



A NOTE

I, Joana Arcangel, am a peer with lived experience – meaning I identify with mental health recovery. At the Hacienda of Hope and through our organization, Project Return Peer Support Network, we utilize these experiences and focus on strength-building through a person-centered approach to connect with and help others in their journey.

I cannot fully express my gratitude for the many leaders and other peers who've paid the way for mental health education and empowerment. This includes organizations that instill so much hope in others, such as Project Return Peer Support Network, where I have found a sense of belonging and my calling as a peer professional, and generous individuals like Mary Ellen Copeland, who has given many individuals the support, confidence and tools to take charge of their own recovery through creating the Wellness Recovery Action Plan.

I am open about my mental illness not because I don't care about what people think. In fact, I care a lot. I care to open the conversation, I care to open hearts, open minds, open doors. I have faced trauma as a child, developed what has been a very debilitating phobia and my self-destruction was a security blanket that I held close for so long though it only suffocated me. Throughout my life, I had hope, but so many times it was just a flickering light in the cold darkness. That hope, no matter how small it can become or how much it waivers, has been the heart of my resilience.

Being a mental health advocate isn't just a job to me. It is a part of who I am. I look at the Department of Mental Health symbol – Hope, Recovery and Wellness – as a wheel. I am grateful I've had people to ask for directions when I felt lost, people who were my designated drivers, people who kept me company during long exhausting roads. However, the direction I'm headed has always been up to me. I am the ultimate driver of my recovery and although it may not always be full of beautiful sceneries and sunshine, I know it will always be mine to take.





ABOUT PROJECT RETURN PEER SUPPORT NETWORK & THE HACIENDA OF HOPE

PRPSN has evolved and expanded in its 35 years of operation. It was California's first staff-facilitated peer support program for people with mental illness. In 2015, PRPSN was recognized by Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health as its own legal entity and expanded its breadth and depth as a contract provider to include: IMD step-down, peer support/peer counseling/peer mentoring services, alternative crisis support, bridging and support services, workforce training and development, wellness centers/client run centers, and innovation services.

One of Project Return's leaders, Associate Director Angelica Garcia, is a Copeland Center certified WRAP facilitator. *"As a person with a lived experience and working professional in the mental health field, I have found that utilizing WRAP for the last 9 years has been very effective in maintaining my own wellness. Given the functions of fast paced [daily agenda], I have found that having a plan in place reassures me that even if I start noticing signs that are uncomfortable, I can actually take action before they progress. I have established a support system that understands my needs when things might now be going so well. Being a WRAP Facilitator helps me educate others on a system management tool that has been very effective for many of us."*

Hacienda of Hope opened its doors in 2013 as one the first Peer-Run Respite Care Homes in Los Angeles County. Funded by the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, Hacienda of Hope was developed to meet individuals' need for respite in times of crisis and distress when there is no clinical danger. This provides an opportunity to develop a wellness and recovery plan, along with other practical tools, to promote a positive reinforcement of values, relationships, health and life skills that would not necessarily be available in a psychiatric setting.

Annette Scott was a former social worker who identified as a peer and came to the Hacienda of Hope as a guest. She was able to work on her recovery through the power of peer support and tools like WRAP. "Being a former social worker has brought me full circled with my profession. Now, I am in need of services...I have found respite. The Hacienda of Hope is a place where you can rest, heal and redirect or regain insights for a healthier lifestyle. With my stay at the Hacienda of Hope, I have gained epiphanies and empowering reflective moments...I can empower others with life skills I have regained at the Hacienda of Hope."

Our team is staffed with people who identify as peers—those who have found recovery from the stigma, isolation and hopelessness associated with mental illness. We share lived experience to instill hope and provide guidance and support to those who are facing difficulties that challenge a person's mental health and wellness.

At the Hacienda of Hope, we utilize our organizational core values – Hope, Empowerment, Recovery, Mutuality and Integrity – to find common ground with our guests and visitors to promote a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment. We promote our peer-run respite care home as a means to eliminate stigma surrounding mental illness, provide alternative options to



hospitalization which can decrease homelessness, help a person to rediscover their strengths, needs, dreams and aspirations, and encourage independence and personal responsibility in one's recovery and life.

Gregory Park, a former Hacienda of Hope guest, wrote about his experience in a letter of gratitude to the staff: *"When I first arrived here, I did not know what to expect. [My days were] filled with a lot of traumatic, dramatic and stressful situations...During my time here, I found my spark that makes me who I am. Thank you for making this experience truly a memorable one. I was able to achieve many goals and begin plans to better my life."*

Our guests typically stay for 3-5 days. During their stay, guests receive support with activities of daily living, attend peer-run support groups, participate in extracurricular and recreational activities and are linked to outside services and community support.



We base our program, including our peer-run groups, on SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions of Wellness (Emotional, Social, Physical, Intellectual, Spiritual, Financial, Occupational and Environmental Wellness). Our groups include: Walking Meditation, WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan), Music, Spiritual Enlightenment (discussions on spirituality), Your Voice (based on practices by the Hearing Voices Network) and more. Our support groups are facilitated by staff, interns and volunteers and are open not only to our guests, but to adults who would like to participate.

Michol Loeffler is a peer specialist staff member who facilitates our WRAP group at the Hacienda of Hope. She shares her personal experience with mental health challenges, how she found WRAP and how she now helps others take charge of their recovery. *"I became a WRAP facilitator in 2008 and have been facilitating WRAP ever since. I share my journey with guests as an example of what recovery can look like. The tools and concepts of WRAP are helpful to my interaction with guests and visitors. WRAP has shown me that others have the freedom to create their own wellness, just as I have. Because of that, I'm able to guide another person through their journey of wellness, not mine. I believe that this is what WRAP is all about."*

We are located in the Century Villages at Cabrillo in Long Beach, which is an inclusive community of programs that provide a variety of services to various populations, including veterans, low-income families and individuals who deal with mental health issues. At CVC, we often work together and use collaborative efforts to provide services to our members.



Grace Yim, a student at California State University, Dominguez Hills and intern at CVC, was able to experience building her own WRAP. *“As an occupational therapy student who wants to specialize in mental health, I am always eager to learn about evidence-based practices that help people with mental health conditions recover and lead meaningful lives. What is most inspiring about WRAP is that it gives the individual control over his/her illness experience and recovery process. This resource speaks to a vision of health care that empowers clients and facilitates the process of shaping their future possibilities.”*

PRPSN's CORE VALUES

- **Hope:** We hold the belief that things can get better. We never give up and we educate people that no matter how bad things seem, if you take one step at a time, things will change for the better.
- **Empowerment:** We enhance personal growth and inner strength while motivating, inspiring and guiding ourselves and peers into action. We encourage others to reach their full potential by allowing them to find their internal strengths.
- **Recovery:** We believe that individuals who have suffered from mental health challenges can go on to lead successful fulfilling lives. We see individuals grow when they seek out information and utilize the resources offered. Individuals regain their sense of self by taking control of the things which previously seemed beyond their control.
- **Mutuality:** Regardless of our job title, we are all equal and thus treat each other with dignity and respect. We respect the validity of every individual's experiences, thoughts, opinions, and feelings, even if they are different than our own.
- **Integrity:** We practice honesty at all times—personally and professionally. We operate using moral judgement, character and leadership values and do things in a fashion of respect and professionalism.

