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██████████ Annual Plan on Accessibility
Created 6.28.2019
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Confidential and Proprietary

██████████ has operated a rescue mission providing shelter and comprehensive support services for high special needs women, youth and children experiencing homelessness ██████████ with the aim of increasing accessibility to meet the unmet need for greater shelter capacity county-wide, its aging facilities were redeveloped into ██████████ state of the art, comprehensive homeless services facility, ██████████ is sited in the heart ██████████ itself one of the poorest large cities in the United States. ██████████ has the capacity to shelter over 500 women, youth and children nightly, with expanded supportive services and programming, including child and family therapies, individual and group counseling, access to medical and mental health care, resource coordination, education and job readiness training, a working classroom kitchen, in-take sanctuary, yoga center, salon, art and activities lab and soothing gardens. Working in concert with community service providers, ██████████ also includes a model therapeutic children’s wellness center, with early child care and education for infants and toddlers ██████████ and a neighborhood health clinic ██████████

This multi-faceted plan describes accessibility issues and the Foundation’s response and aims for continuous improvement.

Architecture

██████████ was designed and outfitted to provide a trauma-informed, welcoming, universally accessible, environmentally sensitive, comprehensive homeless services facility that puts children first. ██████████ as the 2018 *Project of the Year* for its innovative design and function. ██████████ was awarded *Gold Status* by the ██████████ Green Building Council.

The facilities were designed with a residential (rather than institutional) exterior façade, in keeping with the neighborhood and to create a more welcoming presence, to encourage women and children to access services and minimize possible stigma associated with living in a shelter, particularly for children transported to and from school. Natural wood furnishings, soft and soothing colors, crystal chandeliers, residential lighting, contemporary art, and LGBTQ inclusive signage welcome guests¹ with dignity, privacy and respect.

¹ The term “guest” is used interchangeably with “program participant” throughout this Plan and the Foundation’s documents and agreements with program participants to help promote a more welcoming, respectful, voluntary, empowering, trauma informed and non-institutional environment and approach to the service of sheltered women, youth and children.

Careful attention was paid to creating child and family friendly spaces throughout the facilities, from custom designed nesting toddler beds (that tuck under adult beds when not needed), baby changing stations in every room, and wall mounted baby sleeping and bathing supplies and instructions to pint sized furnishings and play areas throughout, a special mommy and me children's play room, art and activities lab, and yoga and exercise room that complement child and family centered programming.

With the assistance of experts and consumers, [REDACTED] was designed for universal accessibility, going above and beyond ADA compliance, to include custom furnishings in every residential room and common area, mobility aids (e.g., hooyer lifts and slide bars, as needed), expanded shower seats, hydraulically powered medical exam beds and dental chairs, wheelchair weighing machine, ORcam (glasses with a camera that reads and speaks to assist those with vision impairment), vision impaired software and building standard braille signage.

[REDACTED] was built to the latest standards for hurricane preparedness and is a "shelter in" facility during times of natural weather disasters, with a concrete structure, high impact glass, 5000 gallon diesel fuel generator to provide power and temperature control in power outages, a large capacity freezer, and under-ground gas lines to minimize loss of cooking fuel. Disaster and emergency preparedness and continuity of operations supplement these features, including emergency fuel supplies on a priority basis and extensive advance coordination with local governmental officials responsible for handling emergencies.

Environment

[REDACTED] was constructed and designed to operate in an environmentally sensitive manner, meeting the standards for Gold certification by the [REDACTED] Green Building Council and included numerous energy efficient features like water conserving fixtures, low energy usage hand dryers and washers, building standard LED lighting, landscaping canopy, and energy efficient windows. Reference is made to those extensive certification requirements.

Among the innovative features included a "green room" for heat treating incoming program participant belongings to minimize the need for pesticides to address the usual pests associated with living on the streets and other shelters. Utilization of the green room is now standard protocol for heat treating the personal possessions of all incoming program participants.

