



The Lodge: Researching a Targeted Engagement Approach

INNOVATION PLAN ANNUAL UPDATE

FY 2020-2021



Department of
Behavioral Health

Introduction

The Lodge is a new innovation project launched in Fresno County with the goal to explore, identify, and understand engagement for individuals who are homeless or at-risk for homelessness, who have limited engagement with care, and are in the pre-contemplation state of change.

The Lodge seeks to support participation in a housing program designed to stabilize a person's living situation while also providing supportive services on site. The project will accomplish this by providing safe and secure, low barrier (come as you are) lodging focused on meeting an individual's basic needs in a setting with 24/7 peer support services. The Lodge is also making a change to an existing practice in the field of mental health, including but not limited to: application to a different population; by using Peer Support Specialists trained in motivational interviewing; and other evidence-based practices to understand its effectiveness in engaging a specific population (individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, with an emerging or chronic mental illness, and who are not engaged in the mental health system due to being in the pre-contemplative stage of change).

The service agreement for the Lodge was approved in October 2020, and the Lodge began welcoming individuals in March of 2021.

Background

The Lodge is a \$1,400,000 three-year Innovation Project, which seeks to understand effective methods of engagements for individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, with an emerging or chronic mental illness, and who are not engaged in the mental health system due to being in the pre-contemplative stage of change. The program examines whether meeting an individual's basic, intrinsic needs can improve engagement in care, and whether peers with similar experience can be effective facilitators of that engagement.

This project was approved by the California Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) in May of 2020.

RH Community Builders was identified as the intended awardee through a request for proposal (RFP) process in February of 2020, pending approval of the project by the MHSOAC.

RH Community Builder has been operating and providing housing services, including emergency housing during COVID-19, and is keenly aware of the challenges inherent in providing housing programs for individuals experiencing homelessness and/or mental health challenges. Furthermore, RH Community Builders had a permitted space available at the time of the RFP, which allowed for rapid the start up for such a program in Fresno County.

Project Activities

The contract with RH Community Builders was executed in October of 2020 by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors. This agreement allowed for RH Community Builders to begin preparing the program, including hiring and training staff in a manner consistent with the supportive, come as you are milieu needed for the engagement strategy. Some of the initial work also included

preparing the existing facility for services, as it was previously used as an emergency shelter during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The facility is located in the city of Fresno, accessible by public transportation, and in a neighborhood with larger lots to allow for privacy. The Lodge's campus allows for separate men's and women's quarters, as well as private space for those who are gender non-binary or identify as transgender. The Lodge also includes open outdoor spaces, as well as space for individuals to keep their pet companions (i.e., dogs) safely on the premises.

At the time of this writing, the program is fully staffed. A key aspect of this program was to employ peers with lived experience and to examine how peers rendering the engagement strategies may impact effectiveness. The program is employing seven full-time peers, as well as 11 other staff (including supervisors, operations, and clinicians). The only vacancy at this time is for a Licensed Vocational Nurse. All peer positions have been filled.

RH Community Builders participated in a series of meetings with the project's identified research team at California State University Fresno Foundation, also known as the Social Research Institute. The research team is led by Dr. Tim Kubal, who possess extensive experience with individuals experiencing homelessness. RH Community Builders, County staff, and the evaluator (Social Research Institute) met on a regular basis for several months to begin coordination of evaluation and necessary data collection. Coordination work began prior to the execution of service agreements to ensure that the program would be implemented in a manner consistent with the project's learning goals, and that appropriate data would be collected and available for a complete evaluation of the projects and its learning goals.

The agreement between Fresno County and Social Research Institute was executed in March of 2021, which coincided with the startup services. The agreement for the evaluation is \$150,000 for the three years.

The Lodge was open to receive guests in March of 2021. The number of referrals varies by month but is generally increasing. In FY 2020-2021 the program has served 211 unduplicated individuals. The program census for FY 2020-2021 can be viewed in the table below.

	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
TOTAL GUESTS	57	67	64	45
TOTAL SERVED	41	53	53	25
TOTAL CONTINUING	0	7	6	9
TOTAL REVISITS	0	1	1	1

The table below illustrates the number of persons who have had successful linkages and have been engaged in care through the program. Successful linkages are defined as a program participant initiating and/or accepting the facilitation to get connected to services, enrolls in the agreed upon services, and then attends their first appointment.

