

Conard House Expands Psychology Training to Benefit Mentally Ill Adults Living in Supportive Housing

Innovative Solution Helps Assure Access to Counseling as City Proposes Cuts at Clinics

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — March 11, 2009 — Conard House (www.conard.org), a pioneering nonprofit organization helping people self-manage mental illness since 1960, announced today that it will expand its Practicum Program to give master's and doctoral level students hands-on experience in counseling residents of its Supportive Housing Program. Students will have a unique opportunity to learn the concept and application of Community-Supported Self-Management (CSSM), a breakthrough approach envisioned as an evidence-based replacement for the medical model traditionally taught and practiced.

Since the mid-1990s, Conard House has partnered with local universities to provide practical training opportunities for graduate students in psychology as well as marriage and family therapy. Unlike practicum programs organized around a clinic setting, the current Conard House Practicum Program takes place in its Residential Treatment setting. The Program provides graduate students with real-world experience around the "other 23 hours" of life for people taking an important first step in learning to manage mental illness. With the proposed expansion of this program into the Conard House Supportive Housing communities throughout San Francisco, graduate students, under supervision of licensed psychologists, will gain hands-on experience in a critical next phase of CSSM.

"This practicum program leads the way in innovation by giving aspiring mental health professionals invaluable one-on-one experience with the concepts of Community-Supported Self-Management, a transformative approach which enables people living with mental illness to better manage their return to a healthier, more independent life in the community," said Louise Foo, Ph.D., Director of Clinical Services at Conard House. Preparations are currently being made for the program expansion to launch at the beginning of the 2009/2010 school year.

CSSM, a groundbreaking approach for the self-management of serious, chronic mental illness, integrates the founding principles of psychosocial rehabilitation with recent research and proven outcomes in the self-management of chronic medical conditions. What distinguishes CSSM from the traditional medical/acute care model is the assumption that people with chronic mental illness have an inherent capacity to learn and change. Seen through the CSSM lens:

- Treatment incorporates an individual's abilities and strengths, and is not determined solely by an understanding of disease and pathology.
- Medications are prescribed for symptomatic relief and enhanced functionality, not merely to reduce symptoms.
- Hope of recovery and healthy living -- rather than "cure" or simply containing the level of illness -- are the primary expectations.

"Conard House has a long and strong track record of providing counseling and support services to people living with chronic mental illness," said Richard Heasley, Executive Director of Conard House. "With the proposed healthcare budget cuts in San Francisco looming, we are concerned about continuing support that fosters recovery and hope, while averting the warehousing of vulnerable people. With the new program, we will be able to bring in supervised master's and doctoral students to offer valuable counseling services to our supportive housing clients, an essential step in our self-management program."

The expanded professional training program is made possible by a grant from the Michelson Foundation, which supports residential mental health services that help adult clients regain independent living.

About Conard House

Conard House, Inc. is a private, nonprofit organization providing mental health services to residents of San Francisco. Founded upon core principles of self-empowerment, self-determination and the least restrictive, community-based living, Conard House opened its doors in 1960 as the City's first "halfway house" for adults following hospitalization. Today it serves more than 2,100 people in a dozen locations. Support for its programs and services come from various city agencies, service fees from organizations, rents from residents, foundation grants and donor gifts. For more information about Conard House and its programs, please visit www.conard.org.

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