



HELPING PEOPLE WITH
MENTAL DISABILITIES TO
ACHIEVE QUALITY LIVES

TSI Living

Fall 2005

News for the consumers, staff, family & friends of Transitional Services, Inc.

A Good Night's Sleeeeeeep...

Shakespeare once wrote, "To sleep, perchance to dream..." and William Wordsworth called sleep "blessed barrier between day and day..." Many people take the proverbial "Good Night's Sleep" for granted, but for those who can't sleep, it's an elusive luxury. According to the American Sleep Disorders Association (ASDA), 35 million Americans suffer from long-lasting insomnia.

There are several causes of sleeplessness. Some are a stressful event, environmental disturbances (such as noise, light or temperature), use of alcohol, tobacco or caffeine, and changing sleep and work hours. Women, usually after the age of menopause, are most frequently affected. For most people, insomnia is something that occurs only "sometimes."

Typically, a person requires one hour of sleep for every two hours they are awake. The average sleep requirement for most people is about eight hours per night. This seems to be "hard-wired" into our bodies through years of evolution.

When someone doesn't get enough rest each night, they begin to accumulate a sleep debt. How can a person tell if they are getting a sleep debt? Here are two indicators: 1) They need the alarm clock every morning to wake them; and 2) they tend to sleep many more hours on weekend or non-work days than during the week. Continuing in this cycle for over a month, a person can accumulate up to 40-50 hours of sleep debt. That can be harmful.

Sleep deprivation can lead to: irritability; a decreased attention span; falling asleep unintentionally when doing repetitive tasks such as driving; feeling "run down" and in a general state of low energy; and feeling unhappy.

Sleep is important to the immune system. It allows the body to repair itself. It gives time for the mind to organize information and retain memory. It allows for dreaming, which is critical to maintaining mental and emotional health.

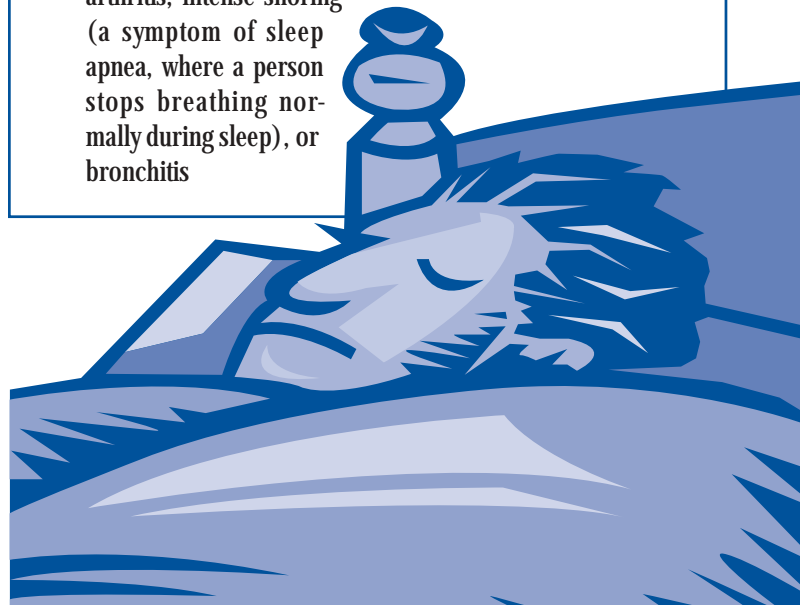
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Improving Your Sleep Time

You can get those precious hours of sleep by:

- * Avoiding caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol, especially during the four to six hours before sleep
- * Not exercising within four hours of bedtime; exercise earlier in the day
- * Engaging in a relaxing bedtime activity like taking a warm bath, listening to music or enjoying a light snack
- * Trying to put worries out of your mind; plan a time tomorrow to think about them
- * Reserving your bed for sleeping only; it isn't your office, a place you watch TV, pay your bills, or talk about the day's events
- * Going to bed when you are sleepy; if you don't fall asleep in about 20-30 minutes, leave the bedroom and do some quiet activity until you do feel sleepy
- * Making sure your bed and pillow are comfortable; making your bedroom a quiet and dark retreat to induce sleep
- * Going to bed and waking up at the same time everyday, even on the weekends; it will normalize your sleep and wake cycles
- * Napping no more than 30 minutes and only in the afternoon and only if you are very sleepy
- * Seeing a doctor for treatment of any medical condition that is causing your sleep to be disturbed such as gastric distress, arthritis, intense snoring (a symptom of sleep apnea, where a person stops breathing normally during sleep), or bronchitis



