

The City and County of San Francisco Services Connection Program: A Community Ally

KINGSTON LUM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the City and County of San Francisco (CCSF), research indicated that many seniors and adults with disabilities who reside in the San Francisco Housing Authority (SFHA) public housing developments were often socially isolated and did not have access to supportive services. CCSF collaborated with SFHA and Northern California Presbyterian Home and Services (NCPHS) to develop the Services Connection Program (SCP). SCP targeted the cited seniors and adults with disabilities to enhance their abilities to age in place, avoid premature institutionalization, and to build a sense of community. SCP created a support system where none existed prior, and

it demonstrated that the benefits exceedingly outweighed the cost to sustain the program.

Much like its neighbor to the north, the Santa Clara County (SCC) is facing a similar dilemma with older adults living in the 111 mobile home parks within its borders. With no formal system of support or easy access to supportive services, it is challenging for these seniors to remain in the dwelling of their choice with independence and dignity.

This case study will explore the possibility of creating a supportive services program that will become the safety net for seniors living in mobile homes in SCC.

Kingston Lum, IHSS Social Work Supervisor,
Santa Clara County Social Services Agency

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“Before the program was here, we had to fight for services on our own; with the program, we have someone on our side.”

—Sadie, a 66-year-old public housing resident

Introduction

By 2030, approximately one in four San Francisco Bay Area residents will be over the age of 60, and the number of adults 75 and older will double in size.¹ Consequently, there will be an increased demand for high quality, community-based long-term care services targeted principally to individuals who are poor or of modest means. With adults age 60 and older currently representing 19% of the population in CCSF and 15% of the population in SCC, both counties have been charged with the task of providing support and services to meet the needs of a rapidly growing senior citizen population.⁴ In CCSF, the Long Term Care Coordinating Council (LTCCC) was created and charged with the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the Living With Dignity Strategic Plan (LWD).² In SCC, the Seniors’ Agenda was crafted to examine the current status of a growing older adult population and to make recommendations (via the Seniors’ Policy Council) to ensure the physical, social, and emotional well-being of older adults.⁸ With the creative and innovative elements/approaches that are embedded in each blueprint, there is a wonderful opportunity for each of the counties to conduct cross-county reviews and to borrow, incorporate, and modify some of the unique

components from a neighboring county in order to fulfill the collective commitment of supporting the health and well-being of older adults in the Bay Area.

Background

Known worldwide as Silicon Valley, one of the many standout features that is distinctive to SCC is that fact that there are 111 mobile home parks within its borders, with 21 designated as seniors-only parks per this writer’s calculation.^{a,3} Of the 18,613 mobile home householders in SCC (or 3% of the total population), approximately 30% (5,185 householders) are 65 and older, and 92% of this group own their own home.⁵ For many of these seniors, who may be on a limited or fixed income, a mobile home represents one of the few viable options for affordable housing and home ownership. There are specific challenges/barriers for seniors who live in mobile home parks versus seniors in other living situations (e.g. locations are generally not near hospitals and clinics, community centers, grocery stores, transportation, etc.), and there are very few services in SCC that are dedicated

a. A senior mobile homeowner is defined as being 55 years or older per CA Civil Code Section 798.34. In compliance with the Housing for Older Persons Act of 1995 (Public Law 104-76), 80% of the resident of a particular park must be 55 years and older in order to be designated as a seniors only park.

to seniors in these locales. The incorporation of a supportive services program targeted specifically at the extensive number of older adults living in these underserved communities is crucial. This case study will focus on the CCCF's SCP and how such a program could be replicated in SCC.

