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**News, updates, stories, and more from the Center for Urban Community Services.**

**Sept 2023**

Dear Friends of CUCS,

A little over a year ago on August 30, 2022, CUCS opened Paul's Place located at 114 West 14th Street, between 6th and 7th Avenues. Paul's Place is a Drop-In

Center and Safe Haven and is centrally located near subways, bus lines and Union Square Park. Paul's Place serves homeless individuals living on the street, many with mental illness and/or substance abuse issues.

With every CUCS Report, we inform you of the complex nature of homelessness and the complex array of services and supports for those experiencing homelessness. We have discussed transitional sites and permanent supportive housing.

In this September issue we are focusing on Paul's Place. You will learn how a Drop-In Center differs from a traditional shelter, as well as how CUCS guides Safe Haven clients to permanent supportive housing. Both models are necessary and respond to unique needs – both offer vital services, and both offer people a respite from a hard life on the streets.

CUCS/Janian meets our clients wherever they are, and Paul's Place offers an opportunity for anyone who is street homeless to receive care, comfort, and support.

As always, we welcome your comments and questions. We thank you for your partnership, as together, we work towards a solution to this crisis – one person at a time.

Warm regards,

Rise Roth

Chief Development and Communications Officer

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## ***Building Community***

Paul's Place is a special place. When clients walk through our door, they will be met by staff who genuinely care about their well-being and are committed to providing them with high-quality services. Our staff have a plethora of knowledge in so many areas that affect our client population – substance use, trauma, domestic violence, and most importantly, housing.

Our staff never give up on our clients. We believe that our clients deserve a better quality of life and they can achieve their goals. Clients recognize this and feel seen beyond their mental health diagnosis and history of homelessness.

Clients bring their friends from the street and share with them how a simple shower and freshly washed clothing gave them enough confidence to try and interview for a job. That is why they come back.

Ask any of our clients, “Why Paul’s Place?” They will share this: Paul’s Place has become their community.

— **Monica Villamor, LMSW,** Clinical Supervisor, Paul’s

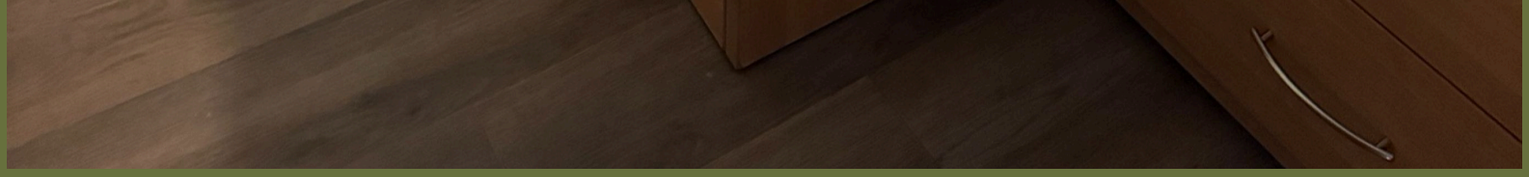
# Paul's Place:

## Building Trust with Unique Services

Paul’s Place exterior on 14th Street.

Paul’s Place offers a remarkable experience for people experiencing street homelessness. It includes two distinct CUCS programs within one building; a 24-bed Safe Haven (transitional housing) as well as a 24 hour Drop-In Center, which is open 7 days a week and can accommodate about 70-90 people during the day.

Many people who are homeless endure experiences that cause them to feel extremely isolated. They may have a hard time trusting others and hesitant to stay in traditional overnight shelters. To address this concern, the Paul's Place Drop-In Center wants people to feel welcome regardless of their status, identity, personal experiences, challenges, or stage of life.



A typical Safe Haven bed at Paul's Place

# The Facilities

**The Drop-In Center** offers many services including assistance with housing placement, but there are no mandatory program requirements that the clients must meet to be eligible for the Drop-In Center services.

**The Safe Haven** offers an alternative to shelter. Each client is assigned a case manager who will work with them on an individualized, person-centered service plan with the ultimate goal of permanent housing.

# Services Offered

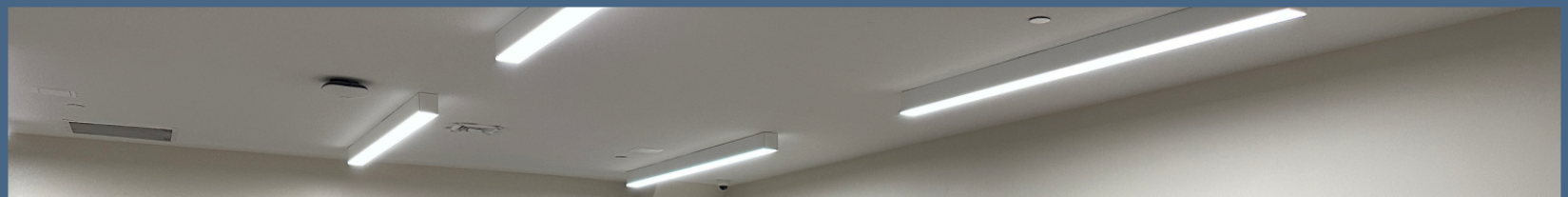
The service teams for both programs use evidence-based practices in its work with clients, which staff are trained to provide. Additionally, they also offer a variety of services, such as:

- Outreach and engagement
- Case management and group treatment
- Psychiatric treatment
- On-site medical care
- Housing placement

Paul's Place staff (left) meets with a client (right)

Drop-In Centers are designed to provide readily accessible and low-commitment emergency and essential services to homeless people living on the street. The goal is to help people feel welcome and safe enough to “drop in”, so staff can start building positive relationships built on trust, communication and goal-setting. Clients find out about Paul’s Place from the Manhattan Outreach Consortium (MOC) Street Outreach Team or by word of mouth.

