



Chase Brexton Health Care

Because everyone's health matters.

Response to Planning Council Questions

Frank Sullivan 3/23/2016

1. *What type of psycho-social groups are assisting older gay, bisexual, and same gender loving men as well as transgender individuals?*

Please take the time to visit our LGBTQ Resource Center and let the staff know what kind of groups will be useful or helpful for you. The LGBTQ Resource Center provides support groups within the context of the Center's mission. If a group is needed or helpful, the Center needs to know and will respond by setting up the group. At this same time Chase Brexton's Behavioral Health program is expanding and offering services in the Resource Center located on the 2nd floor in the Mt. Vernon Center. Within the Resource Center, Chase Brexton's Behavioral Health providers will offer individual and group counseling to adults and is planning to expand into pediatrics in the near future. Behavioral Health is integrated with primary health care to close the gap between Behavioral Health and Physical Health. Besides the availability of Behavioral Health Services, the LGBTQ Resource Center also provides referrals to outside groups, for examples:

- Senior Pride provides an unstructured social support and process group for older gay men to discuss topics of interest, such as issues pertaining to sexuality, relationships, community, stigma, health and aging, politics, hobbies, and other issues.
- Transcendence: Pathways to a Healthy Transition – “Rolling Group” with ongoing enrollment, always taking referrals and pre-screening required. Transcendence is a time limited cohort-based group therapy. This group provides a confidential and trans-affirmative forum for individuals to explore topics and access information and resources necessary for a healthy and successful gender transition. In 12 weekly sessions the topics include: Coming Out/Disclosure; Maintaining and Building a Support Network of Family and Friends; Relating, Dating, and Intimacy; Changing Name and Gender on Identity Documents related to Employment, Housing, Medical Care and Other Procedures; Spirituality, and Planning a Healthy Transition.
- T time is an ongoing unstructured group that provides a safe and affirming space for Trans* and gender non-conforming (TGNC) persons. Participants are



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provided the opportunity to be in community, to provide and receive feedback from peers and co-facilitators on topics such as interpersonal functioning, family dynamics, and developing a sense of self, and discuss lived experiences.

2. How is Chase Brexton promoting wellness than prescribing pills to minority populations?

Minority persons make up 70% of Chase Brexton's HIV patients. All patients are offered medical care and support services to help them achieve the maximum level of wellness possible. The HIV medical and support services are definitely focused on the HIV medications and their intended and possible outcome of viral load suppression which requires appropriate "pills" and the commitment of the patient to take them. At the same time HIV-positive patients need to stay otherwise healthy. The whole purpose of viral suppression is to make HIV-positive patients as well as possible until a cure is found. So for HIV-positive patients wellness includes adherence to medication along with "diet and exercise" and avoidance of unhealthy practices such as smoking, too much alcohol and illicit drug use that may interfere with the HIV medications and scheduled HIV medical appointments. Now, the medical staff is involved in addressing the problems of aging especially among the virally suppressed patients who now face the health problems of aging. A wellness medical visit of any aging patient includes reviews of blood pressure, sugar levels, aches and pains, potential for prostate cancer, dental problems, stroke warnings, heart problems, etc. Chase Brexton has an HIV Committee that in this past monthly meeting began serious discussions on making sure that aging wellness is addressed in HIV medical visits. We already schedule annual wellness visits for check-ups for healthy patients. Along with checking the viral load, the HIV visit includes a check of the patient's overall wellness level. The patient will be asked to follow the wellness recommendations.

3. What is being done to recruit Psychiatrists?

The Chase Brexton Human Resources Department routinely recruits for medical professional positions in professional journals, medical schools, professional mental health recruitment channels as well as national medical organizations, personal contacts, as well as immediately following up any lead. A large part of the problem is a national shortage. The national shortage



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in mental health underserved areas is up to about 2,600 psychiatrists. The issues causing this are as follows: Psychiatry is the third lowest paid medical specialty; psychiatry is one of the least respected medical specialties; a higher percentage of psychiatrists than doctors in other specialties are at or close to retirement age and not looking to change jobs; low job satisfaction and appeal to medical students are related to mental health conditions being intractable compared to physical illnesses. Chase Brexton has now hired a psychiatrist. An additional psychiatrist remains to be hired so that all sites can be covered.

4. How do patients receive their psychiatric medicines and how is adherence maintained?

A major responsibility for the in-house psychiatrist is to be in charge of medication treatment for mental health patients. The psychiatrist is responsible for mental health prescriptions and monitoring the medication treatment including adherence. The mental health therapists have regular appointments with the patients and also monitor the medication program for appointments adherence. The therapists provide individual and group counselling services. .