

PRESENTATION FOR A HIGH-FUNCTIONING ADULT DROP-IN CENTER IN NORTH PORT, FL

By

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I'm here to make the case that a *high-functioning* adult drop-in center will prove a wise investment that will improve the quality of life for *high-functioning*, impaired adults, resulting in *saving tax payer money for police and expensive hospital services*

CURRENT DROP-IN CENTER

Current drop-in centers in our area are not meeting the needs for the high-functioning consumer for the following reasons

- Education is dumbed down to tutoring consumers to brush teeth, maintain hygiene, and take meds
- Consumer ideas are not acknowledged. Ideas are often stifled at Mental Health Community Centers, at times because of necessity, because of the low-functioning demographic.
- Consumers must attend group meetings in order to have access to the facilities
- No creative input is accepted from consumers for the specific creation of a new group within facilities
- In the past, restrictive rules were enforced that forbid the consumer from leaving the premises until the end of the day

ADVANTAGES OF A HIGH-FUNCTIONING DROP-IN CENTER

Conversely, a high-functioning adult drop in center is designed to inspire self-worth and self-reliance, because the consumer, under minimal oversight, will take part in ensuring that the facility functions smoothly.

(Only those who desire *freedom* AND *responsibility* for that freedom will seek out and thrive in a high-functioning drop-in center.)

DESCRIPTION OF A HIGH-FUNCTIONING DROP-IN CENTER

A high-functioning center is a warm, nurturing environment, resembling a recovery club house, but with added depth. In other parts of the USA, centers such as the one I propose offer showers, hot meals, invite speakers for mental health, housing issues, and available programs suitable for the consumer.

A high-functioning center will have the capacity to address chemical dependency, which is experienced by a large percentage of consumers in order to "feel stable." A program like this is needed, because Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous, and other twelve-step programs do not address the complications that mental illness piles on to addictions. Members of AA and NA would be welcome at our center to discuss recovery.

A high-functioning center might offer fun, games and programs similar to those offered at public libraries and community organizations such as the American Legion, the VFW, the Elks, and the Moose with the benefit of not having access and temptation to alcohol, and would be made possible by reaching out to the community.

I envision a center that would offer a television room where consumers bond in games and movies, a meeting room for dual recovery (ie) both drug and alcohol dependency, and meeting rooms for guest speakers, psychologists, and police.

I visualize consumers adopting projects such as a "clean-up" for a North Port City Street. Although the consumers hold the privilege to suggest creative ideas for the facility, they will be under the guidance and jurisdiction of a government appointed official. One of the most coveted desires of the high-functioning consumer is the ability to offer input into the betterment of the facility. Consumers see the exchange of ideas as valuable as the exchange of money.

Consumers are responsible for keeping the facility clean. When consumers have something meaningful to do, their mental outlook is enhanced, and gives consumers a sense of community so they will come to feel that a person's dignity is not predicated on their current income. Eighty percent are unable to hold down a job

HOW IS COST A FACTOR?

A 2,000 square foot house, costing less than \$200,000 is suggested. When one considers the estimated cost of hospitalizing a consumer at \$1,878 per day on average through the USA, or \$2,086 per day here in Florida, one can argue that a facility that helps keep consumers out of hospitals is cost effective. For example, if three citizens spent three days in a Florida hospital, the cost would constitute approximately \$18,000 or roughly 20% of a down payment on a facility.

HOW IS THE CURRENT SITUATION AFFECTING CURRENT COSTS?

State and local governments are reluctant to allocate money for the mentally ill. This is understandable because some of the policies currently in force manage to increase the size and strength of bureaucracy.

For example: Paid positions are now in place at drop-in centers for Vocational Specialists whose job is to teach vocational training that amounts to nothing more than encourage consumers to arrive at their own answers by asking basic questions like: "What do you think is appropriate clothing for a job interview?" The consumer is not directed by the Vocational Specialist as to what the consumer should wear.

HOW IS THE CURRENT SITUATION AFFECTING COSTS TO SOCIETY?

Basic economic formula: Supply and demand dictate price

Because 3% of the population is bi-polar and one in five citizens are in need of mental health counselling, the number of consumers for mental health services is glaring. The increasing cost to society yields a staggering price to society as is evidenced when the mentally ill butt heads with the police because they are not using mental health facilities. That's why it is vitally important that the mental health facilities **meet the needs of the consumer** and why there is a **need** for a facility for the higher functioning consumer. Not only does the community suffer, the stigma against the mentally ill increases.

