

The Village Integrated Services Agency

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MHA: The Village Integrated Services Agency is an internationally known, award winning recovery-oriented program of Mental Health America, Los Angeles located in Long Beach, California. The Village is a non-profit organization that considered a leader in the field of recovery-based mental health care. It provides recovery-based mental health care to people with a variety of mental illnesses including schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, bipolar disorder and major depressive disorder. The idea behind the Village is that its members are provided with whatever services they need to recover from their mental illness. Member are assigned to a team of professionals who collaborate with the member and help manage their case, find them housing, help them get a job, deal with financial planning, and even help them make friends and develop hobbies through community integration. Medical director, Mark Ragins MD, helped found The Village and has won many awards. Ragins is also a Distinguished Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association.

The Village's successful and innovative approach is the inspiration behind the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) of California. The MHSA provides funds to transition all mental health care in California toward recovery-based models like the Village.

MHA Village was recognized by two previous US presidential administrations. In 2002, President Bush's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health selected the program as a model to study as it researched and recommended "programs that work." In 2000, President Clinton's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities called their work training and job placement program a best practice.

Among other national awards, the American Psychiatric Association honored the Village in 2000 with the Gold Achievement Award, its highest distinction for community-based services. The same year, MHA Village director received a lifetime achievement award from the United States Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association. In 1998, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration designated the program as an exemplary practice, which has paved the way for organizations to receive federal funds to learn how to replicate the Village's model.

The MHA Village - working with the outreach provided by their Homeless Assistance Program and options of their Housing Department - earned recognition as a best practice in the 2002 California's Programs to Address Homelessness" prepared by the California Department of Mental Health and the governor of California.

A Los Angeles Times editorial series on homelessness and mental illness, which won a 2002 Pulitzer Prize, commended the Village's success in helping individuals "get the support and strive for independence." The Long Beach Press-Telegram credits them with "helping several hundred mentally ill homeless... become self-supporting members of the community."