

Village Welcoming Team

(2009)

Welcome to the Village! The Village is a special program where we hope you can recover and rebuild your life. We have a welcoming team to help you get started.

Not everyone we welcome ends up staying at the Village. Some people chose not to work with us after they get to know us. Some people chose not to live in Long Beach. Some people choose to live without help from the mental health system altogether. On the other side, sometimes we think that you should work with other services outside of mental health, for example employment, substance abuse, or other social services. Sometimes we think that mental health services would be a good idea, but not the Village itself. There are other programs and other levels of service. Sometimes we think that LA county DMH shouldn't be the ones paying for your services. For example, maybe you have insurance or are a Veteran or are on parole. One of the purposes of having a welcoming team is so we can both take a little time to make the best decision.

Probably the most important part of welcoming is getting to know each other. We believe that to help someone we have to have a relationship and be able to trust each other. We don't like treating strangers. We want you to feel part of the Village, like you belong with us. We want you to feel like you can be yourself here and feel safe here.

We are a "consumer driven" program. That means that we try to build services based on what your goals are to improve your life, rather than making treatment plans for you. Part of welcoming is getting to know your goals. Most of the time, if people could achieve their goals without services and support, they would have done so already. There must be some barriers and difficulties getting in the way. By getting to know your story, what you've tried before, what has worked and what has not worked, and what your strengths are to build on, together we can figure out ways you can succeed with our support. From the very beginning, we're also thinking about how you're going to move on from our support, and what changes you'll be making so you don't need us any more to do well. We don't expect anyone to need to stay at the Village forever. There are always more new people like you coming in.

We are a community based program. We want to support people to live as part of our community. Often when we first meet people, they have had serious problems staying connected to the community. Sometimes people don't have documentation to identify themselves. Sometimes people don't have any money to get by with. We can probably help you get some benefits, but the current level of benefits is so low, you'll always be on the edge. Paid work is really the best way to have enough money. Sometimes people don't have a secure place to live. We can focus on helping you get housing and what you'll have to do to keep housing. Sometimes people have serious legal problems. We can help with meeting your legal responsibilities for past problems and focus on what you'll have to do to avoid further problems. Sometimes people are so overwhelmed they feel like they can't cope in the community (for example because of mental illnesses, disturbing emotions, substance abuse, physical

illnesses, or even life's problems). We can focus on what skills and supports you need to build so you can cope. Overall, we don't think part of normal community life should be homelessness, jailing, medical or psychiatric hospitalizations.