

Grant Allows for Expansion of Supportive Housing for Young Women in Essex County

Written by Australian Business

PARAMUS, NJ, October 12, 2013 **/24-7PressRelease/** -- The Strive for Independence program at Care Plus NJ, Inc. (CarePlus) has received a grant from the State of New Jersey to expand transitional supportive housing options and services in Essex County for female adolescents age 18 to 21.

The CarePlus Strive for Independence program is geared toward "aging out youth", specifically 18 to 21 year olds who are at a vulnerable point in their lives where they begin to cross over into adulthood and assume the responsibilities of finding a job, paying bills, and supporting themselves. Unfortunately, they are not always as well prepared for self-sufficiency as they had hoped for. Compounding this is the realization of the financial costs that they will assume, especially living in a state where housing costs are amongst the highest in the nation. Continued transitional supportive services at this point in their lives will help to ensure this transition is successful, and they will have the opportunity to further develop the independent living skills they need to succeed.

The objective of the expansion of the transitional supportive housing program is to give young women - who are homeless or do not have a stable living environment - a place to stay while working to improve their lives under the guidance of CarePlus. During their stay, participants work toward goals such as obtaining gainful employment, pursuing higher education degrees, and permanent housing.

The length of time the young women spend with Strive is largely determined by her progress. CarePlus makes evaluations based on aspects of her life such as the stability of a career and the ability to support herself with that career.

The grant also specified a focus on the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI) population. According to studies, these individuals are at an increased risk when emotionally and/or physically removed from their own families, eight times more likely to attempt suicide, and six times more likely to report high levels of depression.

The program is keenly aware of the challenges among these youth, specifically normative adolescent development, the impact of chronic homelessness, trauma, involvement with the juvenile and/or criminal justice systems, risk of exploitation, pregnancy through parenthood, and sexual identity issues such as may be the case with the LGBTQI population.

Essex County was identified as having the highest number of adolescents in out-of-home

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placements (1,211 adolescents), and clearly demonstrated the highest level of need for homelessness prevention.

"The CarePlus Strive program has been operating for the past eight years in Essex County with great success," stated Kristine Bersch, Program Manager of Crisis Services for CarePlus. "We look forward to the additional funding to allow us to expand the program and help other young women transitioning on to adulthood, and living a life that they can be proud of."

Currently, Strive provides housing and services to six individuals - both young men and women - at any given time; the expansion will allow an additional five females to be placed into supportive housing. The individuals will be placed in one or two-bedroom apartments dispersed through Montclair which will provide them with convenient and diverse housing in a suburban community.

Care Plus NJ, Inc. (www.CarePlusNJ.org) is a northern New Jersey provider of recovery-focused mental health, substance abuse and family services that addresses the unique needs of individuals with a holistic approach to recovery and overall wellness. Operating out of 23 sites - including three outpatient centers located in Paramus, Fair Lawn, and Montclair, ten residential facilities, offices at three local hospitals, and seven community offices - their services are convenient to clients located throughout Northern New Jersey. They also provide educational programs on mental health-related topics to schools, organizations, and community groups; topics including certified Mental Health First Aid, suicide awareness, bullying prevention, and crisis intervention.