mr. Zepeda also personally defied the statistics when he left street life and built a successful life as a college graduate. Today he is not just a role model, he is a professional outreach specialist for the Pacific Clinics program that targets homeless 16- to 25-year-olds. He knows he needs to establish trust first before he convinces these “transitional age youth” (TAY) to access the mental health services they may need to reintegrate into society.

Connecting First

Mr. Zepeda visits street corners and other places from Pasadena to Pomona where TAY congregate. He walks around and talks to people of matters that interest them until a connection is made. “It is important that they see you on a regular basis,” he says. “In socializing with them, they want you to be part of them, not them part of you.”

Connecting with Homeless

He continually assesses the situation at hand to sense when to offer his young contacts bus tokens or shelter or transportation to a hot meal. And when to simply leave them alone. When the time is right, he hands out a flier listing what resources are available and his phone number where he can always be reached. “Sometimes they will call within hours, sometimes days or weeks later,” he says. The fliers get passed around. “I get calls from as far away as Inglewood and Barstow.”

“It’s a good feeling to see an individual change, even a little bit.”

His outreach extends to speaking at community meetings and agency visits. Becoming widely known as a resource has generated referrals from residents, social workers and the police. “They become familiar with who we are and what we offer. They know that when they call, I’ll be there within the hour.”

Understanding the Street TAY

Family problems often put TAYs on the street to begin with: domestic violence, parental substance abuse, finances. “Sometimes the oldest will leave home to lessen the mother’s burden of raising younger siblings,” Mr. Zepeda says. “These are also youths who are trying to escape gang affiliation, have been in the juvenile justice system or have graduated out of foster care with nowhere to turn.”

For those new to the streets, he says, “You can see the fear in their eyes.” Those who have been in the life for awhile are particularly wary of outsiders. “They’ve been bruised by family, the gangs and the system. They are hardened by drug use, by others taking advantage of them, by what they have to do to survive, including selling drugs and sexual favors. They jump from city to city, not wanting to be recognized or because someone

Transitional Age Youth

is looking for them.” With the number of homeless youth increasing, he also notes that many haven’t been found. They blend in well and disguise themselves, relying on friends for clean clothes, a shower or a few days of shelter. “But you can tell,” he says. “They age quickly, looking old beyond their years, with deteriorating health, even missing teeth.”

Return for Some, Not All

The transient nature of this population makes them hard to follow. One 17-year-old he worked with for months moved on without a word. For another, he was able to obtain housing and mental health services only to see her drop out of both and lose touch. “Some just want the immediate benefits — a quick meal, a place to stay. With low self-esteem and a bravado of not caring, it’s all too easy to return to the street. It is the only way they know.”

Happily, Mr. Zepeda also counts numerous successes. One of his longtime contacts, now age 22, spent time in jail and had a drug problem but recently got his own apartment and re-established communication with Mr. Zepeda. “Many pop up periodically, ready to quit the streets,” he says. “The ones who make it are tired of living the way they do, mature and become willing to make changes. At any point in our relationship, something will motivate a change.”

Given the challenges, the openings Mr. Zepeda and the outreach team provide begin with their presence, of letting the street youth know they are there and available for calls and as gateways to needed services. “They know my phone is always on, for calls when they are anxious, in trouble, contemplating suicide. I’ve had all those calls. It is a good feeling to see an individual change, even a little bit.”

A Look at Some of Our Housing Consumers...

Housing Creates a Role Model

A methamphetamine addiction had wreaked havoc on the divorced woman’s life. She had come from an affluent family and had never lived on her own. Her drug habit had cost her custody of her three children and her relationship with her father. After being on the streets for two years, a shelter recovery program rescued her and contacted Pacific Clinics. While she was in treatment for two years, Housing Services found her an apartment as she put her life back together. Now reunited with her father and allowed to visit her children, she shares her story at AA and NA meetings and sponsors members. As an inspirational role model, she says, “Housing Services getting an apartment for me has made a tremendous difference. It changed everything.”

From Bridge Life to Home

By his late 40s, the man had been living under a bridge for 15 years, accustomed to its raw living conditions and isolation. After he was hospitalized for severe schizophrenia and referred to Pacific Clinics five years ago, his case manager called in Housing Services, which spent months convincing him of the benefits of living in his own apartment. The team helped him set up a savings account where he accumulated \$300 toward move-in expenses. Housing Services then covered the rest and negotiated a payment plan for the security deposit. Now in permanent housing for nearly two years, he has learned living skills, such as not drying out the trash (a hold-over from bridge life, required to keep the rats away). He has become very sociable and attends Housing Services events.

