

Community Support Services (CSS)

The mission of Community Support Services (CSS) is to increase accessibility to quality affordable housing in Essex and Morris counties for adults (18 +) diagnosed with a serious and persistent mental illness and to provide comprehensive, high quality mental health services.

The goal of CSS is to assist individuals who are currently hospitalized, homeless, or living in sub-standard housing, gain access to adequate, affordable housing. Since its inception in 2006, CSS has been able to identify and develop housing opportunities (two residences in Bloomfield, one in Nutley, and one in Montclair) along with creating relationships with landlords in the community in order to secure “lease-based” housing for our consumers. CSS also offers flexible support services that are based on wellness and recovery principles. CSS works collaboratively to build on each individual’s capacities, resiliencies and talents in order to develop an individualized and strengths-based rehabilitation plan which promotes successful reintegration into the community while resuming or engaging in new life roles (e.g., tenant, partner, caregiver, friend, student, and employee). It is the belief of the program that with support and access to a safe, affordable living environment, an individual in recovery will be able to live in the community and achieve a higher quality of life.

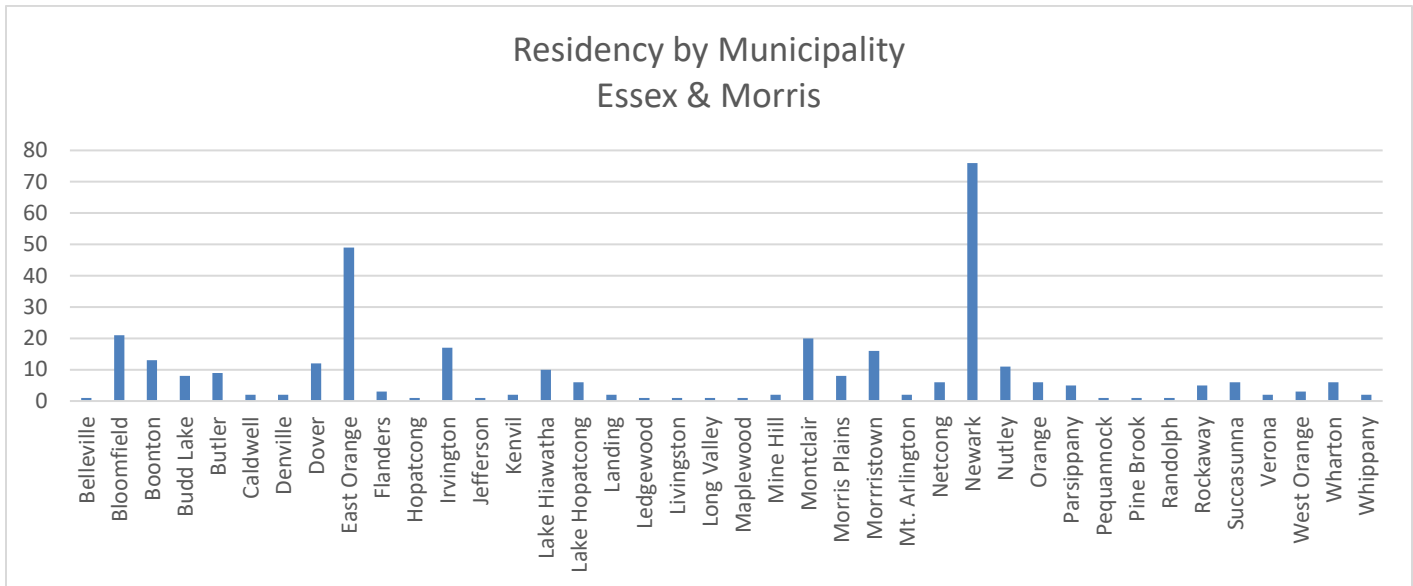
Caseload

Community Support Services has successfully placed over 347 individuals diagnosed with a serious and persistent mental illness from a wide variety of referral sources, such as Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital, Essex County Hospital Center, community-based providers, higher level of care/service organizations, self-referrals and shelters due to homelessness. Additionally, CSS provided supportive services to 110 individuals who have their own residence but needed additional care to ensure their stability in the community.

