

I.A. History of ACMH

ACMH, Inc. is a non-profit, voluntary agency incorporated in 1973 (as the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Mentally Ill) “to provide out-patient projects and programs for the aid, care and rehabilitation of the mentally ill and other emotionally or physically disabled populations.”

ACMH’s first mission was to operate a thrift shop at Manhattan State Psychiatric Center as auxiliary operation of the hospital. Clients were trained to work at the store and received a small stipend. This was a time of important advances in the field of psychiatric rehabilitation in the wake of dramatic advances in the psychopharmacological treatment of mental illness. Concurrently, public awareness of the deficiencies of large State institutions encouraged policies and programs facilitating community living for persons with disabilities.

Between 1976 and 1978, ACMH opened its first housing for persons with mental illness. With a grant from the State of New York, the agency leased a handful of apartments in Manhattan, providing 16 clients with a place to live in the community. This “scattered site” apartment approach allowed clients to live in the community in the least restrictive environment. Agency staff visited the residents in their homes, providing support, making sure they had medications and appointments for needed services and providing hands on training to learn or relearn the skills they needed to live in the community.

In 1979, the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) licensed ACMH as a Community Residence provider and increased its funding to enable the agency to serve an additional 16 persons. The scope of services grew with a dual focus on providing assessment and referral for acute mental health needs as well as supporting psychosocial rehabilitation and community integration. With additional awards over the years, ACMH today operates 158 Scattered Site beds as “Apartment Treatment” in Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx. Apartment Treatment focuses on preparing residents, typically over a two-year period, for transition to permanent housing.

In 1993, again with funding from OMH, ACMH opened a 24 bed Scattered-Site Supported Apartment Program. Supported housing is permanent housing combining a rental subsidy with case management services. Program staff make regular visits to the apartments and collaborate with tenants to provide services intended to assist them to establish and maintain a household, according to an individualized support plan. Over the years with funding awards from both the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and OMH, the program has expanded, today comprising 453 beds in Manhattan, Queens, and the Bronx.

In 1994, after renovating a 100 year old tenement, ACMH opened its first residential building, with another major renovation completed in 2018. Independence House, a single room community residence program in Washington Heights, now serves 16 formerly homeless mentally ill adults with individualized case management services on-site and round the clock front desk coverage.

In 1997, ACMH opened Garden House, its second residential building for homeless mentally ill adults. Located in Manhattan's East Village, Garden House's community residence program currently serves 19 residents, each with their own apartment. This six story new construction project was made possible with grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, OMH, and a generous gift from benefactor Betty Wold Johnson for the garden which lends the building its name.

ACMH's Blended Case Management Program began operation in 2002 in Upper Manhattan and was the agency's first initiative to serve persons with mental illness independent of its own housing programs. In 2013, as part of the NYS Health Homes initiative, the program was converted to a care management service, in contract with Health Homes and the City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. ACMH Care Management Services provides outreach, engagement and care coordination to hundreds of adults daily with mental illness or other chronic illnesses.

In 2003, renovations were completed and the doors opened at Sabra Goldman House, a 51 bed single room community residence on the grounds of Creedmoor Psychiatric Center in Queens Village. Named in honor of our visionary former chief executive, the Sabra Goldman House program provides transitional community living for individuals who require on-site supportive and rehabilitative skills-building services due to extensive histories of hospitalization. The transitional setting has proven successful in preparing many program graduates for discharge to Scattered site apartment settings.

Recognizing the key role of peer to peer support in recovery from mental health and substance use, ACMH began promoting the participation of peers as volunteers and paid staff or consultants in the 1990's. Peers are persons with lived experience with mental illness who share with others their own journey and the skills, knowledge, and supports that have helped them. In 2007, ACMH first formally incorporated the role of Peer Program Specialist in its community residence programs.

In 2012, "74 Avenue A," a 55 bed single room community residence, opened its doors, also on the grounds of Creedmoor Psychiatric Center. A unique feature of this residence is its Asian initiative, serving residents in their own culture and language. 74 Avenue A was the first ACMH capital project funded, in part, by equity from Low Income Housing Tax Credit investment.

In 2014, two permanent housing projects were opened: Markus Gardens in Jamaica, Queens and E. 144th Street Affordable Housing in Mott Haven in the Bronx. Both apartment buildings include enhanced services for young adults ages 18-25 transitioning from institutional settings or foster care to independent living. Markus Gardens was made possible by a generous bequest from the estate of Rita Markus, and, thanks to another generous gift, houses the Betty Wold Johnson Solarium. E. 144th Street Affordable Housing marks ACMH's first project offering units for community households, in addition to individuals with mental illness.

In 2015, ACMH entered into new partnerships with multiple health systems under the State's Medicaid Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment Program to collaborate on workflows and implement new initiatives in order to generate better health outcomes and reduce potentially preventable hospitalizations and emergency room utilization.

Also in 2015, with a Medicaid Redesign grant from OMH, ACMH opened a 3 bed Crisis Respite and Transitional Housing program at Garden House. In 2018, with additional grant funding this service was expanded by adding 7 more beds at Independence House.

2016 marked the commencement of Habilitation, Psychosocial Rehabilitation, and Peer Empowerment services in home and community based settings independent of ACMH housing.

In 2017, ACMH broke ground on a joint venture providing permanent housing for persons with mental illness that will also include units for low and middle income households.

2017 also marked a major expansion for the agency with a total of 427 units of supportive housing in seven programs transitioned from another provider into ACMH's portfolio.

In 2018, ACMH broke ground on an additional two joint ventures to provide supportive housing in mixed population permanent affordable apartment buildings.

For 45 years, ACMH has promoted the wellness and recovery of persons with mental illness living in New York City.

ACMH is committed to promoting health, quality of life and independent community living for special needs populations and preventing cycles of repeated hospitalizations, homelessness and incarceration by providing access to resources, treatment and support.

ACMH's programs seek to maximize each client's decision-making role regarding his or her own needs and goals, recognizing that personal growth occurs when people believe that change is possible and that support is available to attain the goals that are important to them.