Overcoming Barriers to Mental Health Access: Transportation

One of the over-arching goals of People Incorporated’s programming is to “improve the quality of life for individuals and families experiencing barriers to mental health and wellness.” One common barrier to providing mental health care for many individuals is transportation.

Transportation barriers can take many forms – for some individuals, they simply do not have access to transportation without the support of someone who can drive them due to a lack of public or personal transportation. For these individuals, hired transportation such as ride-sharing programs like Uber or Lyft may be financially out of reach.

For some individuals who have their own transportation but are experiencing a mental health crisis, the idea of driving themselves to our crisis centers – even when staff is ready to greet them and a bed is waiting – can be just too overwhelming.

In 2020, when Minneapolis was experiencing unrest, People Incorporated utilized transportation support to get clients out of unsafe conditions and into crisis programming when individuals were experiencing both a mental health crisis and threats to their physical safety.

“Some days, it felt like dispatching a hero when you took a call from someone and ordered their Uber ride to get them safely to one of our programs,” says Jennifer Sietsema, one of People Incorporated’s Access Navigators.

People living in more rural communities also face transportation access issues. In-patient mental health supports are extremely limited in the more rural areas of Minnesota, if available at all. Without a family member or a friend to help support their travel to a program with bed availability, mental health supports remain out of reach.
A ride to one of our crisis centers, treatment programs, or even a therapy appointment may be the pivotal moment. For those without reliable transportation, the cost of getting to the treatment can be a significant barrier. In 2021 alone, People Incorporated helped individuals from Elk River, Ham Lake, Shakopee, Hastings, Rochester, and throughout the metro get the care they needed when it wasn’t available to them locally. This year, with the added opening of the Steiner Kelting Mental Wellness program in Chaska, MN, which will serve a much more rural clientele, we anticipate this annual expense to grow to more than $55,000 annually. Your gifts to this program ensure people who need care can access the support they need. You can make a gift to remove barriers to mental health using the enclosed envelope or visiting our website at http://www.peopleincorporated.org/donate.

The real antidote to burnout is a feeling of competency and confidence in what you’re doing. Once you’ve removed what you don’t need, you can add things back where you feel competent, in control, and basically content. This is the pathway out of burnout. Oh, and yoga if you’re so inclined.

People Incorporated Expands Hybrid Model of Care

The antidote to burnout is not “self-care” and it’s okay to turn down a meeting with someone you don’t really have time for (this will give you some space to say yes to things you actually want to do). Lastly, let’s consume less news, once you know what’s going on, you’re set.

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Compassion Fatigue is one of many courses available to the public through People Incorporated’s Training Institute. These classes offer affordable, quality training taught by experts in their field. You can support the Training Institute to keep these classes affordable and provide scholarships to those who need them or sign up for training at www.traininginstitute.org/w/.

M any clients, or our Intensive Residential Treatment Service (IRTS) – a supportive environment for treating mental health and chemical health needs for up to 90 days- face the hurdle of finding bed availability at a new location that can support them. Even more, the transition to a new program requires them to pack, relocate, and become familiar with all new staff and therapists. This can create new anxieties, activate or worsen existing symptoms, and sometimes even re-traumatize a person, inevitably affecting their recovery path.

Allowing the client to remain in their original program is less disruptive and provides an added level of comfort, safety, and security. In response, People Incorporated introduced a hybrid model of care – one that incorporates both short-term and long-term client support – in September 2021 with the Steiner Kelting Mental Wellness facility opening in Chaska. This hybrid program model was so successful that People Incorporated has now converted our two other crisis programs to provide hybrid care – Nancy Page Residence and Diane Ahrens Residence.

Mara Burk, Program Manager at Nancy Page Residence, explained how this care differs from that of a hospital or other institution: “It creates less of a financial strain, is relatively stable, and it won’t create additional turmoil in the client. The hospital experience can be traumatic, whereas this feels more like home rather than an institution. This is a door into an entire world of mental health services, a step over a threshold. It gives the individual comfort knowing they’re not locked up somewhere without a choice.”

When appropriate, individuals receiving crisis care (10 days programming) will be able to move directly into IRTS (up to 90 days of care), removing barriers and waiting for the next steps to be taken on a path toward recovery. Our treatment philosophy is to meet clients with the appropriate level of care in the least disruptive and restrictive way, reducing the trauma associated with starting over.

Recovery means something different to everyone. The road can be bumpy, and it isn’t linear. But showing consistent support for a loved one means a lot in that journey,” says Burk.