Demographics

As of June 30, 2023, the active caseload for Community Support Services was 344. On this date, there were 181 males (53%), 157 females (45%), 2 transgender male to female (0.5%), and 4 transgender female to male (1%). The self-reported ethnicities of the consumers enrolled with CSS are as follows: 22 Hispanic/Latino (6%); 323 non-Hispanic/Latino (93%), and 17 individuals who did not want to disclose (5%). The self-reported races of the consumers enrolled with CSS are as follows: 7 Asian (2%); 2 Black or African-American & White (0.5%); 163 Black or African-American (47%), 4 multi-racial (1%); 2 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (0.5%); 8 Other (2%); 165 White (47%); 13 who did not want to disclose (3%).

CSS works with consumers throughout Essex and Morris counties. Remaining cognizant of the importance of wellness and recovery, CSS consumers primarily live in residences that are convenient to mass transportation, employment opportunities, social service organizations and natural community supports.



Personnel

The CSS quality services are provided by 1 Director, 2 Recovery Coordinators, 5 Clinical Coordinators, 10 Senior Recovery Counselors, 13 Recovery Counselors, 2 Housing Specialists, 2 Full-Time Nurses, and 1 Administrative Assistant/Billing Clerk. Staff are culturally diverse and representative of the persons served. CSS has 4 staff fluent in Creole, 1 fluent in French, and 2 fluent in Spanish.

CSS provides flexible services to each individual according to their needs. Our program has proven to go above and beyond the typical supportive housing services and has been creative with our services and referrals. The CSS staff are available for support and crisis intervention 24 hours per day and 365 days a year. A system for promptly reaching the appropriate on-call personnel has been developed that identifies a responsible party for on-call coverage as the chief point of contact. Our ability to respond to individuals around the clock has averted numerous psychiatric hospitalizations and emergency room visits.

Performance Outcomes

CSS participates in the agency-wide Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) which conducts monthly meetings and collects data on utilization of services, quality assessment, quantitative monitoring, incident review and risk management, satisfaction surveys and measured outcomes of performance.

Community Support Services performance indicators measure the rate of recidivism to the county/state hospitals and recidivism rate to the Short Term Care Facilities on a monthly basis. During this fiscal year, the overall recidivism rate to the county/state hospitals was 2% and the recidivism rate for Short Term Care Facilities was 4%. Both of these rates of recidivism are below the threshold of 20% for a population who, traditionally, relies heavily on acute care services.

CSS performance indicators also measure the linkage to employment which includes full-time work, part-time work, volunteer work and educational programs. This performance indicator is monitored quarterly. During this past fiscal year, CSS was able to assist 11% of our consumers to secure and/or maintain involvement with employment, vocational programs or schools.

Health and Wellness continues to be one of the primary areas of focus within the CSS program. CSS offers each individual a nursing assessment. The nurse meets with the consumers in the community to ensure these assessments take place. The threshold is to have 90% of individuals receive a nursing assessment. During this fiscal year, 100% of CSS participants were offered initial nursing assessment and subsequent follow up assessments with either the CSS nurse or with Prospect House Primary Healthcare.

In addition to the nursing assessments offered, the CSS full-time nurses provide health education groups that are offered on a monthly basis to all consumers served within the agency. This helps promote the agency’s mission of integrating physical healthcare as well as our accreditation as a behavioral health home. Groups vary month-to-month as the nurses provide education on different topics, i.e., nutrition.

Furthermore, 100% of individuals participating in CSS were educated on “Summer Heat and Sun Risks for Antipsychotic Medication Users.” The CSS staff provide ongoing medication education and support. This includes identification and management of side-effects.

Consumer Satisfaction Surveys

MHA is continuously refining services based on consumer input. This is received through various methods, including the annual Consumer Satisfaction Survey. One hundred and ten individuals served completed consumer surveys this year. The overall satisfaction rate was 97%. Below are the findings from the Community Support Services Consumer Satisfaction Survey:

Question #	Question	Percentage
1	I am treated with dignity and respect.	97%
2	I make informed decisions.	90%
3	CSS staff are available when needed.	92%
4	CSS staff follow up on my requests.	95%
5	CSS staff encourages me to make my own decisions.	88%
6	I actively participate in my treatment plan (goals).	97%
7	CSS assists me with achieving my goals.	93%
8	CSS is respectful of my cultural background.	92%
9	I can freely voice my issues or concerns with CSS staff.	95%
10	Overall, I am satisfied with CSS services.	97%

CSS Highlights

CSS Morris officially became a Housing Authority and was awarded funds through the Morris County Continuum of Care Committee to provide rental assistance to five chronically homeless individuals and provide supportive services.

