Request for Funding

July - 2022

To whom it May Concern:

My name is Elijah Levy, Ph.D. and I am the Director of Trucare Foundation for mental Health Recovery, a 501 (c) (3) nonpofit agency providing psychiatric/psychosocial rehabilitation services to 90 persistent, mentally ill residents in a residential care center in Artesia called Founders House of Hope. The majority of the residents are diagnosed with Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders and the balance with Mood Disorders and Co-Occurring Disorders. This summary is intended to describe how illness management, symptom reduction, recovery and increasing functional skills and capacity building can be achieved through implementation of an evidence, skills based psychiatric/psychosocial rehabilitation program. The rehabilitation goals include developing the personal, vocational/occupational and social functioning of our residents. Psychosocial rehabilitation refers to a range of social, occupational, educational, behavioral and cognitive interventions for increasing the role performance of individuals with serious and persistent mental illness. Our program aims at long term recovery, symptom stabilization and maximization of self-sufficiency.

Historically, the mentally ill have been marginalized, stigmatized and devalued in their community and their lives lack meaning. Further, residents at Founders House of Hope are vulnerable to losing their meaningful connections in life; work, family, friends and they experience despair and depression. Thus, the challenges include restoring dignity and empowering the mentally ill so they can develop functional skills. We operate a program of systematic skill building with psychoeducational and cognitive behavioral interventions to prevent relapse. Our residents can improve their level of functioning despite suffering from mental illness and it represents an opportunity to be empowered. The relationship we establish with our residents is very significant for them because it makes them feel they matter to us.

The program goals at Founders House of Hope include improving the quality of life of our residents, building self-empowerment, self-determination and self-sustenance. We partner with residents to identify their capabilities, interests and rehabilitation goals. We build resident strength and instill optimism that residents can succeed in multiple life domains such as school and occupational endeavors. The program philosophy and principles includes maximizing choice, increasing competency, focusing on each resident’s goals and aspirations and instilling hope and optimism that residents can experience meaning and purpose in life.

The element of hope is also essential to our resident’s recovery program. Our residents have experienced countless devaluing experiences in their life. Devaluation and stigmatization wear you down and cause hopelessness and apathy. We need our residents to capture more meaning in their life because without hope one cannot envision a positive future. Our residents have been devastated and possess little hope they can improve the quality of their life. At Founders, we provide an evidence based, psychiatric rehabilitation program. Psychiatric rehabilitation incorporates illness management, skill development and proper medications. The guiding principles of psychiatric rehabilitation include identifying the resident’s strengths/assets, adaptive functioning and reducing the impact of symptoms and restoring capacity. Identifying functional limitations and restoring skills to improve function is the goal of psychiatric rehabilitation.

I work at moving our residents from what is to what can be through providing empathy and ongoing support. In short—the mental illness has taken some life away from our residents and we are restoring meaningful life with limiters. We move our residents from the real self to the ideal self in an environment of social caring and support. The component of empowerment is also important to build in our residents. Empowerment includes having our residents affirm that they can achieve higher levels of functioning. We need to create an environment for them to succeed in many life domains such as in their role as worker, student and responsible citizen honoring their public commitments. I try to create programs so they can experience success in these life spheres. As their successes accumulate, empowerment increases. Our residents have historically lost power, and losing power of choice means not having the ability to act in your own interest. It also conveys to the resident that they lack the belief in self and their ability to choose.

The most effective rehabilitative services we offer our mentally ill are our skills based, recovery groups. The recovery program at Founders is used to describe recovery from the debilitating effects of severe, persistent mental illness. Schizophrenia is a cruel, debilitating illness and is considered the severest of the psychopathologies. We implement a restorative and recovery program to offer our residents hope, empowerment, self-determination (choice) and we integrate a community reintegration component into the program. At Founders, the supported employment program achieves these objectives and provides residents with self-esteem maintenance and an enhanced self-concept. All of the services are group based with a healing, restorative element. The recovery oriented program/groups I conduct provides skill acquisition, knowledge, support and as many resources to facilitate the achievement of each resident’s recovery. In short, recovery means connecting residents to their community in meaningful ways, despite having a diagnosis of mental illness. I attempt to have our residents create and operate from an identity separate from their condition (mental illness). Our residents occupy multiple identities besides Schizophrenia, and we attempt to have them operate in roles as students, sons/daughters, parents, worker and friend so they can enjoy self-esteem.

Founders Outreach operates a supported employment program employing residents in our on-site convenience store called Founders Hut. The supported employment program has a positive impact on our residents, enabling them to generate self-esteem maintenance and self-confidence while assuming responsibility for the overall success of Founders Hut. The program provides residents with opportunities to make worthwhile contributions, and earn a stipend for hours worked. Many of our residents have the capacity to work, and work engages the self in a meaningful way. The supported employment program has made a remarkable difference in the lives of our residents, restoring needed meaning and purpose in their lives. Although I would like to enlage the supported employment program, lack of funds prevents me from doing so. There are additional work opportunities I could create and train residents for employment. The on-site work opportunities we could create are a beautification and gardening program, workers in the kitchen, activity assistants, etc. We have a full time Activity Coordinator responsible for conducting recreational, leisure and arts/crafts groups for residents. The activity program could be enriched with additional funds. The community reintegration program I conduct has insufficient funds to expose residents to cultural centers, museums, the beach and picnics.

The mentally ill can experience hope, self-determination, empowerment, increased adaptive functioning, restoration of vocational/occupational, personal, and social adjustment to the extent that a comprehensive, recovery oriented psychiatric/psychosocial rehabilitation program is available. Recovery ultimately means residents connect to their community in meaningful ways, despite having a diagnosis of mental illness. Attempts are made to support the resident’s creation of an identity separate from his/her mental illness and to have them occupy multiple identities so they can generate self-esteem from successfully functioning in their roles leading to recovery. Our residents have been traumatized and experienced countless devaluing experiences in their life. Devaluation and stigmatization have cumulative, debilitating effects on one’s consciousness and wears one down; causing one to feel helpless.

I appreciate being invited to submit this proposal for funds to enrich our psychiatric rehabilitation program. I believe we are grant worthy and greatly appreciate being considered for funding.

Elijah Levy, Ph.D.

Director, Trucare Foundation for Mental Health Recovery