



EVALUATION OF THE SAN DIEGO INDEPENDENT LIVING ASSOCIATION PROJECT

In July 2012, Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP), partnering with 211 San Diego and Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), received funding from the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency's Behavioral Health Services (HHS/BHS) Innovations Program funded by the Mental Health Services Act to launch the Independent Living Association (ILA) Project. The purpose of this project is to support Independent Living (IL) owners, residents and the community by promoting high quality Independent Livings. In the first year of the program, the ILA has a number of important components, including:

- **Developing membership criteria and recruiting at least 40 members** in the first year.
- **Creating the ILA Online Directory** that includes an on-line database and centralized resource to help consumers, family members, and the larger community find information about Independent Living options, including their quality.
- **Creating Quality Standards** that are stringent enough to assure quality while remaining flexible enough to allow the Independent Living owners to retain their creative housing models that serve specific, individual populations.
- **Implementing the Peer Review Accountability Team (PRAT)**, a group that consists of owners, residents and CHIP staff serves to determine Independent Livings' adherence to the Quality Standards and provide individualized coaching to help owners to improve their business.
- **Conducting Education and Training** for owners, residents, and community members designed to provide these key stakeholders with the tools they need to encourage successful Independent Livings.

The term Independent Living is used to describe a wide array of housing for many different types of residents.

“Independent Living” in this evaluation report specifically refers to privately-owned homes or complexes that provide housing for adults with mental illness and other disabling health conditions. They serve residents that do not need medication oversight, are able to function without supervision, and live independently.

Overview of the Evaluation

CSH has been working closely with CHIP and the ILA Outcomes Measurement Group (OMG) to evaluate the outcomes, impact, and effectiveness of this work. The evaluation has three main goals:

1. Document the work that has been done in the first year of the ILA;
2. Measure the outcomes and effectiveness of that work; and
3. Determine what is working well, what areas need improvement, and what changes should be made in the second year.

“Since the ILA has started, it has been absolutely amazing the amount of business we’ve been doing. I have always said, ‘if you put the client first, the money will come.’ [The ILA] supports owners with this philosophy, raising standards for this business and taking out the dark corners.”

-ILA Member/Owner

The evaluation relies on multiple methods, both quantitative and qualitative, including focus groups and individual interviews with operators, residents, PRAT members, the ILA Work Team, community members, and other stakeholders; data generated from a survey of users of the ILA Online Directory; data on website use patterns using Google Analytics; observations of PRAT inspections; pre- and post-tests to measure knowledge gained through the training courses; participant evaluations of the training courses; and a review of program documents and progress reports.

Evaluation Findings

The ILA evaluation found that all components of the project were implemented successfully and on schedule. Key stakeholders, owners, residents, and community members have been very pleased with the outcomes of the ILA and what they perceive to be the benefits to them.

Evaluation Questions	Findings
ILA Membership	
Is the ILA able to generate significant levels of membership and is membership robust in terms of the participation of the members and residents? What do Independent Living operators consider to be the benefits of membership? What are the benefits to residents and the larger community?	As of the end of May 2013, the ILA recruited 43 members, exceeding its goal of 40 in the first year. Owners are happy with the support they receive from ILA and the professionalism of the staff. A few owners have seen an increased number of referrals, which they attribute to being a member and the positive publicity that ILs are receiving.
ILA Online Directory	
What was the process of creating the directory? Do ILA members find the Directory to be a valuable tool? How and how often are operators, residents, and family members using the directory? Do consumers and hospitals, mental health and homeless services providers use the ILA Online Directory to find housing? Is the information easy to find, up-to-date, and useful?	Information from Google Analytics shows a robust level of traffic on the website and a low Bounce Rate (the proportion of users who view only one page on the website and leave). Based on focus groups and information from an on-line survey, members of the Work Team, owners, and users are happy with the content and structure of the ILA Online Directory.

