Request for Funding

January 16, 2023

To whom it may concern:

My name is Elijah Levy, Ph.D. and I am the Director of Trucare Foundation for Mental Health Recovery, a 501 (c) (3) nonpofit agency. I provide psychiatric/psychosocial rehabilitation services to 90 persistent, mentally ill residents in a residential care center in Artesia called Founders House of Hope. I am employed part time at Founders, in addition to running skills based groups at four of our other facilities treating residents with persistent mental illness. The majority of the residents are diagnosed with Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders and the balance with Mood Disorders and Co-Occurring Disorders. This summary is intended to describe how illness management, symptom reduction, recovery and increasing functional skills and capacity building can be achieved through implementation of an evidence, skills based psychiatric/psychosocial rehabilitation program. The rehabilitation goals include the residents learning illness management, vocational/occupational skills, social and relapse prevention skills. Psychosocial rehabilitation refers to a range of social, occupational, educational, behavioral and cognitive interventions for increasing the role performance of individuals with serious and persistent mental illness. Our program aims at long term recovery, symptom stabilization and maximization of self-sufficiency.

Historically, the mentally ill have been marginalized, stigmatized and devalued in their community and their lives lack meaning. Further, residents at Founders House of Hope are vulnerable to losing their meaningful connections in life; work, family, friends and they experience despair and depression. Thus, the challenges include restoring dignity and empowering the mentally ill so they can develop functional skills. We operate a program of systematic skill building with psychoeducational and cognitive behavioral interventions to prevent relapse. Our residents can improve their level of functioning despite suffering from mental illness and it represents an opportunity to be empowered. The relationship we establish with our residents is very significant for them because it makes them feel they matter to us.

The program goals at Founders House of Hope and our other facilities include improving the quality of life of our residents, building self-empowerment, self-determination and self-sustenance. We partner with residents to identify their capabilities, interests and rehabilitation goals. We build resident strength and instill optimism that residents can succeed in multiple life domains such as school and occupational endeavors. The program philosophy and principles includes maximizing choice, increasing competency, focusing on each resident’s goals and aspirations and instilling hope and optimism that residents can experience meaning and purpose in life.

The element of hope is very essential to our resident’s recovery. Our residents have experienced countless devaluing experiences in their life. Devaluation and stigmatization wear you down and cause hopelessness and apathy. We need our residents to capture more meaning in their life because without hope one cannot envision a positive future. Our residents have been devastated and possess little hope they can improve the quality of their life. At Founders, we provide an evidence based, psychiatric rehabilitation program. Psychiatric rehabilitation incorporates illness management, skill development and proper medications. The guiding principles of psychiatric rehabilitation include identifying the resident’s strengths/assets, adaptive functioning and reducing the impact of symptoms and restoring functional capacity. Identifying functional limitations and restoring skills to improve function is the goal of psychiatric rehabilitation.

I work at moving our residents from what is to what can be through providing empathy and ongoing support. In short—the mental illness has taken some life away from our residents and we are restoring meaningful life. We move our residents from the real self to the ideal self in an environment of social caring and support. The component of empowerment is also important to build in our residents. Empowerment includes having our residents affirm that they can achieve higher levels of functioning. We need to create an environment for them to succeed in many life domains such as in their role as worker, student and responsible citizen honoring their public commitments. I try to create programs so they can experience success in these life spheres. As their successes accumulate, empowerment increases. Our residents have historically lost power and losing power of choice means not having the capacity to act. It also conveys to the resident that they lack the belief in self and their ability to choose.

The most effective rehabilitative services we offer our mentally ill are our skills based, recovery groups. The recovery program at Founders engenders recovery from the debilitating effects of severe, persistent mental illness. Schizophrenia is a cruel, debilitating illness and is considered the severest of the psychopathologies. We implement a restorative and recovery program to offer our residents hope, empowerment, self-determination (choice) and we integrate a community reintegration component into the program. At Founders, the supported employment program achieves these objectives and provides residents with self-esteem maintenance and an enhanced self-concept. All the services are group based with a healing, restorative element. The recovery-oriented program/groups I conduct provides skill acquisition, knowledge, support and as many resources to facilitate the achievement of each resident’s recovery. In short, recovery means connecting residents to their community in meaningful ways, despite having a diagnosis of mental illness. I attempt to have our residents create and operate from an identity separate from their condition (mental illness). Our residents occupy multiple identities besides Schizophrenia, and we attempt to have them operate in roles as students, sons/daughters, parents, worker and friend so they can enjoy self-esteem.

Founders House of Hope and one other facility operates a supported employment program employing residents in our on-site convenience store. The supported employment program has a positive impact on our residents, enabling them to generate self-esteem maintenance and self-confidence while assuming responsibility for the overall success of Founders Hut. The program provides residents with opportunities to make worthwhile contributions, and earn a stipend for hours worked. Many of our residents have the capacity to work, and work engages the self in a meaningful way. The supported employment program has made a remarkable difference in the lives of our residents, restoring needed meaning and purpose in their lives. Although I would like to enlage the supported employment program, lack of funds prevents me from doing so. There are additional work opportunities I could create and train residents for employment. The on-site work opportunities we could create are a beautification and gardening program, workers in the kitchen, activity assistants, etc. We have a full time Activity Coordinator responsible for conducting recreational, leisure and arts/crafts groups for residents. The activity program could be enriched with additional funds. The community reintegration program I conduct could benefit from additional funds to expose residents to cultural centers, museums, the beach and picnics.