In the City and County of San Francisco, SCP is aimed at linking seniors and adults with disabilities living in San Francisco's public housing developments with available services provided in the community. The goal of the program is to undertake a practical role in maximizing the residents' abilities to age in place, avoid premature institutionalization, and to build a sense of community.⁶ By delivering supportive services in a community setting, the recipient of such services can remain in their home longer, and avoid or delay needing institutional care. On average, a resident who lives in a public housing unit can remain in their home 6 months longer with the assistance of a service coordinator versus one who did not have a service coordinator.¹⁰ This can yield real savings, ranging from \$22,588 to \$49,078 annually per individual (even when factoring in the costs of housing assistance and other public supports versus institutional care).¹⁰

Services Connection Program (SCP)

In 2002, it was recognized that while CCSF possessed a rich array of community-based long-term care and supportive services directed at seniors and adults with disabilities, many of the services were fragmented and uncoordinated.² With research indicating that seniors who live in public housing developments have far more complex needs than their peers in more affluent living situations, and are twice as likely to be disabled, more socially isolated, and have a higher need for assistance with activities of daily living, the existence of a disjointed support system posed a monumental impediment to those who needed help the most.⁷

With grant funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Community Partnerships for Older Adults (CPFOA), the LTCCC was created

and appointed by the City and County of San Francisco's Mayor's Office to oversee and implement the Living With Dignity plan. During the development of the plan (2002 to 2004), a series of discussion between CCSF and the Housing Authority confirmed that the 2,200 seniors and adults with disabilities living in the 23 senior/disabled public housing developments have very complex needs that could not be adequately addressed by one agency alone.² Moreover, an assessment conducted by the San Francisco Partnership for Community Based Care & Support Members (February to April 2005) verified that many seniors who lived in public housing did not have ready access to community-based supportive services.²

In response, from April 2006 to January 2007, the CCSF Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS), the SFHA, the Resource Centers for Seniors and Adults with Disabilities, and other community-based service providers explored and partnered to launch the Services Connection Pilot Project (SCPP). The strategy of SCPP was to create "service teams" to conduct biweekly visits to 5 of the 23 senior/disabled public housing developments that have been identified as needing the most attention (Rosa Parks, the two Clementina Towers, 350 Ellis, and 666 Ellis). The goals of the pilot were to link seniors and adults with disabilities with services provided in the community, and to increase the collaboration among the various service providers and agencies. By all accounts, the Services Connection Pilot Project demonstrated that it created a sense of community and enabled individuals to overcome barriers to independence.²

Based upon the achievements and outcome of the SCPP, DAAS and SFHA next collaborated with Northern California Presbyterian Home and Services acting as the lead agency for the program, to launch and establish the SCP in 2008.

SCP continued the work of increasing access to community-based services for older adults and adults with disabilities living in public housing through the provision of service coordinators. Like

its predecessor, the program was designed to address the unmet needs of seniors and adults with disabilities by extending their capacities to remain at home with services to ensure safety and to promote as much independence as possible. The target population for SCP was individuals 60 years or older and/or individuals between 18 and 59 years old who were living with disabilities in San Francisco's public housing developments. An emphasis of the program was to focus on groups that have been identified as demonstrating the greatest economic and social needs, such as individuals who were low-income, non- or limited English speaking, a member of a minority group, frail, and/or identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.⁶

The program philosophy of SCP was to use a voluntary, strength-based approach. With consent, SCP provided and made referrals to community resources such as: homemaker services, home management, advocacy, benefits/entitlements, assessments, case management, transportation, health care services, mental health, meals, transitional care and translation services.⁷ The program focused on the partnership with service providers/community stakeholders, and on effectively utilizing the expertise/capacity of the service providers to address the multifaceted needs of the target population.

At the time of this project, SCP has a total of seven service coordinators who are deployed throughout San Francisco to work with residents in 16 designated senior/disabled public housing developments. The service coordinators are trained to conduct assessments, and carry out casework applications, and each one possesses knowledge of the existing community resources and aging/disabled services. They are charged with the responsibility of developing a working relationship with community-based service providers and the residents through a "broker" model of service delivery.

