

City Solutions - Harvey West Community Safety

Document Description: This is the HWCS's Team Final letter sent to the Santa Cruz City Council describing the team's response to the DESC policies that were recorded at the 2013-11-07 meeting

Subject Line - City Solutions - Harvey West Community Safety Team Meeting with the SC Day Resource Center Representatives

Date sent: January 1, 2014
To: The Santa Cruz City Council

Attached please find the report of the November meeting between the Harvey West Community Safety (HWCS) Team with Claudia Brown and Monica Martinez of the Homeless Services Center. At the meeting, we reviewed 11 safety changes that the team had asked the HSC to consider implementing at their Daytime Essential Services Center (DESC). The team's recommendations were based on best practices found at other day resource centers.

Though the focus of the meeting was to discuss the team's 11 safety requests, the biggest insight was to learn that our DESC has a very different model than other day service programs. Our DESC's low threshold policy means that there is no requirement for our DESC client to take transitional steps out of homelessness. The clients do not have to perform chores for service, do not have funds withheld for future housing, do not have to sign up for case management, and the client can use the DESC services even if the client has an active criminal case or has a violent criminal history. The fact that our DESC services are supported by city tax dollars and are open to criminals with current warrants is very difficult for the HWCS team to understand.

As a result of these policies, our DESC attracts a different clientele. We were advised that the DESC's focus was to cast a wide net to reach anyone, including those who are using a large amount of community resources. In contrast, San Luis Obispo's day services mission is "to create opportunities for clients to secure employment and to transition back into productive society."

Claudia and Monica described the DESC policies in the attached document which states: "(1) The DESC has been set up as location based outreach which intentionally has a low threshold to engage clients who are often difficult to reach.

(2) The DESC is a way of to connect with the chronically homeless that often use a large amount of community resources, including those who are frequently involved in the criminal justice system.

(3) It is safer for the community to have people engaged with the HSC and other social service organizations than to deny services and send them away. DESC provides a pro-social linkage to medical and mental health care, dental care, substance abuse treatment, legal support, and job training opportunities."

Though the DESC will serve clients that are down on their luck, we believe that the SC DESC's primary focus is to draw in hard to reach clients. These vulnerable clients may have mental health, drug addiction or alcohol issues. Our understanding is that mental health and drug addictions services usually fall under county, state, and federal funding and not city funding. The City of Santa Cruz is the landlord for the DESC and the city has spent \$2,370,000 on the DESC from 1992 to 2012. Please consider that if there are no transitional mandates of the DESC client, the DESC is behaving like a charity that is partially funded with city tax dollars.

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The Harvey West Community Safety Team has done all that we can do to influence the DESC policies. Though our team now understands what is motivating the HSC to have low threshold policies, the policies do not improve public safety. We believe that if the DESC's focus were changed to primarily offer services to secure employment and help the client transition into productive society, we would have a safer community and we would be more in line with other community funded day services. We hope the city can review the attached document with our community's safety in mind. Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards - Harvey West Community Safety Team

Here is the link to email's attachment: This document describes the Daytime Essential Services Policies

http://takebacksantacruz.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/10ChangesDRC_HSCResponse.pdf