Evaluation Questions	Findings
ILA Quality Standards and Peer Review and Accountability Team (PRAT)	
<p>What planning occurred in the development and finalization of the Standards? How well have the Standards been implemented? What proportion of ILA membership applicants meets the ILA Quality Standards? Are PRAT inspections being conducted regularly and with most/all of the operators in the membership? What works well about the PRAT process and what needs improvement, including both initial inspection and any associated follow up?</p>	<p>The ILA developed the Quality Standards and the PRAT process by incorporating best practices as well as feedback from owners, residents and community stakeholders. Thus far, 20 PRAT inspections have been conducted – 16 of which met Quality Standards upon first inspection and 4, which have been advised and coached on changes needed to make to meet ILA Quality Standards. PRAT observations revealed inconsistencies among inspections in the application of the Standards. Constant review and comparison of inspections has helped PRAT to “calibrate” the process and make improvements.</p>
Education and Training	
<p>How many participants from each stakeholder group were reached by the training? Do participants learn about and understand the ILA Standards and how they are being implemented? Do participants find the training useful? How much information do they retain? How have they put the information into practice, if at all?</p>	<p>The ILA conducted 32 training courses to participants across San Diego County – 104 owners, 167 residents, 51 trainers, and 217 community members. This far exceeds the goal of reaching 75 owners; and is on track to meet the goal of 200 residents by the end of the first year. The average change between the pre- and post-test scores for all training courses was 16.3 percentage points, exceeding the goal of increasing knowledge by 10%. Based on their evaluations, training participants were very satisfied with the course content and trainers.</p>

Recommendations for the Second Year of the ILA

While Year 1(July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013) of the ILA was extremely successful, the evaluation also uncovered some areas for improvement and potential focus for the second year (July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014) of the project:

- More work needs to be done to outreach to owners who are still concerned that the ILA will become more of a regulatory agency and increase their costs of operation by having to meet the Quality Standards. While members seem very happy with the ILA, it will be necessary for the ILA to reach out to skeptical IL owners in order to increase membership and improve quality standards across the entire Independent Living industry in San Diego County.

“There are a lot of [police] calls for services to Independent Livings and Board and Cares. This is a drain on resources, so the officers’ knee-jerk solution is to get rid of them. With the ILA and the opportunity to meet strong and appropriate owners, officers see that there is a need for strong ILs and they now have a collaborative partner [the ILA] to bring up the standards instead of working to eliminate Independent Livings.”

-ILA Work Team Member

- There is some evidence that the ILA has increased collaboration between hospitals and ILs; however, this goal of the ILA deserves a greater focus in the second year. We will learn more about the extent to which overall collaboration has increased through a social network analysis being conducted as part of the evaluation.
- Some inconsistency in the PRAT process and the application of the Quality Standards was uncovered during PRAT observations. Constant review and comparison of inspections has helped PRAT to “calibrate” the process and make improvements. This work should continue to ensure the inspection process is as accurate and efficient as possible.
- While feedback on the ILA Online Directory was almost universally positive, some Work Team members recommended adding even more detail to each IL listing. For example, one member suggested adding whether the IL has a cultural or spiritual component.

“I don’t have any family, so when the owners try to make their house better and they treat me with respect, it makes everything in my life better.”
-IL Resident

Next Steps for the Evaluation

The Outcomes Measurement Group, with CSH as the lead, will continue to evaluate the ILA in the second year by focusing on the following activities:

- Analyzing data from the on-line survey on the ILA Online Directory to measure user satisfaction.
- Using data from Google Analytics, tracking changes in web traffic and patterns of use.
- Working with Moder Research & Communications, Inc. on a social network analysis to determine increases in collaboration between ILs and key stakeholders and partners.
- To the extent possible, accessing data on calls to the police and 9-1-1 to see if the ILA is having an impact on those outcomes.
- Conducting participant evaluations of training courses and pre/post tests. We will also conduct a six-month follow-up post-test for previous training participants to determine the extent to which information on Quality Standards is being retained and implemented.

This project is funded by the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency’s Behavioral Health Services Innovations Program funded by the Mental Health Services Act.

For a full copy of this evaluation report, please visit www.ilasd.org