Homeless CalWORKs: a Crucial Piece in Employment Puzzle

It's not necessarily easy for anyone to find work. Now imagine someone with mental health issues, and without a permanent address. It doesn't exactly add up to a successful job application.

In recognition that a home is central to stability and employment, the state government launched the "Homeless CalWORKs" pilot three years ago as an offshoot of regular CalWORKs, the "welfare-to-work" program that provides mental health counseling and employment services to eligible individuals with minor children. Pacific Clinics is a major contractor, using government funds to assist as many as 50 homeless consumers at a time move from Homeless CalWORKs to regular CalWORKs.

The need is compelling and clear, says Kimberly Guajardo, Psy.D., Director of Programs at Pacific Clinics' El Camino site in Santa Fe Springs, the location of the Clinics' Homeless CalWORKs project. "These are people," she says, "who have no family support, are often new to the area and have mental health conditions that hinder their ability to afford and maintain housing."

"Having a place to call home," she continues, "removes a major stressor for individuals struggling to provide for their families while they heal and find work."



The CalWORKs Homeless Project makes a difference for families. From left: Norma Barrales, Mental Health Worker; Judy Tse, CalWORKs Program Director; Haylee and Amber Rosales, clients; and Teri Bartlett, Team Supervisor.

The Department of Public Social Services refers its CalWORKs applicants to Pacific Clinics when they appear to have mental health issues that could interfere with their success in finding and holding a job. Pacific Clinics does an initial evaluation and if housing is determined to be their most pressing need, these new consumers are assigned to the Homeless CalWORKs project at El Camino. Staff are Teri Bartlett, Norma Barrales, Steve Fernandez and Mabel Figueroa, led by CalWORKs program director Judy Tse, LCSW.

"Having a place to call home removes a major stressor ...while they heal and find work."

Participants are primarily single mothers with children, but there are also intact families and some single fathers. While participants wait to be placed in housing, Pacific Clinics staff drive them around to look at apartments, help them secure

necessary documentation such as birth certificates, go shopping for furniture, register their children for school – and more.

Consumers are generally housed with Shelter Plus Care or Section 8 government funds. After being set up in their own homes, residents transition to regular CalWORKs. Sustaining them with crucial support services, such as landlord-tenant relationship management, are David Garcia and Amber Roth of the Clinics' Housing Services, as well as the El Camino CalWORKs Homeless Project team. "That, and the Shelter Plus Care wrap-around services, prevents consumers from losing their dearly-held housing," Dr. Guajardo says.

Then there is one more step – getting a job, and thus leaving CalWORKs altogether. "One of our greatest pleasures is seeing our consumers discharged from CalWORKs and become employed," says Dr. Guajardo. "They are on their way. It is our measure of success."

Asian Pacific Family Center's Housing: a Singular Resource



Consumer Min Juan Wong in her home at Pacific Housing.

What do you do if you are an aging parent with no relatives available to take care of your mentally ill adult child after you pass away?

It's a dilemma often encountered by Jeanette Choi, LCSW, a program director at Pacific Clinics' Asian Pacific Family Center (APFC). Community restrictions on group homes for the mentally ill make her job even harder as she seeks to establish housing alternatives. But the job gets done just the same.

Collaboration Brings Success, Eventually

Establishing its first group home was a formidable challenge for APFC. The Little Tokyo Service Center was an invaluable resource in finding and applying for grants, but waiting for funds while property values soared meant a series of false starts.

Finally, a HUD grant and other government funds facilitated the purchase of a six-unit building in Monterey Park. Enterprise Community Loan Fund, Inc. carried the mortgage at below-market rates while the three-year remodeling project and necessary permits were completed, aided by the support of local government officials. The project, called Pacific Housing, opened its five one-bedroom apartments plus one two-bedroom to residents in July 2006.

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Stella Ho keeps residents happy.

Consumer Stella Ho Helps Make Pacific Housing Special

Pacific Housing is a unique resource for the Asian Pacific community – not least because of the warmth and commitment of Stella Ho, an APFC consumer who helps residents.

Ms. Ho first came to APFC 13 years ago after hospitalization with a severe mental condition. Ten years ago, she started working for the agency as an administrative aide. Last year she started providing support for APFC's Pacific Housing.