More details about our crisis and IRTS programs, along with current bed availability, can be found on our website at http://www.peopleincorporated.org.
People Incorporated’s First Practitioner for Families Experiencing Homelessness

Homelessness affects families. As of 2019, 32% of those experiencing homelessness were children living with their parents, their entire family unit navigating a loss of shelter, and scarcely available public resources. This number has remained relatively stationary since 2015 and does not show signs of slowing. This is exactly where Olivia Jensen, People Incorporated’s first Street Outreach practitioner solely focusing on families, enters in on these vital services. Your gifts to People Incorporated make critical support like this possible.

Olivia’s work is primarily proactive – finding families currently experiencing homelessness or those on the brink of losing stable housing through relationships with third parties. She spent her first months at People Incorporated fostering relationships with school social workers, family shelters, housing workers, and other community partners. By building these connections, Olivia made her name and People Incorporated’s name, a ready resource for families experiencing homelessness. This is what it means to be an integrated, community-based provider, the foundation of our mission.

One of the best parts of my job is building strong relationships with families and children who don’t always have a great support system,” Olivia says. “A huge part of my work is breaking down stereotypes of those experiencing homelessness. Every human, family, and child deserves love, kindness, and respect.”

While many of our adult clients are found through direct street outreach, often through a humble offering of survival tools or supplies for basic hygiene, this strategy is not as effective for family units.

“Homeless families are much more difficult to identify. While some families may live outdoors, many more seek shelter in vehicles, or parents may house their children at a family member or friend’s house while they remain outdoors. Olivia finds most of her clients through referrals from community partners,” says Street Outreach Program Manager Dave Katzenmeyer.

As far as Dave remembers, family homelessness has always been a challenge in our communities but has grown in recent years due to the housing challenges created by the pandemic and the rising cost of living. Olivia has worked with families who have lost their jobs, fallen behind on monthly rent payments, and/or lost the ability to afford childcare. While many families experienced temporary relief from the COVID-specific eviction moratorium in MN, which lifted in October 2021, creating new issues for families struggling financially.

“I’ll get calls from people saying, ‘I’m about to be evicted,’” Olivia said. “We have a hard time finding good landlords who’ll take on these clients, landlords who will work with people with criminal records, poor rental histories, or poor credit.”

Mental health plays a major role in families experiencing homelessness. With the basic human need of shelter removed, families are not only at risk of developing a mental illness, but they risk exacerbating any preexisting mental illnesses. Olivia can direct families to the appropriate resources and programs to get well and move towards stability, and she often makes referrals to other programs within People Incorporated. The holistic nature of our many program offerings allows for seamless referrals with positive results.

Olivia has already made incredible strides in supporting families in your community. So far, in 2022, she has helped 20 families. Olivia has secured stable housing for four of these families, one of them being a single-father family, which is a rarer and more difficult type of family unit to secure resources for. At any given time, she works long-term with about 15 families with 15-20 additional families on a drop-in, short-term basis.

Your support sustains Olivia’s family-focused work and allows our Street Outreach team to envision innovative ways to reach the most vulnerable members of our community.

Program Spotlight: Case Management

For some of our clients, case management is the difference between staying at home and returning to the hospital after a health crisis. It is also the difference between living in their own home versus a congregate living environment such as a nursing home, adult foster care home, or other group living environment. Separated from the financial strain, multiple return visits to the hospital may inhibit a person’s healing process – particularly in the case of mental health issues. With a case manager, clients can easily engage with aides, technology, or other resources that allow them to live comfortably and independently in their homes.

Case managers are advocates and supporters for clients who live with mental illnesses and other health conditions that limit an otherwise independent life. A case manager looks at the full scope of a client’s condition and connects them to the appropriate resources, including a therapist, medical equipment, or house help, all with the goal of finding long-term and cost-effective solutions. Sometimes, case managers will also provide clients with resources received through donation drives, such as winter coats or other basic material needs.

So far in 2022, People Incorporated has served around 850 clients in Minnesota through 6 case management programs, quickly approaching 2021’s annual total of about 950 clients. Our programs include services for children and adults who are deaf or hard of hearing, those experiencing a myriad of mental illnesses, those struggling with substance abuse, those experiencing intermittent homelessness, and much more.

“A case manager is important because it’s somebody who’s there with an outside perspective to remind clients that somebody’s there for them and not judging them for their choices,” said Ashley Hilbelink, Program Supervisor for the Dual Case Management Program. “They take the time to figure out what’s important to them.”

A case manager is a liaison between the client and the multitude of services available through our programs and the larger community. This may include a support plan for housing needs or employment opportunities, daily living, substance use, financial management, and more. Often, case managers are a welcome alternative to law enforcement involvement or a costly hospital visit.

“We’re advocates, and we want to make sure people have the supports they need,” said Hilbelink. “We have the tough conversations and make connections with folks who don’t want to speak with law enforcement or probation officers.”

“We’re here for the people,” added Andrea Bode, Program Supervisor of the Dakota County Waiver Case Management. “It’s human to human.”