In July 2019, the Foundation installed a climate controlled, hydroponic science lab and urban garden (the "Farm"), offering an innovative unique seed to harvest and farm to table educational program for children and families as well as enriching the nutritional food service of the shelter with fresh vegetables grown on site. The programming in the Farm was expanded to include an outdoor urban container garden on the rooftop deck [REDACTED] to compare and contrast hydroponic and soil gardening in urban environments. This innovative program has yielded over 45,000 heads of leafy greens to enrich the plant-based food service at [REDACTED] since 2020, transforming the food culture [REDACTED] with more nutritious, eco-conscious and vegetable rich offerings and education, in addition to raising a growing crop of urban farmers.

[REDACTED] meal service is 90% plant-based, emphasizing local food sources and minimizing its environmental footprint. It is continually developing new pathways to harvesting food that would otherwise be wasted in the community with community partners [REDACTED]

Areas of continuous improvement include greater and optimal efficiency in the operation of the HVAC system for the facility, in particular. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The HVAC system installed in this facility provides for a high level of fresh air intake. 100% fresh air is fed by the system into the lobbies and corridors of the residential floors, making its way into residential rooms via the doors to each unit and air pressure differences that result in an overall estimated fresh air intake of 55-60% on residential floors. Ground floor fresh air intake is estimated at 20-25%, but supplemented by numerous entrances and exits. All air handlers in the facility were retrofitted with Sanuvox UV light adaptors to sanitize and disinfect circulated air. In addition, in response to the coronavirus pandemic, the facilities are now equipped with four Sanuvox UV light sanitizers that are rotated on a regular schedule through the common areas and upon turnover, residential units, to sanitize and disinfect both air and surfaces.

As of May 2020, the main entrance to the facility was equipped with a medical grade, thermal digital camera and alarm system registering the skin temperatures of hundreds of guests entering the facilities and audibly as well as visually alerting the front desk to elevated temperatures.

Attitudes

Our mission is to improve the lives of impoverished and homeless women, youth and children by providing sanctuary, support, education, tools and resources that empower them to improve the quality of their lives on every level, achieve greater self sufficiency, and build safe, secure lives. In their dreams come true, we enrich our community with the fruit of their potential.

To support our mission, we also advocate on behalf of women, youth and children experiencing homelessness to raise awareness of their special needs; inspire innovative, holistic solutions that truly break the cycle of childhood abuse, domestic violence and homelessness; and advance research and enlightened social policies for greater understanding, social inclusion and resources for homeless women, youth and children. In short, we want to engage the hearts and minds of our community through public awareness, information sharing, dialogue, and shared experiences, replacing judgments, blame and stereotypes with deeper understanding, compassion, and love, advancing innovative, scalable solutions to end and prevent homelessness.

To do so, we continue to find ways to inform and expand the public dialogue on homelessness, bringing special attention to the needs of women, youth and children, both locally and nationally, with a special emphasis on the importance of placing children first. Our [REDACTED] executive team and community outreach team implement a broad ranging public awareness and community outreach plan, including service on community boards [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] regular speaking engagements across all sectors of the community; ongoing communications with government officials about the special needs of women, youth and children experiencing homelessness and effective solutions (Federal, State and local levels); regular corporate engagement via sponsorships and volunteer participation; deep volunteer engagement of schools, faith-based organizations, and community organizations; regular media outreach (including radio interviews, tv coverage, social media engagement, and printed news); and numerous opportunities for [REDACTED] alumni to inform and participate in community outreach. [REDACTED]

██████ have enjoyed unprecedented, ongoing media outreach for many years as a model for ending homelessness, its culinary program, and its child and family centered approach. Over the past several years, ████████████████████ has been featured on TV numerous times, participated in radio interviews, hosted monthly tours and volunteer activities, hosted multiple events with government officials' participation, and included over 10,000 hours of volunteer participation in the set up and launch ██████████

In early 2021, ██████████ launched a new Research, Policy and Public Education department. A strategic plan for the work of the new department has been developed. We have revamped our website and social media presence and continue to broaden our reach and share critical information in regard to the special needs of women and children experiencing homelessness and solutions to its end.

