

SACRAMENTO SELF HELP HOUSING
2009-10 PROGRESS REPORT
KEYS TO HOPE 3

The Keys to Hope 3 is a program designed to immediately house homeless individuals and couples with or without pets who had camped out at “Tent City”. They are housed in scattered sites throughout Sacramento in good quality houses and apartments. Sacramento Self Help Housing (SSHH) operates the program which is funded by the City of Sacramento through the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency to subsidize the rent of the clients, provide for property management and have on site support for the residents. Through a partnership with The Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, El Hogar provides a full time case manager that offers individualized case management with wrap-around services and support for community activities. Specifically, services from the case manager included the following:

- Assistance with immediate needs such as obtaining food, clothing, household goods or medical attention;
- Attainment of mainstream benefits;
- Life skills training and individual and group counseling;
- Employment services including job readiness, training and employment counseling;
- Harm reduction strategies;
- Treating and managing mental health and AOD (alcohol and other drug) assessment and treatment including substance abuse recovery and relapse prevention;
- Medical screenings and referrals;
- Support for housing retention;
- Crisis intervention; and
- Financial education including budgeting and money management.

The ultimate goal of this supportive services program was to provide an environment where formerly homeless people could experience success in obtaining and maintaining permanent housing. With the goal of supporting all residents to have success in permanent housing, the property management and social services staff worked with residents to understand the requirements of being a good tenant, including rent payment and landlord relations, fair housing rules and regulations, lease requirements, residence cleanliness, and problem resolution skills.

The housing and supportive services program for the clients began around July 1, 2009. The SSHH Keys to Hope 3 program provided housing for 40 clients who previously lived in Tent City and surrounding homeless camps prior to the summer of 2009. The clients who moved in have experienced numerous barriers that have prevented them from obtaining permanent housing and achieving independent living on their own. The SSHH Keys to Hope program has provided a stable living environment along with supportive services provided by a case worker from El Hogar to assist the residents in identifying and overcoming barriers to successful independent living.

The forty clients participating in the program are dealing with the following common barriers:

Major barriers to maintaining permanent housing	Number of clients that have self identified this as a major barrier	Number of clients the case manager has worked with and made significant progress
Untreated Mental Health Diagnosis	18	16
Alcohol/Drug Dependency	12	9
Acquiring documentation and receiving assistance and education on applying for mainstream benefits	12	12
Inability to Find Employment	11	10
Inability to Receive Education	9	9
Finding Treatment for Medical Conditions	10	9

This list of barriers represents the most persistent and prevalent barriers affecting the clients who moved into the program. Below is a description of specific individuals and the services provided by the case manager to help the clients meet their needs and overcome these obstacles to keep them housed.

Untreated Mental Health Diagnosis

***“Todd”:** “Todd” was homeless for 15 years. He lived primarily on the American River in the Sacramento area for nearly 11 years. He came from an abusive and broken home, but was able to get married and live a reasonable productive life until the death of his spouse. This event sent him into a spiral of homelessness for the next 15 years. His emotional/mental health issues prohibited him from being able to relate with people, maintain employment and further isolated him from society.*

He was referred to the SSHH Keys to Hope Program in the spring of 2009 and was one of the first clients in the program. He moved into a home in July of 2009 and although he had some difficulty at first adjusting to being inside and living with other people, he has adjusted well and is an active participant in the household. "Todd's" goals have been to remain in stable housing, obtain treatment for his emotional and mental health issues, remain employed, obtain treatment for his physical health issues, have access to crisis management and obtain his birth certificate.

Through the assistance and guidance of his case manager, "Todd" has sought treatment for his emotional and mental health issue, received a mental health diagnosis of bipolar disorder and has engaged in treatment services at both Genesis and Guest House. Throughout Todd's time in the program, the case manager has provided crisis intervention to prevent Todd from losing his housing and losing his job on at least 10 different instances. Todd has been off the street now since July of 2009 and is learning to manage his mental health condition so that he can maintain success in his community.

The SSHH Keys to Hope Program currently has 18 out of 40 clients who have identified mental health issues that directly affect their ability to find and maintain housing in the community. The case manager has made effective progress with 16 out of the 18 clients with this barrier. In order to address this issue, the case manager provides direct full-wrap services to help keep the client safe in the home and community, provides crisis management in the home and community when difficult situations arise, and makes direct referrals with mental health providers who can make a diagnosis and implement treatment. The overall goal of the case manager is to help the clients manage their mental health needs so they can stay in the homes and not end up back on the street.