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Sharon Alberts, CEO

From the CEO's Desk

According to Webster's dictionary, one definition of stigma is a mark of shame or discredit: stain. The image that this definition immediately brought to mind for me is the story of *The Scarlet Letter*, written by Nathaniel Hawthorne. In this famous novel, one of the main characters, Hester Prynne, is convicted of adultery and is forced to wear a scarlet A as a permanent sign of her sin. Because of this indiscretion, she was rejected by the society in which she lived.

Today when we talk about stigma, it is often in relation to things such as mental illness. People find it difficult to admit that they have mental illness because of the fear of how others may view them; as less than or as having done something to bring about this illness upon themselves. Rather than risk being rejected by the society in which they live, they remain silent. They may also fear what will happen to them if they admit to themselves that all is not well. A recent

example of this was when someone I know admitted that she never felt quite right even as a teen but she was afraid to seek treatment. She really believed that if she sought help, she would be hospitalized for a long time. She lived with her symptoms until she could cope with them no longer. Desperation and two suicide attempts forced her to seek help. I tell this story because it is recent and just tells me that we have a long way to go before the society we live in understands and accepts mental illness.

Fortunately, some individuals are beginning to speak out about their illness, but there is still much to be done to overcome the stigma and negative perception about mental illness. Mental illness isn't caused by something individuals have done but by irregularities in their brain chemistry. It is no different than someone having cancer. In the case of cancer or other diseases/disorders, the individual isn't blamed for getting ill so why would we blame someone for having a mental illness. We often forget that those with these illnesses are individuals with the same needs as you and I; the need for meaningful activities/work, relationships, a home and the ability to add value to the world around them. For the effects of stigma to be broken, we must not view our relationships with individuals with mental illness as ones of power but of partnership. When together, we are able to create an environment of rehabilitation and hope and educate those around us, then the stigma will be broken.

If you would like additional information, or would like to help support our cause, please call 412-461-1322 ext. 222.

DON'T CALL ME NUTS

VALUABLE RESOURCE

Stigma hurts. Robert Lundin, a former freelance reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, knows because he has lived with a schizoaffective disorder for 20 years. Patrick Corrigan, the executive director of the University of Chicago Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, also knows because he has done much research on the topic. Together they have produced a handbook for people with mental illness which addresses issues such as self stigma and seven ways to foster personal empowerment. *Don't Call Me Nuts: Coping with the Stigma of Mental Illness* also explores knowing when or whether to disclose a mental illness and legal and political remedies.

People still carry with them many myths about mental illness. Here are three that are listed in the book along with the corresponding realities:

1. **Once crazy, always crazy.** People don't get over it. Long-term follow-up research suggests that many, many persons with the worst types of schizophrenia and other severe mental illness are able to live productive lives.
2. **The mentally ill are unable to do anything but the lowest level jobs.** Persons with mental illness perform at all levels of work, just like the rest of the population.
3. **Severe mental illnesses are rare, just like lepers.** Actually, severe mental illnesses like schizophrenia, manic-depression, and major depression may account for up to 8 to 10% of the population. That is about 640,000 people in a metropolitan area the size of Chicago, enough folks to fill Omaha, Nebraska and Des Moines, Iowa combined.



To order the book *Don't Call Me Nuts: Coping with the Stigma of Mental Illness* by Patrick Corrigan, please visit www.amazon.com.