The mentally ill can experience hope, self-determination, empowerment, increased adaptive functioning, restoration of vocational/occupational, personal, and social adjustment to the extent that a comprehensive, recovery oriented psychiatric/psychosocial rehabilitation program is available. Recovery ultimately means residents connect to their community in meaningful ways, despite having a diagnosis of mental illness. Attempts are made to support the resident’s creation of an identity separate from his/her mental illness and to have them occupy multiple identities so they can generate self-esteem from successfully functioning in their roles leading to recovery. Our residents have been traumatized and experienced countless devaluing experiences in their life. Devaluation and stigmatization have cumulative, debilitating effects on one’s consciousness and wears one down; causing one to feel helpless.

I appreciate being invited to submit this proposal for funds to enrich our psychiatric rehabilitation program. I believe we are grant worthy and greatly appreciate being considered for funding.

Elijah Levy, Ph.D.

Director, Founders Outreach

Applicant: Trucare Foundation for Mental Health Recovery, a 501 (c) (3) (nonprofit center)

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The primary mission of Trucare Foundation for Mental Health Recovery is to provide supports, resources and services to residents living at all five of the programs I visit to run groups.

Trucare Foundation for Mental Health Recovery was established in 2022. The program/services offered include skills based psychiatric rehabilitation groups such as:

Illness Management Relapse Prevention

 Developing Leisure Skills Community Reintegration Hope and Optimism

 Vocational Training Impulse Control Social Skills Training

 Social Problem Solving Medication Education

 Mindfulness Group Creative Expression

II. Project Information

1. Need/Problem

Problem Definition

The requested funds will be used to support the psychiatric rehabilitation program. The psychosocial/psychiatric rehabilitation program offers activities/groups such as a supported employment program, symptom management, relapse prevention, social problem solving and related skill building groups enabling our resident to recover from the functional limitations their Schizophrenia and Bipolar illness has imposed on their lives.

The residents served live with persistent, severe mentally illness and are primarily diagnosed with Schizophrenia, with a smaller percentage diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder and Co-Occurring Disorders.

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New Level of Service:

We currently operate a Supported Employment Program enabling residents to work on site at Founders Hut, a store at Founders House of Hope. We also operate a store at our facility in Long Beach called Bay Breeze. Our residents earn a stipend of $10.00 per hour for working at Founders Hut and residents can work a maximum of five hours a week. Although more residents are eligible to work at Founders Hut, our budget prevents us from employing additional residents or increasing their weekly hours. We currently employ 12-15 residents at Founders Hut.

An increased budget would allow us to employ more residents at our programs. The additional income residents receive would marginally increase their quality of life, earning additional monies to purchase clothes, food and enjoy their leisure activities and hobbies.

Additional work opportunities proposed include a beautification program, garden and kitchen assistants. Residents have expressed an interest in learning to nurture a hope garden, beautify the surroundings at Founders House of Hope and working in the cafeteria washing dishes, preparing meals and stocking supplies.

In terms of quantifying a current increase in levels of service provided, we can enlarge the Supported Employment Program to employ more residents, and continue paying their current hourly stipend of $10.00 per hour and conduct more outings. The outings are community reintegration activities which are not offered frequently due to lack of funds.

The additional activities offered by the Activity Coordinator will be enriched if additional funds were available to purchase articles used in arts/crafts groups, supply residents who are artists with art supplies and the purchase of printers and computers with internet access. We currently have no printers for the residents to print documents they create.

Dr. Levy conducts a creative writing class for residents expressing an interest in writing poetry and short stories. One resident self-published a book; his autobiography with Dr. Levy’s assistance. At Founders House of Hope, we self-published two books; anthologies of poetry written by residents. Several residents have self-published their own books of poetry and novels. In addition, several residents enjoy drawing in water color, oils and sketching. Additional funds would enable these residents to receive art supplies so they can continue their creative expression.

Costs/Budget and Justification

1. Costs/Budget

The estimated cost for enlarging the psychiatric rehabilitation program, including expanding the Supported Employment Program, Community Reintegration Program (outings) and Activities Program is approximated to be $31,100.00 per year.

a. Community Reintegration: Two outings per month ($300.00 x 12 months) = $3,600.00 per year

b. Enlarging Supported Employment program

Employing more residents

(10 residents) working

5 hours a week at current

rate of $10.00 per hour ($500.00 a week x 50 weeks)

 $25,000 per year

1. Activities Program: supplies $2,000.00 per year
2. Purchasing 3 printers, ink, paper $500.00

Total funds requested to operate program for a year $31,100.00