

MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF ORANGE COUNTY (mha)

2018 Agency Overview

Founded in 1958, the Mental Health Association of Orange County (MHA) is a private, non-profit community-based mental health and social services agency dedicated to improving the quality of life of Orange County residents impacted by mental illness through specialized direct services, advocacy, education, and information dissemination. MHA provides services for extremely low-income individuals from the ages of 8 years old to 75 years old and all of its services are provided within the context of the psychosocial rehabilitation philosophy. Our programs are limited to individuals on Medi-Cal or who are uninsured/underinsured.

The primary goal of our programs is to eliminate functional deficits and interpersonal and environmental barriers created by mental illness in an effort to renew hope and dignity to the homeless mentally-ill individuals in our community, to reduce their suffering, to stabilize their symptoms of mental illness and to restore their ability to live independently. By addressing the practical and realistic elements of the individual's needs, our programs create a supportive environment which encourages the individual to make positive choices and experience growth.

The Mental Health Association believes that the diagnosed mental illness is but one element of the entire person. Though the illness may permeate most, if not all, aspects of the individual, strengths are retained and/or may have developed in response to the illness. We recognize that choice, both in terms of the types of services available, as well as whether one wishes to involve him/herself with a particular service, is an important part of the recovery process. Our strength-based, client-centered approach views the participation of the individual in his or her rehabilitation as an essential element in the process. We believe the individual should be responsible for the planning and implementation of services, and therefore encourage the individual to make decisions about their own lives and participation in our programs.

MHA makes every attempt to offer a full continuum of care for individuals with a mental illness. From its humble beginnings in 1958 as a small, volunteer advocacy and referral agency, MHA has grown into one of the largest Orange County-based non-profit mental health and social services providers, with 11 locations throughout Orange County and providing a safety-net for the poor and indigent individuals in Orange County struggling with severe and persistent mental illness, stigma and discrimination. We believe the road to recovery begins on the streets, and progresses slowly towards stability, stopping many times along with way. If an individual is to experience positive growth, we must meet them at the intersection of their needs and abilities, which requires our services to be accessible, culturally competent, and sensitive to special needs.

Current Agency Programs

- **Three Mental Health Outpatient Recovery Centers**

Mental health professionals provide primary mental health assessment, diagnosis and treatment, medication services, individual and group therapy, crisis intervention and case management, support and encouragement to individuals struggling with chronic and persistent mental illness. All clients are referred by the County of Orange Health Care Agency. Services are provided at three program locations including: Costa Mesa, Garden Grove and Lake Forest.

- **Three Psychosocial Consumer Clubhouses**

Clubhouses compliment the Outpatient Recovery Centers and are located in Costa Mesa, Garden Grove and Lake Forest and open to anyone receiving services from the County of Orange or its contracting partners. The Clubhouse is member driven, designed and operated solely by mental health clients. The Clubhouse provides a supportive environment and a self-help and empowering setting, which focuses on the strength of individuals through social, recreational activities, education and programs which help to realize each member's potential.

- **Two Wellness and Peer Support Centers**

The Wellness Centers provide a safe and nurturing environment for each individual to achieve his/her vision of recovery from mental illness while promoting acceptance, dignity, and social inclusion. The programs provide peer-to-peer support and community integration, offering an array of groups and resources to increase the wellness of the community of Orange County. These programs are open six days a week and anyone with a mental health diagnosis may join.

- **Homeless Mentally-Ill Outreach Team**

The Homeless Outreach Team locates, engages and provides linkage to the MHA Homeless Multi-Service Center as well as outside providers, shelter and income resources for homeless persons with a mental illness. Bi-lingual (Spanish/English) team builds rapport with the most treatment resistant of the homeless. They distribute hygiene items, non-perishable food, water, socks, blankets and limited clothing along with other resources and meet individuals in parks, feeding sites and other homeless enclaves. A strengths-based psychosocial wellness philosophy is utilized by staff with the goal of instilling hope and motivation in the individuals they encounter and then actively linking them to the services that will end their homelessness and stabilize their symptoms. Outreach teams are housed at both the Multi-Service Center and at the Courthouse Emergency Shelter in Santa Ana.