BOARD LEADER LEAVES TSI STRONGER AND BETTER

Ask Board Chairperson Henry E. Luck, Jr. what he is interested in, and he will tell you three things: Seeing others succeed, helping organizations to change and grow, and creating structure to enable organizations to function better. As a member of TSI's Board of Directors since May 1999, and the Chair since October, 2003, Henry has had many opportunities to realize all three of his interests. Self-effacing, and servant-hearted, Henry has brought much in the way of experience and passion to TSI's Board of Directors. Since 1995, he has served on the Boards of five nonprofit organizations, with TSI being the longest term and most recent. When asked what motivates him to volunteer, Henry states that he has always had an interest in the disenfranchised or as he puts it "People without a voice," he enjoys helping others, and he enjoys a challenge—three things that one is sure to encounter when signing on as a volunteer board member for any nonprofit organization. Once on TSI's Board, Henry made it his business to learn everything he could about TSI, and to get to know the staff and the consumers. He attended every staff and consumer function, asked loads of questions and constantly communicated the Board's commitment to and concern for staff and consumers. Henry's bachelor degree in business and master's degree in education helped him translate this commitment and concern into the following key objectives: To raise community awareness of services, to raise awareness of the wage issue, to help others advocate for themselves and use available resources, and to build infrastructure, policy, and systems to enable the organization to function better.

When asked about the significant changes he has seen at TSI since becoming a Board member, Henry notes that the move to become a regional leader has been a key. He feels that TSI has become "less insular and more competitive by seeking to be part of the larger community." Another key has been the organization's increased awareness of and focus on fund-raising. Henry also



Henry and Jill Luck

appreciates the teamwork and the respect that the leadership team has for one another and for their designated roles within the organization. The organization's accomplishments during Henry's tenure as Board Chair have been numerous and impressive. In addition to the retention of the CEO, which Henry lists as the most significant accomplishment, he also notes the organization's sound financial and business management practices. Other accomplishments include the organization's receipt of a third three year CARF accreditation, the completion of the East Pittsburgh HUD project, bringing new volunteers into the organization, strengthening the Program through the use and addition of a Community Support Program (CSP), and the procurement of additional capital grants.

Henry concludes his term as Board Chairperson as well as his tenure as a Board member in October 2005. Looking ahead to the future, he believes that the organization is facing a number of external pressures such as, serving consumers with more complex disabilities, compensating for a shrinking public funding stream, and attracting and retaining new Board members. Henry hopes that the legacy he has left is that he has helped to "build a strong foundation for the organization's future growth." He also is quick to note that his wife, Jill, shares his commitment to helping others. She has been a great supporter of his work as a volunteer Board member, which has enabled him to be more effective. All of us at TSI thank Henry for his dedicated and excellent service.

***Below is a creative piece written by a person who is recovering from mental illness.
Indeed, the effects of stigma are harsh and cruel.***

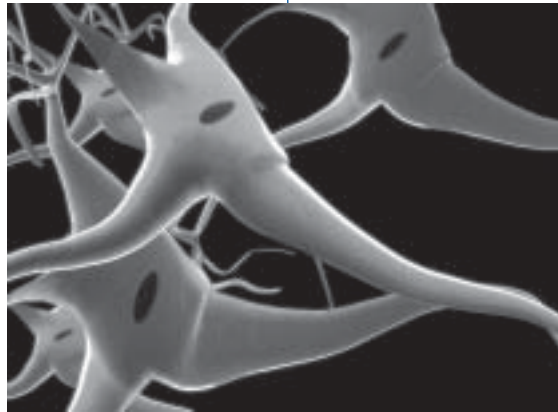
My Career as a Professional Mental Patient

By Kris W.

WANTED: Middle-aged woman interested in exploring your childhood in minute detail, reliving traumatic experiences, being overmedicated or just given medicine with side effects such as severe weight gain, blurry vision, raise in blood pressure, sexual dysfunction, shaking, etc. You must be willing to agree that you have a bad personality, character and something terribly wrong with your mind. Agree to receive several shock treatments that make you lose your memory and make you feel terribly ill for weeks. Must agree to be locked up in a hospital unit and forced to eat horrible food, stay out of bed, and attend the same group therapy sessions over and over, then be told you can't even step outside for air and can only smoke when allowed to. Meet often with doctors to be mentally evaluated, who don't talk to you and prescribe medicine as described above. Salary: below poverty level, but can go to food banks and pick up such things as cans of vegetables and big bags of white rice. Other benefits: meeting other mental patients who also feel terrible about themselves and their lives, being rejected when help is needed immediately, and being picked up by police and put in a paddy wagon instead of an ambulance when you have an emergency. Call now, plenty of opportunities for humiliation and being stigmatized everywhere in society!