Initially, SCP was funded through the successful application for two Resident Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) grants (ROSS I [\$375,000] was awarded in 2007; ROSS II [\$720,000] was awarded

in 2009) from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The program also received supplemental funding from CCSF (approximately \$611,000 for ROSS I; and \$122,644 for ROSS II) for other operational expenses. With the expiration of the ROSS grants in June 2014 and the anticipated impact that the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program from HUD will have on all of the public housing developments, CCSF will be in the process of inviting request for proposals (RFPs) from NCPHS and other community-based service providers to continue the work of SCP.^{6,7}

Since 2008, over 1,600 residents, representing 97% of the total population residing in the 16 senior/disabled adult public housing developments, have used SCP (tallying over 50,000 units of services and over 15,000 resident contacts).⁶ By "starting where the client is at," the service coordinators with SCP did more than just connect residents to services, they acted as a vital resource for assistance and support. Often times, SCP filled the social vacuum by providing social and emotional support to residents who were isolated and living alone. They have performed roles beyond simply connecting residents to services, such as visiting sick residents in their home or in the hospital, communicating maintenance issues to the property managers, mediating conflicts among residents, and assisting with food bank memberships. Through their efforts and positive presence, SCP created a formal support network and improved the quality of life for public housing residents by connecting them to services and support that increased their ability to age in their community and to avoid or altogether delay a higher level of care.

Implications for the County of Santa Clara

While cognizant of the unique needs and challenges of each community, there are a number of common characteristics between older adults in SCC who reside in mobile homes, and their counterparts living in CCSF's public housing developments: 1) both types of facilities tend to serve low to moderate

income households;^b 2) there is usually a common area that can be used to provide services; 3) there is a sufficient number of residents in each setting that has culminated into a “critical mass” necessitating the need to create an assortment of services; 4) both populations have a wide range of issues that are not easily addressed by referrals alone; 5) many are isolated/live alone; and, most significantly, 6) individuals in both settings may not have a natural support system.⁵ These parallels highlight the justification and viability that the establishment of a supportive services program in SCC dedicated to the needs of seniors in mobile home parks would be a natural fit for the community.

Although supportive services programs may differ in their structure, there are three common elements that have been recognized as being crucial to the success of SCP: 1) the program is guided by the preferences of the individuals receiving services; 2) the program continues to evolve to serve a wide range of needs; and 3) the program builds upon their partnerships with community stakeholders.¹⁰ To replicate the impact of SCP, Santa Clara County and its partners will need to incorporate the aforementioned in the framework of a local supportive services program.

Additionally, there are four potential areas of concerns that SCC and its partners will need to address to ensure a successful program:

First, since all mobile home parks are independently owned either by individuals and/or corporations and are motivated by financial gains, there will be a varying degree of interest in wanting an external program to intervene into the affairs of its residents. The proposed supportive services program will need to be able to demonstrate clear benefits to the owners from the start. To elicit buy-in and to assuage the fear of potential liabilities, there will need to be outreach to individual park owners and corporations to convey the real benefits and cost

savings that will be generated, and a frank exploration of what safeguards (e.g. insurance policies and risk management analysis) could be put in place before program initiation.

Second, seniors in mobile homes may harbor more isolative behaviors versus their peers in public housing, and gaining access into their home may be a difficult task to overcome. Also, there may be other residents in these complexes that would oppose having their frailer neighbors remain on the property and/or may be in denial of their own need for services. Thus, it is vital to involve residents through education and outreach from the beginning to develop the necessary level of trust.

Third, there will be logistical challenges with the execution due to the location and number of mobile home parks and the available amenities in the parks. One possibility that can lend itself as a solution and have a secondary effect is the use of a mobile office van. With a mobile office van, the need for office space will be eliminated and concurrently give seniors a safe space to look at their situation objectively. A clearly marked van could be stationed in a designated area at set times, and/or the service coordinator could drive the van to meet with seniors in their own home who are less mobile.

