Sunair Children's Foundation
Supports Transitional Age Clients

Since 2010, Hillview Mental Health Center has benefited from the generosity of the Sunair Children’s Foundation, which has annually awarded a $15,000 grant to enhance our Transitional Age Youth Services Program. This program assists young adults between the ages of 18 and 21 who have mental illness or co-occurring disorders as they transition out of foster care or the juvenile justice system. Living semi-independently in housing provided by Hillview, participants receive psychiatric care, basic life skills training, employment counseling, educational assistance and linkage to appropriate county social services.

"These funds help us provide our transitional age clients with necessities that are not covered by the county," says Peggy Wilson-Jordan, Ph.D., LMF, program director for Hillview's Transitional Age Youth programs. "We are able to purchase clothing for school or job interviews, school books, computers and other essential items. Sometimes the funds pay for medical care if insurance benefits haven't kicked in."

"These items can provide a real boost to our clients," adds Dr. Wil...
ally, we hope to make this information available via an electronic portal.

These efforts align with the health neighborhood concept articulated in the Affordable Care Act, which calls for collaboration between health and substance use providers to achieve long-term, sustainable solutions to health problems which have been exacerbated by lack of collaboration between providers. The Coalition will also address the need for collaboration between health providers and all social services, employment, housing and other organizations utilized by our clients and patients to meet basic necessities of living.

Needs are especially keen in the East San Fernando Valley, where a disproportionately high percentage of the population lives at or below the poverty level. Here in Pacoima, about 17 percent of families live at or below the poverty level. Also, households headed by single mothers--a factor strongly correlating with poverty--have increased by 53 percent between 2000 and 2009.

Collaboration between mental health, medical care and support services is crucial because mental illness has a dramatic impact on health and lifespan. Serious mental illness is associated with a staggering 25-year decrease in life expectancy. Not only do individuals with mental illness have higher tendencies for suicide and high-risk behaviors such as substance abuse, they are also more likely to experience such physical health problems as metabolic disorders, respiratory diseases, sexual disorders, cardiovascular diseases and pregnancy complications.

We believe that the Northeast Valley Health Neighborhood Coalition will be a catalyst for bringing about better integration of care for our clients here in the East San Fernando Valley. Our hope is to spur improved access to quality care, enhance care coordination, decrease unnecessary costs, and increase the quality of life of our clients.

**Sunair Children’s Foundation**

Supports Transitional Age Clients

Sunair Children’s Foundation, under the direction of Executive Director, Melissa Schwartz, Ph.D., was founded in 1937 to provide long-term care and support services to children with serious mental illnesses including bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and major depressive disorder. Ms. Schwartz supervises a staff of five who provide case management to clients wherever they are in the community.

"Most of our clients have an extensive history in the mental health system and are at risk of returning to the hospital or jail without our support," she says.

Ms. Schwartz has been working with the FSP program since she came to Hillview in 2008. She has held positions including case manager, therapist and program coordinator, some while earning her degree at Pepperdine University.

"It’s very gratifying when a client comes in who’s barely functioning, and after a year of support, starts to get his or her life back," she says. "It’s amazing to see that process."

Born in Colorado, Ms. Lawson seeks out a variety of experiences for growth including spending two years in Africa with the Peace Corps, learning flying trapeze and climbing Mount Whitney.

Megan Lawson, LMFT

Program Director,
Full Service Partnership Program for Adults and Older Adults (FSP)

FSP provides intensive mental health services and support to adults with serious mental illnesses including bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and major depressive disorder. Ms. Lawson supervises a staff of five who provide case management to clients wherever they are in the community.

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