████████ continues to collaborate with ████████████████████ in a Children First initiative to end childhood homelessness, advocating to establish housing and supportive shelter in times of transition for all children as a basic right as important to their wellbeing as education, food and health care. We continue to use every opportunity in public speaking engagements and meetings with private and public foundations, government officials and providers to advance awareness of the special needs of children experiencing homelessness and the importance of protective factors for children and families to assure their healing, strengthening and successful outcomes.

With the development of a new platform, with the help of ████████████████████ podcast ████████████████████ creates an outlet where guests can share their experience and the community can learn about the work we do.

████████ serves as a center for service-driven research, showcasing evidence-based best practices, innovation, deep collaboration with community providers, education and information sharing, and community engagement, furthering its advocacy mission to change attitudes toward and increase accessibility and resources for women, youth and children in need. Phase two of our service driven research project, "Children First" ████████████████████ is well underway ██████████ By utilizing our community-academic partnerships and a community-based participatory research framework, we have continued to implement and evaluate evidence-based practices that support early childhood development, well-being and school readiness with children and families disproportionately affected by racial, ethnic, gender and social inequities and further marginalized by homelessness. The Children First service driven research project aims to: increase our current understanding of the developmental, social and emotional wellbeing, and trauma of homeless children and their mothers, including expecting mothers; improve child developmental status and social and emotional wellbeing, reduce impacts of trauma, and improve mother-child relationships by providing services; evaluate the effectiveness of services provided to optimally support sheltered children and their mothers; and raise public awareness of the developmental, social/emotional and trauma needs of sheltered children and the mental health and parenting needs of mothers and expecting mothers, and the value of evidence based and promising practices to support early childhood development, wellbeing and school readiness and improve the lives of children and families experiencing homelessness.

Phase one of our first early childhood research project revealed externalizing behavior problems, trauma, and developmental delays in sheltered children significantly higher than the national population. The first paper ████████████████████

summarizing findings from the first early childhood research project is currently under peer review

Additionally, our latest paper

has also been submitted and is currently under peer review

This ongoing service driven research project, with community partners, is anticipated to lead to multiple papers offering a portrayal of the special needs of children experiencing homelessness and effective therapeutic models to heal and strengthen children and families.

We continue to advance the principle that shelters can be transformative, windows of opportunity to heal and strengthen children and families to break the cycle of violence and homelessness and build the foundation for a brighter future.

By expanding on our comprehensive service delivery and the provision of trauma-informed care, actively advocating for best practices, and advancing innovative solutions to preventing and ending homelessness, we aim to redefine the roles of shelters in society and inspire a national movement. As such, we continue to participate in collaborations, conferences and special initiatives to raise awareness, research and establish evidence informed best practices, identify additional resources, and support innovative solutions to preventing and ending homelessness. Positioning ourselves as a hub for resources, information sharing and advocacy, our 2023 focus continues to include the development of resources for dissemination of our research on ways to make America's homeless systems more child and family friendly, utilizing as a demonstration project and prototype for innovative, trauma-informed shelter.

In recognition of the needed access to additional child care and children's services in the community,

a neighborhood children's educational resource center. This new facility

is planned to open by the Fall 2024 school year. Embodying an innovative collective impact model, will establish a one of a kind community partnership by bringing together mission aligned nonprofits and organizations to reduce barriers of access to children and families experiencing homelessness, and within our community. The five-story, 75,000 square foot, state of the art facility will feature: an education center; a playground; therapeutic, educational, programming, and office spaces; legal services; a community health clinic; and a multipurpose center for community gatherings and events. will grant and collaborating agencies the capacity to expand the provision of their services to children and families within our community for generations to come.

Finances

Recognizing the need for additional financial resources to realize the full potential as a national model in advancing evidence-based best practices to end homelessness, program development and community engagement staff cast a wide net with grant applications and submissions at national, state and local levels.