Understanding *Autism*

Autism is a developmental disability of the brain, much like dyslexia. Autism is not an emotional problem or a form of mental retardation. While some people with autism appear to function as though they have an intellectual disability, they are often very intelligent. Autism is referred to as a spectrum disorder because it ranges in severity across a wide range of conditions. In other words, there are as many types of autism as there are individuals with autism. Some people with autism may never learn to talk and may not be able to work or to live independently. Others may do well living or working in special supportive environments. Still others function fairly well and are so independent that they are not even recognized as having autism. However, people with autism do face difficulties, and it is important for others to understand how they think, how they do things, and how they experience the world.



Oftentimes, individuals with autism have what is referred to as face blindness, which is a difficulty in recognizing people. Most people identify other people by remembering faces. People with autism are not able to do this. Instead of face recognition, they rely on other physical traits of people for identification such as hair style, the sound of their voice, or their general body shape and size. This works fairly well, but when a person makes a change in their hair style or manner of dress, for instance, a person with autism may become unable to recognize them, even if it is someone they know well. If you are meeting with someone who has autism, it is helpful to let them know what you are wearing so they will recognize you.

Since individuals with autism have difficulty processing information that comes to them by way of their senses, they can easily experience sensory overload. For instance, imagine being in a crowded place where the music is very loud, people are talking, laughing, and dancing and strobe lights are flashing while you are having a conversation with someone. You may be able to filter out or tune out the background noise of the music, lights, and other conversations well enough to focus on your conversation. A person with autism would not be able to do this. Simultaneously, they would hear the music and conversations, see the flashing lights and all the activity of people around them, and may even be aware of numerous smells in the room. All this information would be overwhelming and impossible to experience at the same time. If exposed to such a setting, someone with autism would need to leave and find a quiet place to be alone in order to calm their mind. They may even display some behaviors that appear unusual like rocking or flapping their arms. These behaviors are simply the way they soothe themselves and relieve the stress they are experiencing from the sensory overload. Solitude is often sought by people with autism. Many everyday situations can prove to be too stimulating. It is important

to let a person who has autism know that it is okay for them to want to be alone, but that you are available if they need support.

For a person with autism, sometimes the touch of another person can be so intense that it is physically painful. Therefore, it is not a good idea to touch someone with autism, even lightly on the hand, unless you know they would be comfortable being touched. It is also not unusual for a person with autism to look at the floor or wall or anywhere other than your face when you are speaking to them. This is because the face conveys too much information, especially the eyes. So, while it may seem that a person with autism is not paying attention when you talk to them, they are, in fact, working very hard to listen to you.

Individuals with autism also tend to have intense interests in certain things. Such interests can become so engrossing that the person with autism may lose track of time, forget to eat or sleep, or talk about the activity to the exclusion of everything else. This behavior sometimes concerns others as it seems obsessive. In reality, these obsessive interests are very energizing for individuals with autism. It may be thought of as similar to things that people without autism do to relieve stress and “get away from it all,” like taking a long walk or listening to music.

Individuals with autism would prefer to be thought of as people just like anyone else. Autism is not considered to be a terrible fate to those who live with it. While they experience the world in a different way than other people, they live in it and find effective ways to adapt to it.

***To learn more about autism,
please check out the following sources:***

Websites:

- <http://www.autistics.org/library/whatis.html>
- <http://www.geocities.com/growingjoel/faceblind.html>
- <http://www.utismwebsite.com/ari/intro/adviceforparents.html>
- <http://www.autism.org//temple/visual.html>
- <http://www.templegrandin.com>
- <http://www.autismtoday.com>
- <http://www.pitt.edu/~nmminshew>

Books:

- *Thinking in Pictures*, by Temple Grandin, Ph.D.
- *Asperger's Syndrome: A Guide for Parents and Professionals*, by Tory Attwood, Psychologist specializing in Asperger's Syndrome

Why We Yawn

We're not the only ones; cats, dogs, most mammals, and even fish yawn. It's an involuntary action that causes us to open our mouths wide and breathe in very deeply.

It's a contagious action. Sit in a room with other people and yawn. What happens? Everybody yawns. Studies show that 55% of people will yawn within five minutes of seeing someone else yawn. Even hearing someone yawning can trigger you to yawn. You may even be yawning right now, just reading about it.

