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Cambridge and Somerville Program for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Rehabilitation

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One of the characteristics that distinguishes Cambridge from other cities and towns with similar-sized populations is its recognition that 1) the health of the community is defined in the broadest sense of the word, and 2) promoting the health of the community requires a broad range of social services and mission-driven non-profit organizations. Cambridge and Somerville Program for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Rehabilitation (CASPAR) is one of Cambridge's most established and well-regarded community-based non-profits. CASPAR was founded in 1970 to address an emerging community and public health need. Individuals, largely homeless alcoholic men, were overrunning the emergency department of The Cambridge Hospital (later to become an integral component of the Cambridge Health Alliance) because there were no less costly community-based services available to treat their addiction problems. CASPAR's founders were committed to establishing an array of shelter and treatment programs to address the issues of homelessness and substance use disorders.

Over the next almost four decades, CASPAR has diversified its service options in response to the needs of the diverse sub-populations affected by substance use: adolescents, people from diverse socio-economic circumstances, women, pregnant women, people involved with the criminal justice system, individuals with co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders, people with HIV/AIDS, and, most recently, heroin, upload, and injection drug users.

In 2008, CASPAR has not lost sight of its original mission or the vision of its founders. CASPAR continues its commitment to provide a continuum of prevention, intervention, and treatment services to individuals and families whose lives are affected by substance use disorders and its dedication to underserved populations, including individuals who are indigent and homeless.

CASPAR's mission is to reduce the harm associated with substance use and contribute to a healthier community. CASPAR's founders were instrumental in the passage of groundbreaking legislation which made Mass. one of the first states in the country to decriminalize alcoholism. CASPAR adheres to the principle that addiction requires treatment, not punishment and incarceration. Research in Mass. and across the country has consistently demonstrated that treatment is an effective strategy in reducing the likelihood that individuals will experience HIV/AIDS, drug overdoses, emergency room visits, crime and incarceration, domestic violence and family disintegration, and homelessness.

CASPAR embraces a series of underlying values which serve as the foundation for its service delivery.

- * Each human being should be treated with dignity and respect.
- * Ensuring client safety is a top priority in client care.

* Services should build upon the strengths of clients.

* Prevention, risk assessment, and treatment services are most effective when provided as early as possible.

* The nature and course of substance use disorders underscore the need for ongoing supportive services.

CASPAR's fundamental goal is to keep hope alive today so that recovery is possible in the future. To accomplish its life saving goal, CASPAR has developed comprehensive, accessible, low- or no cost services that meet people wherever they find themselves on the use/abuse/ recovery continuum, and which promote progress from the streets to shelter, treatment, long-term sobriety, transitional housing, and an end to homelessness. The benefit to clients is access to a service continuum with a common philosophy and a shared vision, in which they are treated with acceptance and affirmation of their self worth. There is no wrong door to enter CASPAR's service delivery system, and individuals who relapse have the opportunity to return to treatment in a setting where an atmosphere of trust already exists.

Only in a progressive, diverse, and thriving city like Cambridge could the work of a non-profit such as CASPAR be viewed as part of the solution, not part of the problem.

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