Alcohol Drug Dependency

***"Eric":** Eric was homeless on and off in the Sacramento area for over a decade. He has a long time addiction to heroin which prevented him from maintaining employment and finding housing. When Eric first moved into the program, he had difficulty adapting and maintaining his housing due to his addiction. The case manager worked with Eric to find a program that would accept Eric to help him fight his addiction.*

Eric was referred to a residential alcohol and drug recovery program, and has been successful in his treatment which has helped him build a foundation in recovery. Prior to, finding a treatment program, the case manager had worked to educate Eric on harm reduction strategies and the disease of addiction while living in the program which helped motivate him to seek treatment.

Twelve of the 40 clients in the program have identified alcohol/drug dependency as a barrier contributing to their chronic homelessness. The case manager has made successful progress with 9 of the 12 clients. Ultimately, the goal for overcoming this barrier ends with sobriety and recovery. As each case is different, the services provided for the clients pertaining to this barrier vary on a wide spectrum, depending on where the

client is in their addiction. The case manager educates clients who continue to abuse substances on skills designed to help reduce the harm that can be done to themselves or others while using. These harm reduction strategies include ensuring that the clients remain in their rooms, alone when intoxicated, and stay out of public view. The case manager also educates the clients on the benefits of sobriety and consequences of continued abuse. Additionally, the case manager assesses a client who appears to be ready to accept treatment and recovery and makes the appropriate referrals for community support and programs.

Acquiring documentation and receiving assistance and education on applying for mainstream benefits

“Ken”: Prior to being referred to the Keys to Hope Program, Ken was homeless for about 3 to 4 years in the Sacramento area. Ken is a veteran of the Army Airborne Division, and has several physical injuries. After his enlistment, Ken was employed as a construction worker where he was injured in a serious accident, preventing him from remaining employed. This resulted in his homelessness.

After being referred to the program and moving into a home, his goals were to re-connect with Veterans Administration health care, obtain treatment for his physical health issues, apply for Veteran’s Disability and SSI benefits, and apply for General Assistance and food stamps. With the assistance, transportation, education, and advocacy of his case manager, Ken has obtained his DD-214, resulting in his receiving services at the Mather VA Hospital. He has been diagnosed with emphysema and has impaired mobility due to the residual effects of a major knee injury and surgery as well as over 30 jumps as a paratrooper with the Army Airborne. He qualified for General Assistance and food stamps and has applied for Veteran’s Disability Benefits (an 18-24 month process). He is working with the benefits specialist at Sacramento Self Help Housing on his application for SSI benefits. The VA has fitted him for a knee brace and given him a good cane which has improved his mobility slightly and his overall health has improved from being in stable housing.

A majority of the SSHH Keys for Hope clients qualify for one or more government entitlement programs and services which could provide financial support, food or opportunities, but they either have no knowledge of the programs, do not have the documentation to apply, are unable to navigate the complicated bureaucratic application process, or simply don’t apply because they have no mailing address for correspondence. All 12 of the clients that identified this as a barrier to obtaining and maintaining permanent housing have made significant progress with the assistance of the case manager. With respect to this barrier, the case manager provides transportation to and from the agencies providing services, assists with completing the numerous forms and applications, provides advocacy in the event of denial to services and assists clients with obtaining documentation and identification required to apply for services. Many of the clients were eligible for disability through SSI, filed for the program with SSHH assistance, and now are receiving regular fixed incomes that will allow them to maintain their housing.

Inability to Find Employment

“Nick”: *Nick was homeless in the Sacramento area on and off for about 10 years. Due to nothing more than a set of unfortunate circumstances, he became homeless, resulting in difficulty finding employment in order to find housing. He was referred to the program and moved into a home in July of 2009.*

Nick’s goals when he moved in were to become employed full time, renew his Class A Drivers License, and maintain stable housing. The case manager referred Nick for mental health services, and assisted him with finding temporary, part-time employment. Since this time, Nick has passed his DOT drug screening and renewed his Class A Drivers License. He additionally began a home/based side business repairing and refurbishing computers, and is applying for jobs driving trucks.