We continue to strengthen and expand the Board, a focus the past two years as we develop a wider, more diverse network of good will ambassadors needed to support the expanding operations and activities. All Board members are encouraged to fulfill their minimum give/get \$10,000 annual commitment, though in some cases those commitments are made with invaluable in-kind services or some combination.

██████████ continues as well its advocacy to create and secure additional long term funding from increases in government and foundation funding and growth of the endowment fund, furthering financial stability resources to fund increased capacity, enriched support services and long term financial sustainability. ██████████ is engaged in a multi-faceted effort to encourage ██████████ and nearby communities to identify and establish new streams of government funding to end and prevent homelessness, particularly as relates to children and domestic violence victims.

Employment Diversity and Inclusion

The Foundation is an equal opportunity employer, provided however it reserves the right to establish special criteria for employment related to gender specific programs, services and facilities where such criteria are inimical to safe, effective service delivery for such clients and customers. Subject to the foregoing, it is the Foundation's policy to recruit, hire, train, and promote individuals, as well as to administer any and all personnel actions, compensation and benefits, without regard to race, color, religion/creed, age, sex, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status/alienage, military/veteran status, disability, pregnancy, marital/partnership status, arrest or conviction record, status as a victim of domestic violence/stalking/sex offenses, unemployment status, credit history, personal appearance, gender identity, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, source of income, place of business or resident, genetic information, or any other category covered by applicable federal, state or local law. This policy extends to all employees and to all aspects of the employment relationship.

Further, as a means of advancing the accessibility of services and programming ██████████ ██████████ the Foundation strives to identify and hire as many program participants and alumni as possible for any positions for which they qualify. The culinary center, thrift store, farm and operations internship programs provide working classroom environments to train and prepare program participants for the work world and in many cases, serve as feeders to employment with ██████████. Approximately one third of ██████████ staff are alumni or participants of the program.

Communication

Respectful, welcoming communication is fostered with trauma informed staff trainings to foster the cultural competency and sensitivity of staff, including the ██████████ Inclusivity Policy, LGBTQ and cultural competency, conflict resolution and de-escalation, restorative practices and ██████████ Consciousness Raising (Grievance) Policy and procedures.

To advance a more deeply trauma informed, compassionate and contemplative approach to ██████████ services and environment, ██████████ initiated a new core training in Compassionate Choice – Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction with ██████████ providing staff with additional tools and strategies for stress reduction and effective communication.

All program participants are advised of and committed at entry to the non-violence policies and procedures, including restorative justice practices, to assure communications which are respectful and promote a peaceful resolution of conflicts. To that end, the clinical team is the primary source for receiving, investigating and responding to complaints and grievances of program participants. Staff are trained in those procedures and encouraged to be proactive in

addressing and resolving grievances and complaints in accordance with the Foundation's Consciousness Raising Policy.

Technology

In 2018-19, the Foundation completed its transition to an electronic health records system (EHR System), all files of then current program participants were uploaded, and all files of former program participants were scanned and uploaded into the system for preservation. The [REDACTED] team continues to develop, refine and improve the functionality of the EHR System, as well as its tracking and reporting functions for quality assurance and grant reporting.

Technology continues to be an important tool for community outreach and engagement as well. A new website was built in 2022 and continues to be updated annually. Our social media campaign is ongoing and active and has increased our followers to over 14,000, serving as a critical platform for both increasing accessibility in the community and resource development.

Our continuous quality improvement goals include continuing to update and refine our EHR system and website and social media content.

Transportation

[REDACTED] is situated immediately adjacent to [REDACTED] public transit services, with a stop for both bus and localized free trolley services.

Transport of program participants is subject to the Resource Coordination Guidelines and Transportation Operating Procedures, reviewed and updated annually.

The Foundation received a grant for a new transport vehicle, which arrived in March 2021 and is equipped with a wheelchair lift. A designated Transportation Manager provides free transportation to guests full time, Monday through Friday, to appointments for medical, housing, benefit and employment needs. This program significantly enhanced our transport capabilities for individuals with mobility challenges.

