



National Alliance to END HOMELESSNESS

Christian Community Health Center, Chicago, Illinois Providing Supportive Housing and Health Care

February 2009

Created in 1991, the Christian Community Health Center (CCHC) is a community-based 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization founded by a local physician who sought to address the lack of health care in the Roseland community. The organization was formed with a mission “to provide high-quality primary health care and related services to the community regardless of ability to pay.” While primary medical care is the anchor program, Christian Community Health Center has become equally renowned as a multi-pronged social service agency.

Over the years, the agency’s services have grown to include family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics/gynecology, dentistry, behavioral health services, podiatry, patient transportation, supportive housing, employment services, women’s shelters, a wide array of HIV/AIDS services and a pharmacy. Christian Community Health Center currently operates seven sites throughout Chicago and in the south suburbs, as well as a mobile health van.

In 2007, CCHC conducted a strategic planning project to define the organization’s goals and priorities for 2008-2010. The resulting plan outlined organizational growth that included “an intentional effort to provide a greater range of housing assistance with supportive services to patients and other community residents for whom housing issues are a barrier to good health.”

Program Description

Utilizing the Housing First model promoted by the Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness, CCHC began providing permanent supportive housing in 2001 to six homeless individuals. Today, the agency administers ten housing grants funded at \$2,824,638 that serve a little over 300 homeless persons, including those exhibiting HIV/AIDS, mental illness, and substance abuse.

In the Housing First model, CCHC staff is very reluctant to force anyone to leave his or her home. Therefore, a variety of interventions are offered that work to stabilize the individual or family unit. Case management ensures that all of CCHC’s housing clients establish some form of income that sustains their needs beyond the subsidized rent. During intake, the case manager verifies all mainstream income sources and gathers information to determine the client’s eligibility for various supportive services and public benefits. As a result, over 90 percent of the clients increase their income by obtaining employment or qualifying for SSI, veterans benefits, Medicaid, TANF, or child support.

CCHC provides a full continuum of supportive housing, from transitional shelter through permanent housing. The agency’s work is grounded in the core principle that housing is health care. CCHC’s housing programs thrive by instilling within the staff the philosophy of the Housing First and the harm reduction model, which utilizes a non-judgmental approach to dealing with the client, genuine concern for the participants, and consistent engagement with the client.

Target Population

Most CCHC programs target chronically homeless adults who are either living with HIV/AIDS or have a disabling condition, though they are able to perform daily tasks. However, some programs are very specific about the target population’s eligibility requirements. For example, the Safe Start I program targets clients diagnosed with HIV/AIDS who also have a substance abuse disorder, mental illness, or dual diagnosis. This model does not require sobriety for the client to remain in the program. Another example is the Re-Entry Housing and Health Program (RHHP), which is for men who are living with HIV/AIDS who have been recently released from an Illinois correctional facility. Also, CCHC’s Frequent

Users program targets chronically homeless adults who have a debilitating medical condition and have had three episodes of hospitalization at Cook County Board hospitals within 12 months of presenting to CCHC. Finally, the Pediatric AIDS Chicago Prevention Initiative (PACPI) serves adult women diagnosed with AIDS, who have young children and are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Outcomes

CCHC's client outcome goals are: (1) increase residential stability, (2) increase skill level/income, and (3) increase self-sufficiency. These outcomes align well with the outcomes measured by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) homeless programs. CCHC consistently achieves a 100 percent success rate of permanently housing clients within a 6-month period while continuing to provide the social services that lead to self-sufficiency. Intensive case management is provided to supervise progress toward the following client-oriented expectations:

- For those living with HIV/AIDS, a mental health condition, or active substance abuse, case managers monitor clients' adherence to their individualized medical treatment plans
- Clients are expected to know the tenancy rules, deal with the staff in a respectful manner, and use appropriate behavior with agency staff and private market landlords
- All clients are expected to actively seek employment, if their health permits, to maintain or increase their personal income
- If a tenant/client is unable to work, the case manager will work with him or her to actively pursue public benefits to maintain or increase his or her personal income
- In some cases, CCHC will work with the clients to save 10 to 20 percent of their income for future housing-related expenses. CCHC requires that tenants make a rent payment of 30 percent of their income
- Clients' success will be determined by their commitment to pursuing the goals established in their individual service plans

Funding Sources

Christian Community Health Center partners with the following funders:

- AIDS Foundation of Chicago
- Chicago Department of Human Services
- Chicago Low Income Housing Trust Fund
- Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
- Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)
- Illinois Department of Public Health
- Polk Bros. Foundation

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