



Urban Services YMCA to Deliver Citywide Violence and Trauma Recovery Services

With Urban Services YMCA's long standing track record of providing relief to families living in violence-torn neighborhoods, our organization was recently selected to deliver Citywide Violence and Trauma Recovery Services. Through a grant from the San Francisco Department of Public Health, we will deliver comprehensive clinical case management services to youth and their families affected by violent events. These services will reduce levels of untreated post-traumatic stress disorder and offer traumatized youth with a safe environment in which to work through distressing memories that cause them to feel intense fear and helplessness.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was first brought to public's attention in relation to war veterans. During World War I, American soldiers were coming home with symptoms of "shell shock," and during World War II, these same symptoms were referred to as "combat fatigue." After the Vietnam War, returning soldiers were dealing with a condition called the "Post Vietnam Syndrome." It wasn't until recently that organized psychiatry coined the term PTSD to describe the trauma that occurs when a person has experienced, witnessed, or been confronted with a terrible event.

Unfortunately, traumatic experiences such as murders, physical abuse, and intimidation happen daily in San Francisco. For those youth living in San Francisco's very own "combat zones" (youth who witness firsthand their friends and family members being shot and/or beaten) there exists an entire generation of young people who are dealing with untreated PTSD. Recognizing this, the State of California and City of San Francisco targeted Proposition 63 funds to support new and innovative efforts that would help city residents overcome the trauma in their lives.

Imagine a young child who is dealing with PTSD because of witnessing a drive-by shooting while waiting for the bus. Without proper supports, this trauma experienced by the youth will lead to negative symptoms including sleepless nights, nightmares, and generalized anxiety. If left untreated, this trauma could intensify over time and cause extreme emotional reactions including low self-esteem, relationship problems, and depression.

To address the levels of untreated PTSD in San Francisco's younger generation, we have recently hired Clinical Case Managers to work in tandem with our existing network of mental health counselors, case managers, community organizers, and family advocates. Altogether, Urban Services YMCA staffs no less than 20 case managers/counselors who are spread throughout the city and tied to centralized community locations including our Family Resource Centers, Beacon Centers, Safe Havens, and various school sites.

Our new Clinical Case Managers will be tasked with locating appropriate crisis response services in the community and facilitating referrals into these services. Clinical Case Managers will also maintain dual roles of counselors and case managers to address any ongoing symptoms of PTSD through sympathetic group work. Treatment will also include



Clinical Case Managers helping traumatized youth re-experience the terrible event and working through the memory, all the while maintaining a healthy counselor role to facilitate healing.

With Urban Services YMCA's significant crisis and emergency infrastructure already in place, we expect to take full advantage of our existing programs to provide a seamless coordination of activities. Through our comprehensive Violence and Trauma Recovery Program, that will utilize our existing capacities and holistic continuum of care, we will serve 100 youth and their families annually.

For more information regarding our Violence and Trauma Recovery Services Program, please contact Alisa Title, EPSDT Program Director, at 415-292-3025 or atitle@ymcasf.org.