Thank you for giving me the privilege of your time

VINCENT HOUSE

PINELLAS PARK, FL

LIGHT HOUSE

INVERNESS, FL

MILWAUKEE GRAND AVENUE CLUB

MILWAUKEE, WI

SR. FRIENDSHIP CENTER,

VENICE, SARASOTA, FL

Thank you for asking me to highlight successful adult mental health drop-in centers in Sarasota County

Adult mental health drop-in centers available in Sarasota County

1. Prospect House (941-953-3477) 290 S. Tuttle, Sarasota
2. Beacon House (941-496-4934) 1580 Tamiami Tr., Unit C, Venice
3. Anchor House (941-423-9898) 3555 Bobcat Village Rd., North Port

FIRST I will address what constitutes a need for services for the mentally ill; SECOND, centers in Sarasota and THREE, what constitutes a successful drop-in center

FIRST Need

Some of the main issues that cause the mentally ill to run adrift are:

- Nothing to do
- Need for respect and being heard
- Obtaining correct diagnosis
- Finding physicians who prescribe the correct mixture of meds
- Access to health care

Without adequate services, the mentally ill face social isolation, unemployment, boredom, depression and run-ins with the law.

Drop-in centers hope to address many of the needs of the mentally ill with the goal of providing a win/win situation for the community and the mentally ill by: **Reducing the need for hospitalizations**

SECOND In order to point out successful mental health drop-off centers in Sarasota County, I can only respond to the question based on my personal experience and/or what I found helpful:

The facilities supplied a meal a day, which was very helpful

I experienced sessions referred to as Situation Solution Discussions, which were discussions on hygiene, exercise, the importance of meds, and finding a hobby

At one time DRA (Dual Recovery Anonymous) at the Beacon House was very helpful, but I understand is no longer offered. DRA addressed the needs of the mentally ill who struggle with the complicated diagnosis of dual dependency on drugs and alcohol

Music appreciation (One of the consumers, now deceased, played an instrument, and we looked up information on the Internet about the songs he played, and various information on the instrument he was using

Received tutoring on cooking and eating health foods. At one time at the Prospect House a consumer and former teacher taught arts and crafts.

Play games such as Yahtzee, Uno, Poker

Outings to the beach, cook outs at the jetty, Christmas Party at the Prospect House, Halloween Party at the Beacon House

At one time on Mondays, consumers took walks to the Senior Friendship Center, which was a 3/4 mile walk

We went to the Stonecrabs game in Pt. Charlotte through Beacon House, putt, putt through the Prospect House, and movies through the Beacon House

MHCC has sponsored symposiums for the Van Wezel and Sarasota Memorial Hospital that cast a spot light on mental health issues.

For more complete **advertised** information on what the three Sarasota adult drop-in centers offer, go to: <https://mhcci.com/our-services/drop-incenters>.

Not all the services outlined on the site were available when I attended, or are offered at this time

THIRD What constitutes a successful drop in center?

There is a need for the youth of America and the mentally ill to have a safe, successful place where they can **gather** and be **themselves**. I researched the specifics it takes for a *successful youth center*. The basics for a successful youth drop-in **center easily applies** to adult drop-in centers for the mentally ill

There are **drop in centers that frequently lack funds and resources, but they manage to overcome obstacles** because they utilize the following five ingredients:

FIVE INGREDIENTS that yield success

Consumer Ownership, Mentorship, Community Connectedness, Effective Coordination, Sustainable Energy Source

When the **five issues** are addressed, focus is directed to *Community support*, *People resources*, and *Consumers*—rather than focusing on the stresses of money and facilities, because focusing on the five key ingredients build upon one and the other

THE FIVE KEY INGREDIENTS encourage consumers to have a **sense of responsibility for the center and a sense that they have input into what happens**.

CONSUMER OWNERSHIP

An example of how one center promoted consumer ownership is the center permitted its consumers to express themselves by allowing a brightly colored, hand-painted sign in one club that said: RESPECT. This action encouraged the consumers' belief that they governed their space.

Another example that promotes consumer ownership is self-policing among the users. Although the overseers establish rules and regulations, the consumers take part in working with the overseers and giving input. Consumer ownership requires power and control in decision-making so consumers have a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Examples:

Consumers paint and decorate the walls.

A center might decide to sell a space on the wall for consumers to decorate as they see fit.

A portion of wall space is offered specifically for handprints and names of the consumers

Consumers as board members

Make or influence decisions through an informal meeting process with coordinators or community representatives. Once decisions are made, it is important to have a formal or informal process through which consumers are responsible for implementing and acting on the decisions.

Creating a sense of ownership among consumers is an **ongoing process** that strengthens the center.

Key questions to ask consumers to ensure a sense of consumer ownership:

Who is responsible for this place?

Who decides what things happen here?

What kinds of decisions can you make?

How much input do you have to what happens around here?

What are the implications of these decisions?

How important is this place to you? Why?

Can you be yourself in this space? (Give the consumers feedback to their questions)

MENTORSHIP MENTORS

Mentorship Mentors are overseer/coordinators at the facility and/or consumers who provide inspiration and support to others. Someone who helps others smile when they're down, but also 'hangs out' with everyone. Successful center staff is 'approachable and easy to talk to.'