There are several theories about why we yawn:

1. It is a way of getting more oxygen into our bodies or getting rid of too much carbon dioxide. This is probably not true, since we don't yawn during physical exercise when our need for oxygen is greatest; but many athletes tend to yawn right before competition.
2. It is evolution. Some believe yawning was a way that animals showed their teeth and made themselves look less vulnerable to other animals before they went to sleep. It's like saying, "I'm mean and don't mess with me while I take a nap."
3. The dictionary says we yawn when we are bored, but lots of us have involuntarily yawned even when the conversation was very interesting.

The truth is that scientists really aren't sure why we and other animals yawn. It may be triggered deep in the brain and serves some healthy purpose; or it may be a way of communicating in a group. No one really knows. It doesn't matter. Take six seconds (the average yawn time) to yawn and stretch. It feels good. For more information, please visit any of websites listed below:

- www.science.howstuffworks.com/yawning
- www.bettersleep.org
- www.fda.gov
- www.assmnet.org
- www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsdr/index.htm



A Helping Hand

For almost 30 years, Marion Smith has felt called to help individuals with psychiatric and developmental disabilities have a better life. Over the years, she has helped meet not only basic material needs but also social and spiritual needs. She says "The Lord was leading me to so many who needed help. I have developed some wonderful friendships over the years." In the past, she has been a payee and located housing, employment, and enrichment activities for those whom she has served. She has a basement full of clothing collected for consumers who need it.

Each year, the staff at residential programs get the call from Mrs. Smith inviting consumers to the annual Christmas dinner at her Penn Hills church. The event, which has hosted thousands of consumers over the years, consists of a church service, a dinner, and Christmas gifts for everyone who attends. She even provides the transportation. Mrs. Smith said her greatest challenge in helping others has been simply that she doesn't do as much as she used to. She said that recently she has not received as many calls from consumers and providers as in past years.

Consumers who need shoes or other clothing can get them free of charge. Call Mrs. Smith at (412) 271-1263.

EXCEEDING THE ABOVE AND MOVING BEYOND

Here are the winners through the third quarter of the fiscal year:

- ▲ Rachely Bayzlak, Community Support Specialist I (Two Quarters)
- ▲ Robert Dinkelmeyer, Fiscal Department
- ▲ Pamela Giddens, Community Support Specialist I
- ▲ Boniface Igba, Bryant Street, Overnight Resident Advisor
- ▲ Patricia Jackson, Community Support Specialist
- ▲ Ronald Lankey, Assistant Property Manager (Two Quarters)

- ▲ John Lavender, Community Support Specialist I
- ▲ Bethany Long, Casual Pool
- ▲ Patricia Maglicco, Community Support Specialist II
- ▲ James Rieger, Community Support Specialist I
- ▲ Joe Sieber, Assistant Property Manager (Two Quarters)
- ▲ Michelle Welsh, Residential Services Coordinator
- ▲ Janet Whitney, Supervisor

IF YOU SEE a fellow TSI team member exemplifying the TSI Values and Guiding Principles in such a way that you believe they have gone Above and Beyond not only what is expected but beyond their responsibilities as well, tell them about it today. Locate a nomination form near the Above and Beyond poster in your unit or building and complete it. We have many outstanding staff members; let's make sure their efforts are recognized. If you are in need of more forms, please contact David Treece at 412-461-1322. Look for the Above and Beyond winners and the Janet Sieber Award recipient from our Annual Dinner, held in December 2005. Keep up the great work!

Jewel of East Pittsburgh

On July 7, many members of the community attended the ribbon cutting ceremony at East Pittsburgh Commons. It was planned with the vision of architect Bob Lynch, general contractor Mistick Construction, and a number of subcontractors. Together, they created a great place for TSI to serve consumers with mental retardation complete with the amenities necessary to enable them to “age in place.” This eight-unit, fully accessible, air-conditioned site is serviced by an elevator. The outdated East Pittsburgh site was transformed into a lovely and modern home for ten individuals with developmental disabilities. Residents moved in on July 12, and the site is now fully occupied.

Individuals particularly enjoy gathering at the large, covered patio/picnic area where there once was none. “This is the life,” commented one resident who was enjoying a cold soft drink on the patio. Another individual discussed the joy of having the elevator: “Shopping day is so much easier without having to lug groceries up three flights of stairs.”

