



The new Living Room in Evanston, supporting residents in crisis

How it came to be

The mental health crisis in our communities continues unabated. Our hospitals, EMS teams, police and community crisis workers are overwhelmed by calls from people experiencing these crises. Many mental health agencies are expanding counseling services, and yet urgent need continues to outpace available services. As a result, people in crisis move quickly through hospital emergency departments without receiving the support they need, are diverted into the criminal justice system, or cannot find skilled and compassionate care.

Beginning in 2020, the City of Evanston sought new ways to support people in crisis:

- Evanston's Alternative 911 Subcommittee explored responses to mental health emergencies beyond what the police could offer;
- Providers developed new mobile crisis programs supported by the State of Illinois;
- Community and hospital partners requested that the City of Evanston establish a Living Room in Evanston, modeled on the Living Room in Skokie, developed by Turning Point Behavioral Health; and
- In March 2022, the City of Evanston awarded Turning Point one year's worth of operating expenses and renovation funding.

The Living Room is a walk-in program for adults in psychiatric crisis. At no cost to guests, this program provides a calm and comfortable environment in which guests can resolve crises with an experienced and compassionate team of therapists and Crisis Recovery Support Specialists (people with lived experience with mental illness). Over its 13 years of operation, The Living Room in Skokie has maintained an excellent track record of deflecting guests away from emergency room visits – a 98% success rate for the last five years. This is better for guests and avoids draining limited hospital resources.

The Evanston Living Room will offer these same supports in a welcoming environment in Evanston. To address the complex behavioral health concerns and sometimes overwhelming economic anxiety of community members, the Evanston Living Room will also include support for people with substance use concerns and those needing assistance with employment and enrolling in public benefit programs. This new integrated Living Room model is highly innovative and will broaden crisis support significantly.

The Living Room in Evanston is just south of Ascension St. Francis Hospital. Turning Point Behavioral Health will lead the project and additional services will be provided by PEER Services and Impact Behavioral Health Partners. The City of Evanston made the first investment in this program through its American Rescue Plan Act funds. Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky secured additional federal funding and State Senator Laura Fine secured state capital funding. All partners continue to raise funds to secure the program's future.

Turning Point Behavioral Health

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Coming soon to Evanston at 311 Elmwood Avenue! www.tpoint.org