CSS was able to advocate for 30 Rapid Rehousing vouchers after funding was cut for a county-sponsored program that would have otherwise left 30 individuals street homeless.

CSS provided air conditioning units to all consumers in need during the summer months to ensure their health and safety in the home while educating the importance of Summer Sun and Heat Risk.

During the winter months, CSS provided winter coats, hats, socks, and gloves to all consumers in need.

CSS participated in the annual Consumer Picnic where consumers were transported to a park for a fun filled day of socialization, activities and food.

CSS participated in a Morris and Essex Desk Audit by the county's Continuum of Care Committee. This was to ensure that HMIS reporting was up to date and accurate. CSS was commended for its superior quality of data reporting.

CSS continues to work with the Community Assessment Team in Morris County, "Neighbors in Need," in their on-going leadership in the Landlord Support Program that launched on July 1, 2022. This program, led by Monarch Housing Associates with services being provided by MHA and Family Promise of Morris County, has successfully housed 12 individuals in the past year.

Community Support Services continues to utilize the Bed Enrollment Data System (BEDS). This database allows other social service agencies access to availabilities at Community Support Services.

Community Support Services continues to be an active participant in the Continuum of Care/Comprehensive Emergency Assistance System (CoC/CEAS) and the Community Assistance Services (CAS) committees.

CSS is a member of the Supportive Housing Association (SHA) and attends quarterly meetings in Trenton, NJ to collaborate and advocate with other housing entities on the state and local level.

MHA continues to own and operate two single-family homes in Bloomfield, a 6-unit apartment building in Nutley, and two 6-unit buildings in Montclair. Each one is currently at full capacity housing a total of 25 individuals diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness.

MHA ensures that the buildings' exterior and interior meets or exceeds the quality of the housing in the neighborhood. MHA retains professional landscaping services and contractors who specialize in construction, heating, air conditioning, electric, plumbing and snow plowing. Tenants are encouraged to fully participate in decision making in terms of physical plan and environment of care. All tenants are given the rights and responsibilities afforded as a tenant in a tenant/landlord relationship.

CSS continues to develop strong relationships with landlords and other service providers throughout Essex and Morris counties in order to better meet the needs of the individuals served.

Through Foothold Technology's AWARDS system, CSS continues to maintain all clinical files electronically. The electronic files were enhanced since the entire agency started using the system. This system continues to assist staff with maintaining record keeping in an organized fashion as well as assisting with generating professional reports and monitoring outcomes.

All CSS staff, through Relias Learning, were trained on various topics which included but were not limited to HIPPA for Healthcare Professionals, Corporate Compliance and Ethics, Cultural Diversity, Co-Occurring Disorders, Coordinating Primary Care Needs of People with Serious and Persistent Mental Illness, Illness Management and Recovery, Nutrition and Exercise for Clients with Mental Illness, Incorporating Recovery Principles and Practices into Mental Health Treatment, Case Management, Crisis Management, Overview of Suicide Prevention and Psychiatric Rehabilitation. In addition, CSS staff are trained in WRAP (Wellness and Recovery Action Plan), Motivational Interviewing, Safety in the Community and CPR.

The CSS staff continue to provide information and education to each individual on Psychiatric Advance Directives. CSS offers assistance in the development, modification, execution and registration of a Psychiatric Advance Directive. CSS Recovery Coordinators attended a Psychiatric Advance Directive training held by the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services. This training was held to discuss the new system that is being implemented to assist individuals with registering a Psychiatric Advance Directive.

Advocacy Activities

CSS staff work closely with each individual to develop self-advocacy skills and help them become involved in program level advocacy and systems level advocacy. These skills are used to procure continued and needed services and supports. Staff provide education on direct skills and link individuals to trainings and activities on the consumer movement (i.e., Self-Help Centers, Consumer Advocacy Partnership). Individuals are encouraged to become involved in self-help groups, such as NAMI-NJ, and other MHANJ advocacy initiatives.

In addition, CSS staff continue to participate in the following committees and meetings:

- Comprehensive Emergency Assistance System (CEAS)
- Community Assistance Services (CAS)
- Essex and Morris County Residential Meeting (which is a sub-committee to the System Review Committee (SRC))
- Community Assessment Team (CAT)
- Landlord Support Program (LSP)
- Morris County Data Quality Committee
- Supportive Housing Association (SHA)