All this was made possible through the financial support of H.U.D., who provided more than one million dollars for renovations; Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust, who provided \$35,000 for furnishings; and a family member who donated money to purchase a grill for the new patio. Thanks to Sharon Alberts, CEO, and other TSI leaders who worked to orchestrate the efforts of all parties involved for two years of planning and hard work.



Sharon Alberts, TSI CEO, cuts the ceremonial ribbon



Gary Colwell, MR Residential Services Coordinator, takes the first ride on the new elevator



The old was made new with fresh paint, new awnings, pointing, modern lighting and ramps



Contemporary features for accessibility are found in every apartment

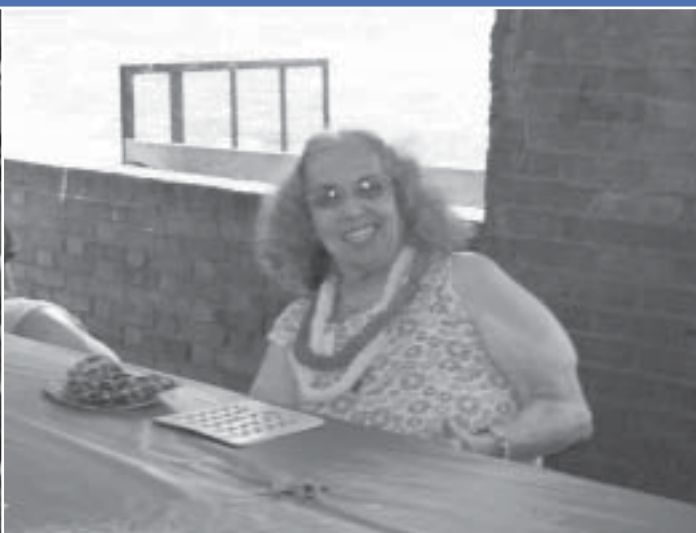
What did the Consumer Activities Committee do this summer?



Went to PNC Park to see the Pirates play the Houston Astros.



*Held its annual picnic at Schenley Park;
this year's theme was a luau*



The Consumer Activities Committee is seeking to add consumer members. If you are interested in participating, please contact the Main Office at **412-461-1322 ext. 249** for more information. Transportation to and from the meetings will be provided for you.

Thanks to **Ron Lankey** for taking wonderful pictures at the luau.

New Program Seeks to Provide Life-Changing Opportunities



Opportunities for personal growth, change, and recovery are taking shape at TSI. The Community Supports Program (CSP), led by Supervisor Jennifer Mullins, focuses on life enrichment, literacy, job readiness, and mental health recovery through peer education. These four core areas have been identified as areas of importance by our consumers. In keeping with the mission of TSI, the Community Supports Program is designed to foster independence and growth in the people we support.

Two Arts and Crafts groups, led by Kristin Waneck, an established Pittsburgh artist, were started in January to provide consumers with ways to explore their creativity. Three of the participants in these groups had works exhibited in the Flowering of Insight Art show at the PPG Wintergarden in downtown Pittsburgh. Gwen Jaffe, another professionally trained artist, will be taking over the classes in late fall.

Another enrichment group, Expressive Movement, began this fall. Produced through collaboration with the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts and the Mary Miller Dance Company, the six-week sessions help consumers gain self-esteem and confidence as well as foster body awareness and exercise.

It has been shown that consumers who take part in Peer Education and Recovery groups improve their chances for mental health recovery. Because of this, a peer educator will lead our Journey group, which will use materials from the Boston Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation. This group will encourage and empower participants to take an active role in their own recovery process.

Because consumers have said they want programs to help with employment, TSI will be having a series of quarterly employment forums. At the first of these, held on October 19, Jennifer Cullen of the Pennsylvania Protection and Advocacy agency helped consumers understand the Ticket to Work and other employment programs.

The CSP also hosted a housing forum in conjunction with the Pittsburgh Fair Housing Partnership.

This is only the beginning of what is hoped to be a bright future for our consumers. TSI and the Community Supports Program will grow, change, and improve right alongside the people we are helping to do the same.



Transitional Services, Inc.

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Transitional Services, Inc. has been accredited by CARF for the following programs:

- *Community Housing: Psychosocial Rehabilitation (Adults)*
- *Community Services: Community Living Services*