

Senior Support Services

Annual Report -- Year 2021

Senior Support Services — Denver's only nonprofit specializing in services for hungry and homeless elders — has been in business since 1976, helping an ever-increasing number of clients aged 60 and over lead more self-sufficient and fulfilling lives. We offer a myriad of services including hot meals, clothing, transportation, and help obtaining government benefits and affordable housing.

Pre-COVID-19, up to 250 clients per day were free to shelter and socialize — from 7am to 7pm — at our 4,000-square-foot center. With the arrival of the pandemic, we struggled to find a way to continue to serve our clients but also keep them and our staff healthy and safe. As clients were literally rubbing elbows, we made the difficult decision in March 2020 to no longer allow congregating inside our facility. Instead, clients cued up outside and were able to get services and case management through open windows.

Clients got one hot meal and one sack lunch passed through a window between 11am and 1pm every weekday. At another window, clients got hygiene items, clothing, mail and other necessities. At additional stations, clients were able to obtain our trademark comprehensive case management services. On cold days, they were able to come inside one at a time to meet with a case manager.

To the relief of all, we were able to open and allow congregating in our facility in June of 2021. Our trademark services were once again available inside making them a lot more accessible. Face-to-face interactions improved client/case manager relations and trust-building, and increased completion of tasks due to client ability to be inside. Everyone was still required, by public health order, to wear a mask.

Mission

Our mission is to make each day better and safer for Denver's low-income and homeless seniors by providing the resources and support they need to lead more self-sufficient and fulfilling lives.

Programs

We operate the only day center catering to the needs of the hungry and homeless seniors of the Denver area. Clients get meals, emergency food and clothing, individualized case management, medical care, housing, government benefits, socialization, and activities. During the pandemic year of 2021, we provided:

- Two meals served each weekday for up to 150 seniors
- Emergency food and clothing banks
- Access to medical care, health screenings, counseling and health insurance
- Individualized case management and advocacy including:
 - Obtaining government benefits
 - Obtaining and retaining affordable housing
 - Paying rent and utilities on behalf of clients
 - Mediating tenant-landlord disputes
 - Preventing homelessness through financial management counseling
 - Connecting clients to healthcare providers and health-related services
 - Leading Care Coordination in complex client situations.

2021 Accomplishments

Overall

Provided services for 1510 hungry and homeless seniors¹

Nutrition

Served 40,600 individual meals²

Distributed 2485 emergency food items³

Other Basic Needs

Distributed 2730 clothing items⁴, 2,500 pairs of socks, 340 new boxer briefs⁵

Distributed 10,000 hygiene items

Made direct payments for birth certificates, prescriptions, healthcare-related items, moves, background checks, etc, for 29 seniors

Housing

Obtained or retained shelter or housing on 2547 occasions⁶

Provided “Starter Kits” for 20 households⁷

Provided furniture and décor for 10 new households⁸

Moved the belongings of 7 seniors

Provided long-term, onsite storage for 75 homeless seniors.

Government Benefits

Obtained or retained government benefits (or financial stability) on 2692 occasions⁹

Legal

Obtained legal aid for 264 seniors¹⁰

Transportation

Distributed, free of charge, 600 roundtrip bus tickets

Distributed 1020 free monthly bus passes

Transported or escorted clients by car to 50 medical appointments, government offices, shopping trips, home, etc

Health

Connected seniors with primary/specialty healthcare, health insurance, dental, optical, mental health or substance use referrals, prescriptions, or emergency medical care on 1603 occasions¹¹

DHS outreach worker had 200 encounters with clients regarding SNAP, Old Age Pension, AND, Medicaid issues, rent or deposit assistance, and other financial matters

Licensed Professional Counselors provided 495 individual mental health or substance use counseling sessions for 98 seniors.

Demographics of clients

(Each client is at least 55 years of age)

Physical Condition and Health

- 85% -- mental health challenges
- 60% -- alcohol or drug use challenges
- 70% -- physically frail or disabled
- 22% -- Veterans

Housing

- 75% -- homeless
- 80% -- homeless or at risk of homelessness
- 90% -- live alone or are homeless alone

Gender

- 78% -- men
- 22% -- women
- .1% -- transgender

Ethnicity

- 43% -- African-American
- 27% -- White (non-Latino)
- 18% -- Latino
- 8% -- American Indian
- 4% -- Asian

Income Level

- 80% -- living below the federal poverty level¹²
- \$779 per month is the average income of each client

¹ These are unduplicated individuals.

² Meals were served to 824 unduplicated clients.

³ 141 clients benefitted.

⁴ 304 clients benefitted.

⁵ 132 clients benefitted.

⁶ Here our efforts were critical to the obtaining or retaining of housing thanks to a direct rent payment, tenant-landlord mediation, or persistent advocacy on behalf of the client. 580 unduplicated clients benefitted.

⁷ Each Starter Kit includes bowls, plates, cups, glasses, cooking utensils, cutlery, pots and pans, linens, etc

⁸ Home Builders Association of Metro Denver has coordinated with interior design firms to collect and donate the new furniture & furnishings for these previously homeless tenants. All the beneficiaries were previously homeless.

⁹ It can take an enormous amount of staff time and persistence to obtain government benefits sometimes because the initial application is denied requiring the filing of one or more appeals. Monthly government payments including Aid to the Needy & Disabled, Old Age Pension, Supplemental Security Income, Social Security, Veterans' benefits, food stamps, and one-time payments including LEAP or rent & utility rebates are all included here. 543 unduplicated clients benefitted.

¹⁰ This includes investigating open warrants, background check related issues, and working with Colorado Legal Services regarding tenant eviction, replacement ID's, name change issues, etc.

¹¹ 450 unduplicated clients benefitted.

¹² The federal Poverty Guidelines are used to determine the federal poverty level here. The 2021 Federal Poverty Guideline for a one-person household is \$1,073 per month.