Bode has worked at People Incorporated for two years, and with ten full years of industry experience, she immediately noticed how our case management approach is different. A mental health focus, she says, is crucial when approaching clients seeking these services, many of whom present complex cases in need of personal and holistic attention. As the community need continues to rise, case management continues to be an integral part of People Incorporated’s community impact.

“Mental health is community health,” said Hilbelink. “We work with folks who are experiencing mental illness daily, and we can do something for them that’s big or small that will change their lives. This work is creating stability in the community.”

When you host a drive to meet some of our clients’ basic needs like coats or holiday toys, you are helping our case management team support critical community needs. To learn more about hosting a drive at your workplace, business, or club – or to see a list of current needs – email us at volunteer@peopleincorporated.org.
WISE giving

Have a required minimum distribution from your IRA? Read this first!

You have spent years carefully earning and investing your money, and now it's time to utilize those investments as your annual income. While this is an exciting time for many, this new stage in life also comes with new tax implications. Your distribution affects your income taxes, insurance premiums, and discretionary spending – including giving!

Many People Incorporated supporters choose to use Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) to save money on their taxes and premiums while significantly impacting People Incorporated’s mission. Read on to see examples of how this method can save you money and make a bigger impact.

WHAT IS A QCD?
A Qualified Charitable Distribution is when a donor who is at least 70 ½ years old directs their IRA investment firm to take funds from the IRA and give them directly to the charity, bypassing the account holder. Because those funds never hit the individual’s personal bank account, they are not counted as income, but they meet the distribution requirements. This means you can make a larger distribution with the same amount of funds and lower your taxable income (which is also used to determine Medicare Part B and prescription coverage rates). Each individual taxpayer can choose to give up to $100,000 annually since IRAs are assigned individually and are not joint assets between couples.

Compare the two scenarios* below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Joe</strong></td>
<td>Pulls $100,000 from his IRA to meet his required minimum distribution for 2022. He pays 24% federal taxes on his distribution ($24,000) He has $76,000 remaining. He gives $12,000 to People Incorporated and keeps the remaining $64,000 for personal expenses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annabelle</strong></td>
<td>Directs her financial institution to give People Incorporated $14,000 directly from her IRA. The tax brackets break at $89,076, so Anna only pays 22% on her $86,000 in taxes, and nothing from her gift is counted as taxable income. Her total tax bill is $18,920. She still has $67,080 for personal expenses.</td>
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Annabelle gave $2,000 MORE to People Incorporated and kept $3,080 more for income! She will also be in the lowest bracket for Medicare Part B premiums – a savings of more than $68/month!

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD I GIVE MY FINANCIAL ADVISOR IF I WANT TO MAKE A QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTION TO PEOPLE INCORPORATED?
To make this distribution, please give your financial advisor People Incorporated’s address and our federal tax ID (EIN):
- People Incorporated
- 41-0962996
- 3000 Ames Crossing Rd, 8600
- Eagan, MN 55121

For questions regarding qualified charitable distributions or other giving tools to save you money, contact Rachel Hickok, Director of Development, at give@peopleincorporated.org or 651.288.3514.

*These illustrations are meant to be examples to illustrate possibilities and should not be taken as tax advice. Please consult your financial advisor on specifics to your situation.

Partners make lasting impact at People Incorporated

A special thanks to the team at Mairs & Power for their recent volunteer event with People Incorporated! In May, St. Paul financial firm Mairs & Power donated their time, resources, and needed items for our homeless outreach programs. Together, they created 288 outreach kits with socks, snacks, and toiletries. Thank you, Mairs & Power! We would also like to recognize the team from Ryan Companies who joined us at Huss Center for Recovery. These volunteers painted our ballroom and brought some freshness and light to our clients. Thank you to Ryan Companies for your time, resources, and participation!

For Mental Health Awareness Month in May, we partnered with local Twin Cities businesses and organizations to create donation drives for People Incorporated’s homeless outreach and youth programs. Thank you to Anthem BCBS, Deluxe Corporation, Fueled Collective, Twin City Garage Door, and Weber Shandwick. For more information on how you can help, contact Jeff DeSutter, Corporate & Foundation Giving Officer, at jeff.desutter@peopleincorporated.org.
Bridging the Gap:
A Panel Discussion Between Mental Health & Law Enforcement

People Incorporated, Blaine, Coon Rapids, and St. Paul Police Departments are uniting to help share the impact of our partnership with mental health professionals embedded within the police departments serving our Minnesota communities. Join us to hear from police and mental health professionals!

August 17th, 2022, 10:30 am – 12:00 pm
Ramsey County Library – Roseville
2180 North Hamline Avenue, Roseville, MN 55113