

Services Provided by Clubhouse Programs

Clubhouse programs are communities or an opportunity system that provide a wide range of services and supports that are designed to help people living with severe psychiatric disorders to “recover” and achieve and maintain community integration. Using the word “community” is a better descriptive term than “program” when describing a Clubhouse because Clubhouses are not hierarchical medical model programs. Instead, Clubhouses are warm supported environments that are organized around what is known as the Work-ordered Day and the participants of the program, called members, work with a small number of professional staff to operate the program. The Work-ordered Day makes it possible for people who are unemployed due to their mental illness to go to “work” each day and work side-by-side supportive peers and helpful professionals. In the Clubhouse there are no traditional mental health services that tend to focus on treating the illness. This makes it possible for clubhouse programs to focus almost entirely on the strengths of its membership rather than the problems caused by mental illness.

Services Provided

- An organization (a place) to which a person can belong and contribute and experience feelings of ownership. In this work-like setting, people acquire real coping and life skills that make successful community integration possible.
- Peer Support Services. The clubhouse community becomes a highly effective support group for persons who have struggled with mental illness in isolation. Members help other members resolve crisis, obtain resources and pursue rehabilitation goals.
- Crisis Intervention. Clubhouse programs have been shown to reduce the use of more expensive mental health crisis services, such as crisis clinics, emergency rooms and hospital beds.* Clubhouse members turn to “their community” for help in times of crisis.
- Prevocational Services. Research has demonstrated that clubhouse programs, through the structure and activity provided in the clubhouse “work units,” help those people living with severe psychiatric disorders who are **not** interested in employment when they join the clubhouse, become interested and obtain employment;
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services designed specially for the unique needs of persons who live with mental illnesses. “Transitional Employment” was created in the early 1960’s at Fountain House in New York City to specifically address the needs of persons living with severe mental illnesses.
- Supported Education Services. Clubhouses assist members to further their vocational and educational goals by helping them take advantage of adult education opportunities in the community. In addition, clubhouses provide in-house educational programs that significantly utilize the teaching and tutoring skills of members.
- Case Management Services. Other members and clubhouse staff provide a full range of community support services and assist members with resource acquisition.

The services identified above are provided by all clubhouse programs that are certified by the International Center for Clubhouse Development (ICCD). The term “clubhouse” is used by other types of programs, but programs that are not certified by the ICCD very often do not provide the full range of services identified above.

*Research on the effectiveness of clubhouse programs at preventing or shortening the length of stay of hospitalization and/or helping members to return to competitive employment is available through the Program for Clubhouse Research, which is affiliated with the ICCD and the University of Massachusetts Medical School (508 856-8471 or <http://www.iccd.org>).