Out of the 11 clients who identified that they were unable to find work, resulting in homelessness, 10 have made significant progress. The case manager regularly takes clients to and from employers to apply and/or interview for jobs. In some instances, the case manager has intervened with the employer when the client was in danger of losing a job in order to advocate and make a plan to help the client maintain employment. Additionally, the case manager assesses and makes appropriate referrals to agencies that can provide temporary work or resume and interview skill building services.

Inability to Receive Education

Dolores: *Dolores grew up homeless in the Sacramento Area and maintained housing throughout her life only on a periodic basis. She had numerous barriers preventing her from maintaining housing, which included mental health issues, drug/alcohol addiction and a learning disability. Dolores was convinced that she would never go to school and never had the opportunity or support to try.*

After moving into a home through the SSHH Keys to Hope Program, Dolores received help from her case manager to address her mental health and substance abuse issues through direct practice and referrals to community programs. As she learned to control these issues, she has been able to focus on attending school. The case manager has taken Dolores to a local community college to meet with a counselor, take assessment tests, and receive support for her learning disability and also helped her to enroll in classes. Additionally, the case manager has helped her with school supplies and books. Dolores has completed several classes and continues to attend school while successfully maintaining her residence.

While lack of education itself may not impose a barrier to getting immediate housing, obtaining a good education is a goal that many clients have and a reason motivating them to stay in a home. Education also fosters confidence and creates opportunities for individuals to find work and become productive members of the community. Nine of the 40 clients in the program have identified inability to obtain good academic or vocational education as a major barrier contributing to chronic homelessness. The case manager

regularly educates clients on the education process which includes providing information about junior college, GED programs and trade schools. The case manager has directly assisted 9 clients with applying for or researching classes or programs to help them obtain their goal and provide an opportunity for education.

Finding Treatment for Medical Conditions

“Jason”: *Jason was homeless in the Sacramento area for over a decade. He was in the US Army prior to being homeless and was unable to maintain housing after his discharge due to medical conditions that did not allow him to maintain employment. Specifically, he has a degenerative, arthritic condition which resulted in nerve damage. He recently was diagnosed with lung cancer as well.*

Jason was referred to the SSHH Keys for Hope program and moved into a home in October of 2009. His goal was to re-connect with the Veterans Administration health services and to apply for SSI benefits. With the assistance of the case manager, Jason has been able to establish eligibility for medical services and has been receiving treatment for damage to his neck vertebrae and pain management for permanent nerve damage at the Mather VA Hospital. The case manager has been providing transportation to and from appointments and assistance communicating with health care providers. Jason will be undergoing a procedure to inject gel between his vertebrae.

Nine out of 10 clients in the Keys to Hope Program have received effective assistance from the case manager in obtaining treatment for their medical needs. The case manager provides transportation to and from medical appointments, and also attends appointments with the clients to ensure the doctor and client are communicating well, provides advocacy for medical billing issues, and assists clients with obtaining VA and Medi-Cal benefits as needed. Additionally, the case manager assists the client to apply for Paratransit or other forms of consistent and reliable transportation to and from doctor appointments.

Other Barriers and Services

The six barriers listed above represent the most prevalent and difficult challenges faced by the forty SSHH Keys to Hope clients who entered the program to obtain housing. There are other common barriers and some that are unique to individual clients. The case manager assesses the barriers identified by the clients and assists them in establishing personal goals. After that, the case manager has two primary on-going efforts:

- to regularly provide assistance for clients such as to help them find adequate transportation, to locate and use food and clothing closets, to attend and take care of criminal/traffic/civil court matters and to reconnect with family members.
- To regularly review progress towards goals with the clients and make modifications in behavior or activities to better achieve those goals.

The services provided by the case manager help clients stay in their homes as well as achieve personal goals to become better members of society. Providing a home is only

the first step in addressing the chronic homelessness barrier that must be overcome in order to keep clients off the street. Homelessness for the clients can quickly reoccur without the support needed to identify, address and overcome the challenges that greatly attributed to their homelessness in the first place. The SSHH Keys for Hope Program has demonstrated that access to decent and affordable housing, coupled with intensive and personal assistance with specific barriers and goals, is a critical path towards independence and productivity.