	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
SUCCESSFUL LINKAGES	0	06	03

COVID-19

The COVID-19 Global Pandemic has had an impact on lives and services throughout the past year, and the Lodge is not an exception. Despite the impacts of COVID-19 on service planning and provision, the Lodge was able to become operational in a short period of time during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

COVID-19 has significantly impacted individuals experiencing homelessness in Fresno County. Various emergency housing and shelter efforts provided access to shelter (not necessarily long-term housing) for a number of individuals experiencing homelessness. As these shelters close, these individuals may face challenges in securing shelter and housing. At the same time, there is a risk for the homeless population to increase due to the economic downturn caused by COVID-19, and the risk of postponed or suspended evictions being enforced.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Fresno County faced a high rate of homelessness and a low stock of affordable housing options. Efforts to shelter individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic have further reduced the housing stock.

The Lodge has also experienced challenges related to COVID-19 restrictions which have continued to make accessing some behavioral health services more challenging than anticipated. That has ranged in types of support services and resources, which are a factor in engagement.

Next Steps

The project is working to anticipate changes as the State begins to emerge from the global pandemic; provide access to behavioral services that are amenable to some of the guests of the Lodge; and continue to secure housing placement with a limited stock of available housing. The County has continued to apply for, and be awarded, No Place Like Home awards; however, the number of persons needing housing far outweighs the anticipated number of near future units.

In the initial four months of operation the program has served a larger number of guests than was initially anticipated. The Lodge has been able to accommodate this influx thus far. As availability and accessibility of more services increase with the change in the COVID-19 restrictions, the program will seek to adjust how it is providing care and conducting linkages in order to better engage and meet the needs of the persons served.

The Lodge has reported a high volume of referrals from local hospitals who are seeking a placement for individuals leaving local medical centers, but a large number of those referrals do not meet the project's criteria. As such the Lodge will meet with hospitals to help increase understanding of the program and its eligibility criteria, and how to meet the needs of the target population.

As COVID-19 restrictions ease in the coming year, the County and RH Community Builders hope to conduct more informational outreach to various possible referral sources which may help in the type of referrals received. Some partner agencies may include crisis intervention teams (CIT), collaborators within Project Off-Ramp, and more. Additionally, the County and RH Community

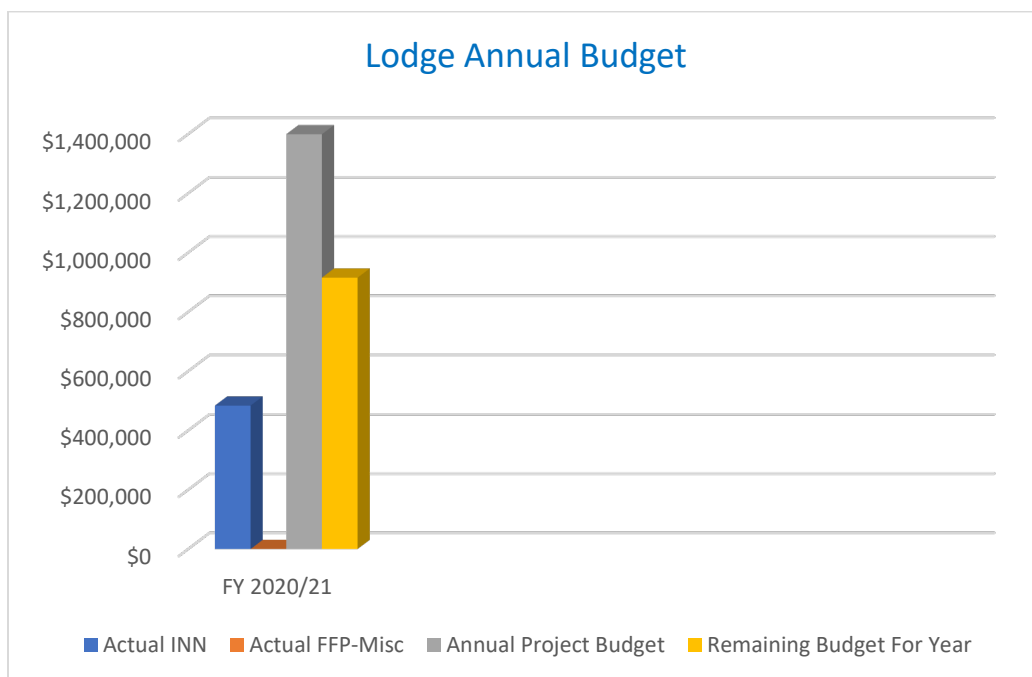
Builders will be able to conduct outreach with other potential programs, full-service partnerships, residential treatment programs, day treatment, and housing partners which can ensure both care services for the guests as well as future housing.

The Lodge will continue to work to examine opportunities to draw down Federal Financial Participation (FFP, Medi-Cal) in the coming year so to offset MHSA costs and create a more sustainable program. At this time, the program is limited in the types of clinical services and interventions for which it may be able to seek reimbursement. Future statewide peer certification will create additional opportunities for services and work rendered by peers to be a billable service.