- **Homeless Veterans Outreach Team**

Case workers link qualifying veterans with services through the Veterans Administration (VA) and provide general compassion and support to those they serve. Clients are transported to the VA whenever needed, and are assisted every step of the process as they seek assistance. At least 33% of the homeless population in the US are male veterans and many do not know if they qualify for VA benefits. Case workers help clients apply for healthcare benefits, retirement, and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers (similar to Section 8 housing vouchers) to move homeless veterans into permanent housing.

- **Homeless Mentally-Ill Multi-Service Center (Options)**

The Homeless Multi-Service Center is open 365 days a year, 6am – 4pm serving meals, providing showers, laundry, access to county mental health clinics as well as telephone and address contact to persons who are homeless and have a severe and persistent mental illness. Student nurses from 5 nursing colleges, rotate through the multi-service center providing health education, hypertension and blood sugar testing and first aid, to fulfill community nursing curriculum requirements. Supportive services; back to work, housing assistance, substance abuse counseling and SSI benefits assistance are provided. Anyone with a mental health diagnosis who is experiencing homelessness may receive services through this program.

- **Housing Services for Homeless Mentally-Ill**

Housing program is unique in Orange County in its ability to assist homeless individuals suffering from a mental illness transition out of homelessness and emergency shelters into permanent, independent housing. Staff assists clients with housing options, provides transportation for housing search, negotiates with landlords, prepares clients for independent living, assists in Section 8 housing application, collects donated furniture and household items and provides case management for successful long-term placement.

- Homeless Independent Housing Program**
 Housing first/rapid-rehousing program that assists homeless individuals and families *who do not have a mental illness diagnosis* secure permanent housing and provides case management and life-skills coaching to prevent recidivism back into homelessness.
- Back to Work Program for Homeless Mentally-Ill**
 MHA's Back to Work program maximizes job placement and retention through various supportive services, pre and post placement activities and job coaching. Referrals are made through MHA Homeless Multi-Service Center, County of Orange Clinics and County Contract agencies. Program's "open door" policy welcomes clients who return for new employment needs
- Resource and Referral Services**
 This community service links callers to MHA programs and services, county mental health clinics, local agencies and organizations, psychiatric facilities, support groups and other requested information.
- Hospital/Client Advocacy Services**
 This program provides trained volunteer hearing advocates for all Orange County's probable cause hearings regarding involuntary hospital stays. Advocates fulfill a state-mandated role in explaining the hearing and supporting patients through the process. Advocates enable clients to have fair and impartial hearings based on criteria for the holds.
- SSI Benefits Outreach Team**
 Staff assists mental health clients unable to work, due to mental illness, through the application process for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and any/all subsequent follow-up needed for approval. All referrals are made through Orange County Health Care Agency and contracting partners.
- Representative Payee Services**
 This program is approved by the Social Security Administration and provides financial case management services to disabled individuals to assure appropriate use of income to address needs and strengthen basic skills and money management.
- Project Together Mentor/Life Coaching Program for Children and Transitional Aged Youth**
 Provides mentoring services for children, youth and families that are receiving mental health treatment through the County of Orange Health Care Agency, Children & Youth Services (CYS) and CYS contracted programs. Mentors are matched with children and youth receiving mental health treatment from the County of Orange Health Care Agency, Children and Youth Services and its contract agencies. Project Together provides a safe, ethical and professional mentor program for the minor client, and their parents/care givers.
- Consumer Operated Thrift Store/Job Training Center**
 Located in Santa Ana, the Keep It Simple Thrift Store provides training and support to clients in preparation for community employment: including workplace culture, merchandising skills, time management, and customer service. The store is also a revenue source for the agency.
- Orange County Task Force on Hoarding**
 The Orange County Task Force on Hoarding is a volunteer, advisory group that meets monthly to review existing residential hoarding situations that affect the health and safety of individuals in Orange County. As such, the Task Force itself does not provide direct services but is comprised of representatives of agencies and programs that often are able to help. Organizations that encounter hoarding situations are encouraged to bring challenging cases to the monthly task force meeting for review (confidentiality rules apply) with the goal of identifying strategies, developing plans and locating resources that may help bring about a positive outcome for all involved.