



Circle of Hope Program

Where do you go when your life has been turned upside down by domestic violence coupled with substance abuse, emotional trauma or psychiatric illness? Add to the equation the responsibility for children who have been witnesses and/or victims of the domestic violence. Hope House and ReDiscover answered that call with a special program that links women at Hope House with mental health and substance abuse services at ReDiscover.

Funded by the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City, the Circle of Hope program began in March 2010 under the direction of ReDiscover's Madeline Maldonado. "In the past, women would go through undo suffering because they didn't know how to navigate the system. Now they are able to get medication and therapeutic services right away. We are seeing women who wouldn't have lasted a week in a homeless shelter (due to the severity of their mental health and substance abuse), and are retaining them in our services after they've left Hope House," says Madeline Maldonado.

At any given time there are 27 – 30 women living at Hope House with half of those women receiving services at ReDiscover. The services can best be described as "wrap around"; meaning they begin with mental health and substance abuse services and continue as the clients are assisted in finding affordable housing, jobs and things as simple as getting a driver's license.

Many of these women come to Hope House with very little. A particular client, who was a successful teacher in another state, fled an abusive relationship with her daughter. After receiving psychiatric services from ReDiscover she was assisted in finding an apartment and receiving her teaching certification in Missouri. She found a teaching job and was given a new winter coat which may seem like a small thing in the way of services but made such a difference. She writes, "I was invited to the staff Christmas party so that I could meet everyone. I wore my new coat. I didn't realize how embarrassing my old coat was until I had extra confidence with my new coat. I'm going to make it. You were right. Thank you for believing in me and supporting me."

The program provided intense, long-term services to 74 battered women and their children in 2010. The average age of the women was 37 years old with an average of three children each. During assessment, 62% of the women exhibited severe mental illness. At 30 days post enrollment 44% were rated as severe. The success of the program has led to another year of funding to serve additional women and children ensuring that Hope House and ReDiscover continue to collaborate successfully. For information on the Circle of Hope program contact Madeline Maldonado @ mmaldonado@rediscovermh.org.