



The new Living Room in Evanston, supporting residents in crisis

An Overview

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 care they need, are diverted into the criminal justice system, or cannot find the skilled and compassionate care they deserve.

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

- Evanston's Alternative 911 Subcommittee explored potential non-police responses to mental health emergencies;
- 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 pioneering Living Room developed by Turning Point Behavioral Health Care Center; and
- In March 2022, the City of Evanston awarded Turning Point one year's worth of operating expenses and renovation funding.

The Evanston Living Room is modeled on the successful Living Room & Resource Center run by Turning Point at its Skokie facility. 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. Turning Point's talented Crisis Recovery Support Specialists bring to their work personal lived experience with mental illness and provide uniquely skilled support for guests in crisis. Over its twelve years of operation, The Living Room at Turning Point has maintained an excellent track record of deflecting guests away from emergency room visits. In the past five years, The Living Room has maintained at least a 98% success rate in diverting guests from needing emergency room services. This is better for guests and avoids draining limited hospital resources.

The Evanston Living Room will offer these same supports in a welcoming environment on the campus of Ascension St. Francis Hospital. 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!

Ascension St. Francis Hospital will host the Living Room near the 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 Care Center

Skokie location: 8324 Skokie Boulevard, Skokie, IL 60077, (847)933-0051

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