Community Integration

Community engagement is a core principle of the Foundation, both to enrich the program services and resources of the shelter as well as to advance public awareness, attitudes and compassionate action in addressing the needs of women, youth and children experiencing homelessness.

[REDACTED] community outreach and programming teams work together closely to reach out to and involve businesses, community groups, faith-based organizations, schools and the general public in the activities of [REDACTED]. Whenever possible, activities may involve program participants, including for example field trips to LGBTQ events [REDACTED], venues like [REDACTED] Gardens, [REDACTED] Children's Museum, parks and beaches.

In 2020, as a result of the shutdown due to COVID-19, we began hosting a weekly food giveaway in response to increased hunger and food insecurity experienced by the [REDACTED] community. These efforts continue on a quarterly basis in collaboration with community

organizations [REDACTED] and have expanded to include health and wellness, educational materials, services, and linkages.

This August we hosted our Annual “It Takes A Village” Back to School Health and Wellness Fair. During this annual event, we are able to provide hundreds of book bags with school supplies, groceries, prepared meals, personal hygiene products, PPE, health screenings and immunizations all free of charge for the community. We are able to collaborate with other non-profit community providers [REDACTED] ensuring that our neighbors have access to these essential resources. As a result of the success of this annual event, we began a holiday distribution in 2019 and have continuously hosted it since. Our Holiday Distribution not only provides toys, holidays gifts, food and more but is an opportunity to spread cheer and joy during, what can be, a difficult time for so many facing financial hardships. These distributions and events have become an important way for [REDACTED] to support its impoverished neighborhood.

The Resource Coordination Guidelines detail our action steps to assist program participants achieve their goals for transitioning to homes of their own. To better assess our performance in assisting program participants in achieving their goals, we will implement additional program participant surveys and reviews to assure we are advancing the ways in which our services are delivered.

Other Barriers

[REDACTED] serves as a direct access point for victims of domestic violence and unaccompanied youth (18-24), and works closely with the [REDACTED] County Outreach teams to reach the most fragile and needy women, youth and children with high special needs in the community. Reference is made to the Counseling and Resource Coordination Guidelines.

We are and will continue to be engaged in outreach on every level and will continue to be active participants to improve and expand access for those in need. To that end, this Plan on Accessibility will be reviewed and updated annually as new opportunities in hopes of removing barriers and increasing accessibility [REDACTED].

Goals and Accomplishments

Goal: Have the ability to provide transportation to guests with physical disabilities, specifically guests that require a wheelchair or have mobility limitations.

Actions Taken: The Foundation applied for funding through the Department of Transportation for a van that is wheelchair accessible with a lift.

Timelines for Area of Improvement: The grant was awarded and the van was delivered to the Foundation in March of 2021. This has been a goal for the foundation since inception in 2006. We have a full time driver that transports guests to and from appointments. We are now able to provide transportation to all guests!

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Goal: Train all staff to better meet the needs of our guests and staff who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Actions Taken: Required staff to complete the training by the Department of Children and Families, teaches staff on how to best serve and communicate with guests who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Timelines for Area of Improvement: The first training requirement was completed for 2021. The second training requirement for 2022 was June 30, 2022 This training is now required annually for all employees ASL classes are now available for guests and staff weekly.

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Goal: Build, open and operate [REDACTED] a neighborhood educational resource center, in collaboration with [REDACTED] collaborating community nonprofits. The goal is to expand children's services offered to sheltered guests, as well as the surrounding community.

Actions Taken: Land for the project was purchased, floor plans are complete, and the project was submitted for permitting to the City and County. 10+ community nonprofits have been identified and license agreements have been completed between [REDACTED] the nonprofits and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] continues to finalize agreements and collaborating entities. [REDACTED] hosts regular meetings between all community nonprofits who will occupy the [REDACTED] to plan for the facility's opening and ensure successful operations.

Timelines for Area of Improvement: Begin construction in Summer 2023 and open the facility in the Fall of 2024. Continue to host regular meetings with collaborating nonprofits through the facility opening.

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