Lastly, SCC will need to create formal relationships with the various stakeholders in this venture. To begin, SCC could leverage its existing relationships with local city governments (such as the City of San Jose, whose Housing Department operates a Mobile Home Rent Ordinance program) to connect with and to build a formal network of support for mobile home park residents.

Program Implementation Recommendations

To warrant the preliminary and ongoing funding of a supportive services program, SCC and its partners will need to demonstrate measureable outcomes, receive commitment from all involved parties, maintain working relationships with all partners and stakeholders, use braided funding to sustain services, be able to respond to unpredictable and changing needs, and the program itself will need to become

b. In the City and County of San Francisco, \$23,750/year is considered extremely low income for a single individual and in the County of Santa Clara the amount is \$22,300. Source: <http://www.hed.ca.gov/hpd/hrc/rep/state/inc2k14pdf>.

integrated into the ongoing work of all related organizations.⁹

With some creativity, the following funding sources can be utilized to fund the wellness supporting activities of a supportive services program: 1) resourceful/innovative use of Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) funding and/or Title III grants (Multipurpose Senior Services Program) to perform outreach and/or intervention; 2) a public initiative generated by the Seniors' Agenda for the Board of Supervisors' approval to procure a secure revenue stream; 3) seek out supplemental funds through senior focused foundations such as the Health Partnership Grant through the Health Trust or the Dual Integration funds through the SCAN Foundation; 4) obtain partial funding from diverse sources such as the Community Food Projects Program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and 5) identify and partner with responsible corporate funders.⁹

To commence the creation of this program, this writer suggests that SCC 1) conduct an assessment to better understand the needs of seniors in mobile home parks and the park owners while also conducting outreach; 2) seek out partnerships with local government entities and community-based service providers with requisite memorandum of understanding agreements; and 3) compile and build upon a list of resources that are applicable to the target population (perhaps using the "A Good Place to Start" pamphlets created by AGents for Change as source material).

Conclusion

With the rise in the number of senior citizens in our society, it is with urgency that we address the issue of aging in place in a respectful and proactive manner. In particular, there is a need to focus attention on seniors who are low to moderate income and who do not have a natural support system. In both the County of Santa Clara and the City and County of San Francisco, there have been concerted efforts to ensure that our communities remain welcoming and livable as the population ages. This common goal has

created the opportunity to conduct across-county reviews and to champion promising collaborative strategies. In this case study, it has been established that the creation of a supportive services program that is targeted to seniors in mobile homes is central to the County of Santa Clara's mission of planning for the needs of a dynamic community by providing quality services and promoting a healthy, safe and prosperous community for all.

Acknowledgments

With great respect, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to James Ramoni, Director, Department of Aging and Adult Services, County of Santa Clara, and Lee Pullen, Director, Aging and Adult Services, County of Marin, for the nomination to the BASSC program. To the County of Santa Clara, a heartfelt thank you for the support I received from Terri Possley, Social Services Program Manager; Diana Miller, Project Manager; and Gina Sessions, Deputy Director. I am indebted to the City and County of San Francisco for the opportunity to collaborate with Trent Rhorer, HSA Executive Director; Anne Hinton, DAAS Executive Director; Shireen McSpadden, DAAS Deputy Director; Bill Haskell, Facilitator; Suhan Zheng, Contracts Manager; and John Murray, Senior Analyst. The generous assistance that was extended to me from Sue Dichter, Director of Social Supportive Services, and her dedicated staff of service coordinators (Leon Schmidt and T. Lien Shutt); as well as Leslye Corsiglia, Director of Housing, City of San Jose, and her equally devoted staff (Jacky Morales, Assistant Director of Housing; Theresa Ramos, Analyst II), were invaluable in the completion of this project. Lastly, I would like to thank Jamie Buckmaster, Social Services Program Manager-Retired, Adult Protective Services, Department of Aging and Adult Services, County of Santa Clara, for the initial opportunity.

The BASSC Executive Development Program has been an introspective and enlightening journey, and I am grateful to my BASSC cohort, staff, and instructors for adding positively to this experience.

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