Mentorship can offer support, inspiration, or encouragement to define and seek life goals. Effective mentor overseers know that consumers are valuable teachers. Consumers can mentor consumers which allows consumers the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others.

Key Questions for Mentorship

Do you have a special relationships with a mentor who gives you support, inspiration or guidance?

What makes it special?

What are you giving and what are you receiving in this relationship?

What qualities enable this relationship to grow?

How frequently do these relationships occur at the center? For you? For others?

COMMUNITY CONNECTIVENESS

Successful centers depend on support from the community to operate, in terms of resources and volunteers. In turn, consumers give back to the community to create a two-way connectedness.

For example, in one town a dedicated consumer group shoveled the steps of the local war memorial after snowstorms. Involving consumers in direct service to the community has proven a highly effective means of empowerment, and a trigger to spark citizen involvement

Open, respectful communication channels must be established. Consumer Centers have succeeded at this through:

- Holding meetings

- Developing consumer-overseer partnerships on their governing boards

- Allowing members of the public to view the center in operation

- Renting centers for day care, community meetings, special events, etc.

- Consumers providing community service

- Using networks of community coordinators or volunteers

At the root of community connectedness is the idea that individuals, businesses and organizations must care and take ownership for consumers and their concerns.

Key Questions for Community Connectedness

Do consumers and the center feel a part of the broader community?

How?

What steps has the community taken to become involved with the center?

Are there means to ensure communication and conflict resolution between the community and the center?

How has the center and its users made an effort to provide services and resources to the community?

EFFECTIVE COORDINATION

Effective coordination and the ability to mobilize resources is key to success rather than the level of resources.

An example of effective coordination is that in one county, four centers pooled their resources to attract funding and sponsors, allowing them a dedicated staff member for marketing, proposal writing and administrative support functions. This action allowed the individual coordinators/overseers to focus on activities and the well-being of the consumer.

Another successful example is a center that had free access to a space in a church hall and dedicated volunteers, but no paid staff or significant funding.

The coordination of a consumer center may fall to the Board of Directors, a youth advisory committee, several interconnected committees or an individual coordinator. In successful centers, the coordinator does not make all of the decisions or rules. Effective coordinator(s) recognize and utilize the strengths and talents of those around them, particularly the consumers.

Successful coordinator(s) identify a pool of interpersonal and technical skills in those connected to the center, ensuring that the appropriate people are involved on appropriate issues. They provide opportunities for individuals to become involved.

Involvement creates a sense of connectedness and ownership. Although some centers site a stable and ample level of funding as the key to their success, research indicates that centers were successful when they had the five key ingredients in place because the five ingredients **enable a center to find the resources**. Stable, secure funding does not ensure that consumers will use or feel connected to the center.

Key Questions for Effective Coordination

- Has there been an allocation of tasks based on individual strengths and interests?
- How has the issue of consumer involvement been addressed?
- Who sets the agenda for getting tasks done and getting the resources to operate?
- Who does the practical work to make the center operate?

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SOURCE

The sustainable energy source is most often a person driving the project, motivating and drawing in others to help. Learning to build off of this energy without draining it, is a key to successful centers that maintain themselves over years.

The energy source (individual) must be constantly monitored to ensure that the source does not burn out prematurely. Each person has ways of coping with stress and workloads, which those around the source must recognize and support. It is important to avoid depending on one individual to prevent burnout, and to provide opportunities for others to grow and learn as they take on responsibilities.

What happens if the person providing the core energy departs? Successful centers have gone through transitions. The key is having the other key ingredients in place, including a governing committee or Board of Directors, consumer ownership and community connectedness.

Energy sources that are alluring but not sustainable are often grant money or the offer of a facility. **Building a center on grant money or the promise of a facility alone**, without sufficient attention to the other four factors **is a weak foundation from which to build**. Networking for money and resources is helpful. Even if a formal network doesn't exist for centers, a research team can find information from other participating centers throughout the country.

Questions for Sustainable Energy Source

Who (individual or group of people) or what is the energy source here?
When push comes to shove, who or what makes this place tick?
Is there a person behind the center who you find motivating or inspirational?
How has the energy source changed?
As an energy source, how do you ensure that you do not burn out?
As an organization, how do you ensure this?
If the source of energy (a person or other) were to leave or cease to exist, what would be the result?

In conclusion, although each of the five ingredients is described sequentially, success comes in the interconnections between them. If funding is cut, it is consumer ownership, community connectedness and effective coordination that are the keys to survival. For specific information see:

<http://heartwood.ns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/YGP.pdf>

"What Makes For A Successful Youth Centre?" By Sandra Luken and Alan Warner, and was based on interview research conducted by the HeartWood Institute with twenty youth centres across Nova Scotia

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