

Access clients are doing well in VCH

The Access Project was an initiative of the provincial government to help discharge Riverview Hospital patients, who no longer required hospitalization, but have chronic and complex mental health needs requiring community-based supports. Additional government funding was provided to enhance community-based services to support discharge of patients into supportive housing.

Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) formed a working group with representation from mental health staff from Vancouver, Richmond and North Shore/Coast Garibaldi to use Access funding to augment current services and discharge 60 patients from Riverview to VCH communities. An interdisciplinary team from VCH assessed the Riverview patients to ensure that appropriate community placements could be made.

Access discharges occurred between June 2002 and March 2004 and 60 patients were accommodated across VCH, 41 went to Vancouver, ten to Richmond and nine to the North Shore. Of these 60 clients, 35 are men and 25 are women with an average age of 45 years. The majority of clients have a diagnosis of schizophrenia. Funding of more than \$1.79 million was used within the community mental health system in a variety of ways to enhance and increase existing services.

Friendship Court in Vancouver is one example of supported housing funded through the Access Project. It's an 18-unit apartment building with on-site staff and provides residents with an optional daily meal and other support programs. A mental health team using a case management approach also supports the residents. In some cases, patients transferred from Riverview were placed in licensed care facilities, and clients from these facilities, who were ready for more independent living, were given the opportunity to move to supported independent living units with the help of Access funding.

At the time of transfer from Riverview to Vancouver, 15 clients went to licensed care, 25 to supported housing and one to family.

Update

In Richmond at the time of discharge, all 10 clients went to licensed care. To accommodate the Access patients, nine supported housing beds were opened in three new townhouses, and nine existing clients, who had been living in the group homes and were ready for more independent living, transferred to the townhouses. In addition to the new independent living housing, Richmond was able to hire a half-time case manager and increase funding to their Peer Support Program.

Nine Access clients went to the North Shore; seven were placed in licensed care, one in continuing care and one with family. Four of the licensed care clients were placed in a newly acquired group home adding a significant resource to the available housing mix. Through Access funding, the North Shore was also able to hire an additional occupational therapist.

Client outcomes

During their first year in VCH, clients were assessed every three months and then every six months afterwards. The Access Tracking Project's latest report (May 31, 2005) revealed that the large majority of clients are doing well. Most of them had a smooth transfer from Riverview and have remained in the same placement since discharge. Case managers also report that these living arrangements are appropriate for the majority of Access clients. Clients' mental and physical health generally has remained unchanged or has improved and the vast majority of clients and families are satisfied with their placements. All Access clients are still receiving mental health services, and in the few cases where clients are struggling, case managers are working with them to resolve issues and provide appropriate supports.

Of the 60 clients that came to VCH, as of May 2005, 57 remain; two were in Riverview Hospital and one was in Forensic Psychiatric Hospital.

Information on these 57 clients shows that:

- 95% of care providers felt that their client's living arrangements were appropriate
- 86% of clients' mental status had remained unchanged or improved since transfer
- 82% of clients' physical health had reportedly remained the same or improved
- 93% of care providers felt that all of their client's essential needs were being met
- 65% of care providers reported that their client had a rehabilitation plan developed and that it was being followed, 9% reported that the plan had been developed, but it had not been implemented yet and 26% reported that no plan had been developed as yet
- 82.5% of the clients required the same or less time than care providers' other clients
- 91% of clients had no effect or only a slight effect on other clients in the facilities where they live
- 84% of clients were moderately or significantly satisfied with their placements
- 94% of family members that were involved in their relative's treatment reported being moderately or significantly satisfied

These findings are consistent with the two previous Access Tracking Project reports published six months and one year ago.

Service utilization:

- Since leaving Riverview Hospital, 21 clients had 45 admissions/visits to either hospitals or emergency services, totaling 2,519 days
- Ten percent of the clients account for 75% of the hospital days used
- 50 clients have at some point used 10 services in the community (for example Kettle Programs, Community Link and the Pathways Clubhouse)

Client moves:

- There were a total of 20 moves made by 16 clients within VCH

Next steps:

Follow up will continue for these 60 clients to determine how they are managing over time in our community.

If you have any questions or comments about the Access Project, please contact: **Lorna Howes**, Executive Sponsor, Riverview Redesign at 604-708-5286 or lorna.howes@vch.ca

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