“APFC is 100 percent good. I was really lucky to be chosen for this position,” says Ms. Ho, now 54, who continues to live with her family. “I love working with all the residents and age groups who come from all walks of life. It helps me know more about society and improve myself.”

During her weekday visits, she assists residents with cooking, shopping and cleaning. She also arranges parties that bring residents together. “We’ve had BBQs, dinners, Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations,” she says. “The residents put on entertainment, singing and dancing, and we do games. I can see how much the residents get even better. They are really happy. And so am I.”

Before Pacific Housing opened, its residents had lived with their parents, with nowhere else to go. “No residential housing existed in the area for the mentally ill and none for Asian-Americans,” Ms. Choi says. She says that there is so much demand for units that she could easily fill another residence.

Residents Develop a New Lease on Life

Residents are single APFC consumers who range in age from early 30s to 60s and are fairly high functioning. Therapeutic services are not provided on-site but at Clinics facilities. “They do their own shopping, cooking and cleaning,” Ms. Choi says. “Each is active and engaged at his or her own level.” She points to one man, previously disheveled and unable to manage, who now keeps his apartment spotlessly clean and is ready to look for employment.

“All of them say the move has changed their lives,” Ms. Choi says. “They have more hope, and their mental health conditions have improved 100 percent.” The program also provides counseling support to residents’ parents. APFC volunteers are now teaching the residents how to tend the property’s vegetable garden — with bountiful results. “They proudly bring

bushels of their crops to us, the envy of all,” Ms. Choi laughs. “Everyone here is thrilled ... particularly because of what it symbolizes.”

A Look at One of Our Housing Consumers...

A World Being Put Back Together

The 33-year-old professional with a well paying job came apart after she was kidnapped at gunpoint and brutally raped. She felt shamed, guilty, dirty and unable to face her family. Buried mental health issues resurfaced, and she retreated to the streets. The Outreach Team found her there and convinced her to engage in mental health services. After a frightening stay in a shelter she moved into Section 8 housing, where today she is slowly retaking her life. As she attends counseling and returns to work, therapy is helping her work through past traumas.



From left: Staff Belen Garcia, Paty Paredes and Theresa Destito.

Refurbishing Older Adults’ Lives and Outlook

“Moving is hard enough for anyone, but for older adults with few resources and limited capacity to manage it, the situation becomes severe,” says Theresa Destito, LCSW, a program director at Pacific Clinics’ Older Adult Services, whose low-income Medi-Cal recipients face overwhelming life and mental health challenges. The collaboration between her program and Pacific Clinics’ Housing Services division, however, has given would-be tragedies happier endings, as these examples attest:

- Compounding his major depressive disorder, Mr. K at 70 years old had lost his wife. In the midst of grieving, he faced a rent increase, which he could no longer afford without the help of his wife’s Social Security check. After he was served with an eviction notice, the Housing Services crew worked quickly to locate a nicer, more affordable apartment for him in West Covina. Mr. K now enjoys socializing there with other tenants, which provides a lift to his spirits and outlook.
- At 79, Mr. J had serious mental health issues and had been homeless and living at the Union Station shelter for more than a year. With help from the Older Adult program, he became eligible for Shelter Plus Care and qualified for an affordable apartment in Duarte. Once he moved in, Housing Services provided furniture and basic necessities. Mr. J’s son spent Christmas with him in his new apartment, and he now plays saxophone with his new band.

Landlords Are Valued Partners

Because Pacific Clinics generally doesn't own the buildings that shelter its housing consumers, it must find landlords attuned to tenants with special needs — landlords like Mike Padilla and Mary Blythe.

This married couple are far from your typical investment property owners, however. They make it their business to make their vulnerable residents feel welcome, comfortable and safe.

Yet these proprietors of Whittier's "Hadley House" didn't buy the property a year ago with the idea of turning it into special-needs housing. Intrigued by a local access cable TV mention of "sober living" housing,

they decided to advertise for residents looking for transitional living. Soon enough, David Garcia of Pacific Clinics Housing Services got in touch with them.

"He was so wonderful to work with that we partnered up," says Ms. Blythe. "We've really enjoyed our relationship with Pacific Clinics."

"I like to be associated with Pacific Clinics because you see progress."

The feeling is mutual. "I consider them my partners, absolutely," Mr. Garcia says. He notes that in addition to keeping the property in very good condition, the couple even hosts a weekly meeting with their eight single adult female Pacific Clinics consumers. "They actually engage with the clients, which is very unusual."

