

PROFILE

SCHUMPERT MEDICAL CENTER

Building Community Trust

An organization that coordinates comprehensive services helps persons in the Shreveport, LA, area lead healthier, more productive lives. In March 1992 Schumpert Medical Center opened Centerpoint, a multi-service center that offers comprehensive information and referral services, coalition building, and case management services. The initiative links persons in need of services with service providers. Centerpoint was launched after Schumpert did a community needs assessment in

1989, surveying 70 political leaders, health-care and social service professionals, and low-income residents. Through this assessment, Schumpert discovered that persons in the community lacked access to services and that some critical health-care, mental health, housing, employment, and social services were not available. Added to this was the absence of a consistent, well-developed network of service providers.

After reviewing the results of the community needs assessment, Schumpert formed a community advisory council, a 19-member panel that included representatives from competing hospitals. The council was charged with setting Centerpoint's goal and objectives (see Box).

REFERRALS AND INFORMATION

Through one call or visit to Centerpoint, persons can access the maze of programs and agencies available in northwest Louisiana. Centerpoint maintains an information and referral data base on all community services. Its Information and Referrals Services re-

Through one call to Centerpoint, persons can access a maze of programs.

ceives approximately 300 calls a month, seeking a range of services—assistance with rent or utilities, medication, dental care, and travelers' aid. But one agency cannot usually meet all needs. Centerpoint's information specialist often has to refer a client to several sources to fulfill his or her needs.

Social service, health-care, and other agencies must understand the wants and needs of persons in the community and of the service delivery system to meet the community's needs. To keep abreast of what is available in the community, an organization's representative must participate in ongoing communication with service providers and the public and should attend various gatherings that might take place at city hall, in neighborhoods, and through-out faith communities.

The information and referral data base was developed and con-

Centerpoint's Goal and Objectives

GOAL

To facilitate informed and collaborative efforts to effectively serve northwest Louisiana residents in need of assistance.

OBJECTIVES

1. To develop and maintain an accurate and current computerized inventory of community services for persons who need assistance.
2. To offer information and referral services to agencies and persons in need through correspondence, telephone calls, or in-person visits.
3. To facilitate networking among community leaders, local government, and other institutions, agencies, and faith communities that provide services to persons who need assistance.
4. To encourage and support the formation of alliances of faith communities that might finance and develop direct services for persons who need assistance.
5. To establish volunteer backing, including a roster of physicians and legal, financial, and other professionals willing to provide direct services to persons who need assistance.
6. To provide orientation and educational programs to community service staff and volunteers.
7. To assess community needs and facilitate collaboration between community agencies so that they may develop action plans to fill service gaps.
8. To develop statistical and demographic data on community needs, services, and affected populations, making this data available to organizations for reports, strategic planning, and grant applications.
9. To advocate for better and more accessible services for persons who need assistance.
10. To continue to be the central intake for homeless and at-risk populations, providing holistic case management that addresses emergency and survival needs and provides a comprehensive service plan to address other socioeconomic, environmental, and psychological factors that affect their lives.

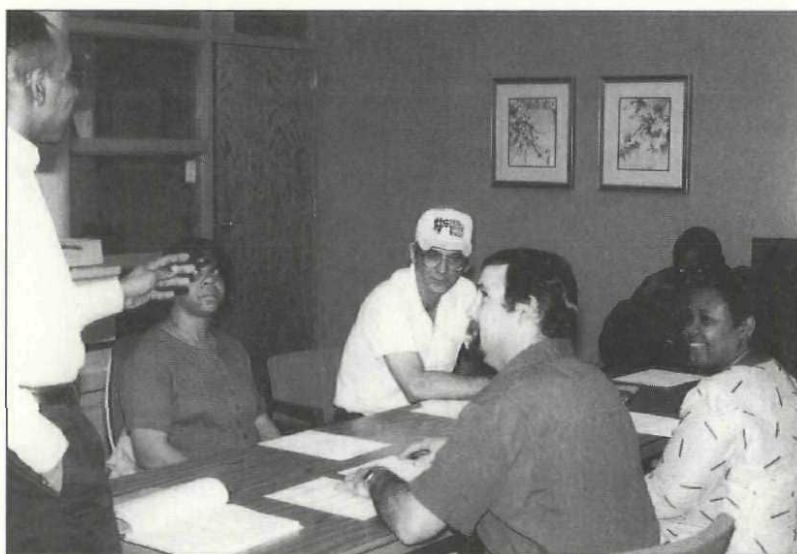
tinues to be updated through continual communication and networking with service organizations and the community. For example, at Centerpoint-sponsored "First Thursday" lunch gatherings, faith communities and social service providers share ideas and provide information updates on services.

Centerpoint, with other service providers and members of the religious, business, and civic communities, is in the process of taking coalition building one step further in 1995. A workshop was held on March 31 to develop a structure or process whereby the community as a whole has a voice in the development and funding of future services. Business and service providers must buy into the idea of community-wide planning, with the understanding that support for services will be part of the overall planning pro-

cess. This will ensure that duplication of services will be eliminated, resources will be maximized, data regarding the greatest needs will be gathered and shared, and the most critical needs will be addressed.

The March 31 workshop was a first step to community ownership of the problems and the solutions within the community. Since our federal government is offering the opportunity to local government to define how resources will be distributed, the challenge is to find new ways to make the best decisions regarding the distribution of money, efforts, and time.

Not only do organizations tell Centerpoint what they provide but they also turn to Centerpoint to find out where service gaps exist. Because Centerpoint tracks all services requested—those that are filled and those that go unfilled—the



Education on daily living skills is part of the case management work of Centerpoint.

organization can provide agencies with the data they need when applying for grants and planning.

REACHING OUT TO THE HOMELESS

Centerpoint is located on the first floor of a hotel in Shreveport's social services corridor. It is near a bus line and on a major pedestrian thoroughfare. Centerpoint is a centralized intake for homeless persons and their families and for those at risk for homelessness.

The healthcare needs of the homeless are a constant concern. Centerpoint and other Schumpert Medical

Center departments are improving how they screen for communicable diseases, especially tuberculosis. Immunizations for children in area shelters and impoverished neighborhoods are provided by the "Shots for Tots" program, a multihospital, van-based immunization outreach program.

The case management services for homeless persons are often comprehensive and long term. Centerpoint case managers can arrange for services such as transportation, counseling, and education. Homeless persons come to Centerpoint for referral to an area shelter as the first step toward regaining stability. The case managers monitor client progress and offer support services as these persons move through a continuum of care from shelters into permanent living quarters.

Some homeless persons are unable to

begin their journey to stability because of substance abuse or mental illness. In addition to receiving encouragement and support, these homeless persons can shower and launder their clothing at Centerpoint. Local religious organizations donate food, shampoo, soap, towels, clothing, and other items for those in need. Centerpoint helps more than 1,000 new homeless persons each year as it continues to serve those still struggling with life on the street.

HOPE IN A HEALING COMMUNITY

Centerpoint offers hope to a healing community—both to persons and service providers. By working collaboratively, community service organizations better use existing services and can plan to fill service gaps. Centerpoint staff is proud to be part of creating this healing environment.

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Director

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Centerpoint offers information on community services and also a place to catch up on the news.