Lastly, the program will be monitor and report any information that may emerge on the length of time in the Lodge before persons served are receptive to care/linkages.

Budget

The program has been budgeted for \$1,399,333.00 annually; however, the contract was not executed until the second quarter of the fiscal year. The project did experience some high costs with its initial ramp up and staff training period. The program was unable to bill for any potential FFP (Medi-Cal) services for the first six months as it did not render services to individuals.



At the time of this report, the Lodge has expended \$483,793.96 of the total budget of \$1,399,333 for the first year. It should be noted that at the time of the development of this annual update report the invoiced for May and June had not been finalized. If the costs for April hold true at approximately \$90,000, the total expenditures will be about \$180,000-\$200,000 more for the rest of FY 2020-2021, placing the total at close to \$683,000.

The Lodge has approximately \$3.5 million dollars remaining on its contract.

The Social Research Institute has budgeted \$21,447 for FY 2020-21. While the Social Research Institute has started its data collection and early work to support the project evaluation. From March through June 2021, the Social Research Institute expended \$13,796. Its project budget for the upcoming fiscal year is \$50,557.

Appendix

- A- Lodge Brochure
- B- Flyer for Lodge Referrals



THE LODGE

The Lodge is a new, innovative program aimed at engaging the most disengaged clients in the Fresno Community through short-term, peer-driven lodging program.

Program Goals:

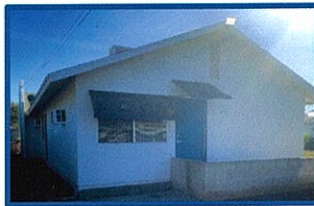
- Build Relationships
- Motivate for Change
- Engage in Long-Term Services

What to Expect:

- Low Barrier- no requirement of sobriety, pets welcome
- Shelter & Meals
- Hygiene Supplies
- Transportation
- Case Management & Linkage

Who Should Be Referred:

- Fresno County Resident, eligible for Medi-Cal
- Not currently enrolled in a Fresno County Mental Health or Substance Abuse program
- Currently Homeless
- Documented or suspected Severe Mental Illness
- Co-Occurring substance abuse disorders accepted



The Lodge is a program of

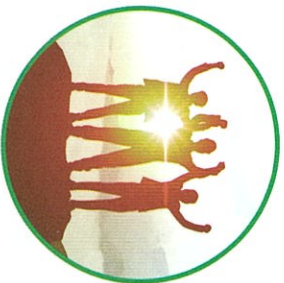


Department of
Behavioral Health



24/7 Referral Line: 559-899-0888

| What is The Lodge



The Lodge is a short-term, peer-driven lodging to help individuals experiencing homelessness, severe mental illness, and currently not engaged in services become connected to the right resources.

Through relationship building and connection, our team- including peers from all walks of life- will help guests take the next step in their life. Our team will help individuals identify their goals and become connected to long term services like mental health programs, housing services, health care, and substance abuse treatment programs.

The Lodge is low barrier, so individuals are invited to come as they are- with pets, their belongings, and not yet in recovery.

The Lodge provides 3 meals per day, warm and safe living accommodations, and a flexible, but structured living environment to encourage positive life changes.

RH COMMUNITY BUILDERS

1040 N Pleasant Ave
Fresno, CA 93728

| Some Services Offered

Each guest will be offered a variety of services to meet their individual needs. Services may include:

Life Skills - The Lodge will offer life skills classes such as cooking and laundry to help you become successful on your own.

Housing Search - Our team will begin with the basics of a housing assessment and assisting individuals with locating their essential documents such as ID.

Case Management & Linkage - The Lodge is a short-term program. From the time of entry our team will work to find "the next stop" on each individuals journey. This might include being connected to a mental health or substance abuse program.

Mental Health Services - Our clinical team will provide short-term interventions, assessments, and skill building.

Substance Abuse Services - Our team will assist in skill building, harm reduction, and motivating individuals for change.

Family Services - Family members will have opportunities for structured family groups as well as open visiting to encourage relationship rebuilding.

Health Care - Our team will help you find a Primary Care Doctor, arrange appointments, and assist you with getting the services you need.



| Sample Daily Schedule

8:30am - Breakfast
9:30am - Morning Meeting
10:00am - Living Skills Group
12:00pm - Lunch
1:30pm - Substance Abuse Group
3:30pm - Community Activity
5:30pm - Dinner
7:00pm - NA Meeting Onsite

Schedules are flexible and individualized to meet each persons needs. Groups are offered and encouraged, but not required.

You will also have opportunities to meet with Peers and Therapist individually throughout your time at The Lodge.

Other group topics include goal setting, housing, family, anger management, and healthy relationships.



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