"Helping people just captured us," Ms. Blythe explains. "I see the girls come in depressed from living in a shelter, but after a few nights' good sleep they brighten up. People's lives can spiral

down to homelessness very quickly. It's kind of like 'there but for the grace of God go I.' We've got to help these people get back on their feet! I like to be associated with Pacific Clinics because you see progress."

Her spouse says they'd buy more such buildings if they could afford to. "It's given us a sense of fulfillment," Mr. Padilla says. "I was arrested on a drug charge in 1970-71, and I was given a chance to go into rehabilitation. So I can sympathize."

Concludes Mr. Garcia: "It's not all about the money with them. They have heart."



Mary Blythe and Mike Padilla with Pacific Clinics' David Garcia (right).

- Ms. D, a 70-year-old African-American, had been living alone in a Section 8 building. A new owner refused to accept Section 8 and evicted Ms. D because she could not afford the rent without the subsidy. Ms. D, with a very optimistic attitude and strong spiritual faith, successfully found a smaller Section 8 apartment about 15 miles away. However, she told her Pacific Clinics case manager, Paty Paredes, that she had no resources left for moving her furniture and belongings. Housing Services was called in to move Ms. D and her belongings to the new rental before the eviction deadline.

- After his roommate died, and with no money, family or friends, Mr. B's anxiety disorder intensified when he was turned out of his board and care facility without resources. Housing Services stepped in to move him and his few belongings to a new facility, and the Older Adult program staff provided emotional support through this exceptionally stressful time.

Donations of financial support, furnishings and other household items are gratefully accepted on behalf of those without living essentials. Please call (626) 960-4020, x212, or email aroth@pacificclinics.org. Thank you!

Moving Forward: News and Notes

New Web Site Can Make a Lot of "Cents" for Pacific Clinics

What if Pacific Clinics received a penny every time you searched the Internet? Or if a percentage of your online purchases went to support our work? Now it can! GoodSearch.com is a Yahoo-powered search engine that donates about a penny per search to charities its users designate. Use it as you would any search engine and watch those pennies add up. GoodShop.com is a new online shopping mall that donates up to 37 percent of each purchase to your favorite cause. Amazon, Target, Gap, Best Buy, eBay, Macy's and Barnes & Noble are among the hundreds of merchants that have teamed up with GoodShop.com and can support the Clinics each time you place an order. You can even make GoodSearch.com your homepage. Just go to GoodSearch.com and enter Pacific Clinics as the charity you wish to support ... and be sure to spread the good word!

Pacific Clinics, a California 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation, has been certified since 1993 by the American Psychological Association for its psychology, internship programs and since 1995 by CARF - The Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission -- for its vocational services. Pacific Clinics' work is funded by contracts from Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties, as well as state, federal and municipal governments, United Way, corporate and foundation grants, and private donations.

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Visit Pacific Clinics on the Internet for more information on our programs and events at: www.pacificclinics.org

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New Wellness Center Opens

Pacific Clinics dedicated its second adult wellness center during an open house event February 21 at its Pasadena Family Services site. Named for William H. "Bill" Compton, Jr., the Clinics' first consumer board chairman who passed away last year, the Center is funded by the 2004 Mental Health Services Act. It welcomes consumers in advanced stages of recovery to play a major role in the management of the Center and in their own treatment through social events, vocational and lifestyle training and housing access. Clinicians also provide mental health services. The Clinics' first wellness center opened in Ventura County in 2007.

Conference to Honor Clinics' Executives

The 15th statewide Cultural Competence Summit takes place March 25-26 in San Diego and will present its 2007 Cultural Competence Professional Award to Susan Mandel, Ph.D., and a Service in Action Award to APFC East's Lydia Ko. Other Pacific Clinics staff, including Corporate Director Rocco Cheng, Ph.D., will present at six workshops.

Latino Mental Health Conference to Highlight Cultural Viewpoints

Pacific Clinics' Latino Conference on May 27, 2008 at the Hilton Hotel in San Gabriel will focus on "Outreach, Engagement and Treatment for Latinos from a Cultural Perspective." Featured presenters are Sergio Aguilar-Gaxiola, M.D., Ph.D., Director, UC Davis Center for Reducing Health Disparities, and Steve R. Lopez, Ph.D., USC psychology professor. Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health and Latino Behavioral Health Institute are co-sponsoring the 11th annual conference. For registration information, please call Blanca Padilla at (562) 942-8256.



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