Both the Safe Haven and Drop-In Center programs are designed with a low barrier for entry, to help engage with homeless people who are mistrusting of traditional services or are hesitant to accept services for a multitude of reasons.



Rows of recliners in the Paul’s Place drop-in center

The Paul’s Place Drop-In Center has the capacity for 44 clients to stay overnight in reclining chairs in the lounge. There are many medical conditions that are exacerbated by extended periods of sitting and standing upright, such as severe foot sores.

The recliners offer a simple first step for people on the path to exiting homelessness. Once people realize they have a safe place to rest and heal, take a shower, wash their clothes, have a warm meal, have a meeting with a medical provider, and feel the support of a case manager, they are more receptive to a discussion about permanent housing.

Along with essentials like showers, restrooms, hot meals, a laundry facility, and personal lockers, Paul's Place offers round-the-clock staff who provide clinical services as well as housing services for approximately 70 clients who are assigned to case managers.

Ultimately, the first step to helping the homeless is always building trust and engagement. Sometimes it takes months of conversations between staff and a client before the client feels safe enough to open up about what they have been through and what their goals are.

Once trust has been established, case managers can begin to help them achieve their goals. Our hope for them is permanent housing.

# Our Impact

CUCS programs are *data-driven.* We consistently track and measure our impact to ensure the highest quality of service possible.

## Paul's Place Statistics:

**1903** total unique clients served by the Drop-In Center since opening

**47,450** total client visits recorded

**38,000** meals served to clients

**13** overdoses reversed using Narcan

# Questions and Answers

*Ask the Experts at CUCS*

Tracy Erhardt, Program Director of Paul's Place (left) sits with a client (right)

**Topic:** Paul's Place
**Expert:** Tracy Erhardt, Program Director of Paul's Place

## Why is Paul's Place right in the middle of the community? Wouldn't it be better for homeless people to be placed further away from communities?

Actually, it is ideal for Paul's Place to be placed in the community. Homelessness is an enormous problem downtown and particularly in the neighborhood where Paul's Place has been established. Parks like Union Square and Washington Square Park are nearby and are used as refuges by homeless people. The Department of Homeless Services (DHS) specifically asked us to create a Drop-In Center south of 14th street to help this population.

## How does Paul's Place listen and adjust to community feedback?

CUCS has monthly meetings with the local Community Advisory Board (CAB). These meetings include CUCS staff, elected officials and neighbor organizations like the Salvation Army. These meetings are a place where CUCS can discuss challenges and solutions. Here's an example:

In the past, there would be occasions in which clients would congregate outside Paul's Place, for example when we are cleaning the facility. Some community members expressed concerns about the crowd. So, Paul's Place staff adjusted their method of assigning spots in the drop-in center, which made placements more predictable for clients. Paul's Place staff also found more room for people and stopped closing during scheduled cleaning and maintenance. This resulted in much fewer people waiting outside.

Paul's Place has worked hand-in-hand with DHS and elected officials to secure funding for additional on-site security staff. This enables staff to immediately address any staff and client concerns as well as ensure conflicts were resolved amicably.

## What Janian Health Care services do you provide?

Janian Medical Care is a CUCS affiliate and provides primary medical and psychiatric care to clients. Paul's Place has one medical nurse practitioner and one psychiatric nurse practitioner on staff, as well as a Licensed Practical Nurse five days a week. Sometimes we face unique challenges when providing health care. For example, if someone has a serious mental health condition, it's more likely they will miss appointments. We want people to be able to walk in, see a friendly face and connect on a human level without the added the stress of missing and rescheduling appointments. So, to provide a high level of service, the dedicated staff always tries to be flexible with scheduling.

## How long do people stay at the drop-in center?

It really varies based on the client. It depends on their status, how long they have been homeless, if they have any serious medical or psychological conditions, and other factors. Some come to us fully prepared to enter permanent housing and only stay a short while. Others are at the beginning of their journey or have documentation issues, like not having a valid photo ID, and that makes it complicated just to get started.

The goal is to balance safety and care, so Paul's Place staff always strives to make sure clients receive the highest quality of care and their needs are met.

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Thank you for reading the CUCS Report. Our goal is to make sure New Yorkers are well-informed as we continue our work to help people rise from poverty, exit homelessness, and be healthy.

The CUCS Report is a publication of the Center for Urban Community Services.

Do you have questions about the CUCS Report, our services, facilities or programs? Contact: **devcom@cucs.org**

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