



Eldridge Press

Message from the Executive Director

by Karen Faria

In June 2014, the California Legislature approved a bill that provided funding for acute crisis homes at both Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) and Fairview Development Center (FDC). The idea evolved from the Task Force recommendations about the future of the Developmental Centers. This unique program design is evolving, but the mission is to provide specialized behavior and programming services to help stabilize individuals who have reached a crisis point in their community setting due to severe behavioral and/or psychiatric conditions. The program is designed to help deflect people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in crisis from entering acute psychiatric hospitals, forensic institutions (incarceration) or developmental centers. Residents of the STAR program will be provided intensive behavioral, medical and psychiatric supports from experienced and highly trained selected professionals in a home-like environment, with the goal of re-stabilization so they can return to community living as soon as possible. The STAR program will have a maximum population of five. Several steps have either been initiated or will be taken before the home can open, which is tentatively scheduled for mid-February 2015.



Karen Faria

- Judah building is in the process of being renovated—especially the kitchen—to provide a more home-like environment.
- Judah building will be renamed to the northern STAR program (STAR, for short).
- Staff will be working for the STAR program first and only shared with the other programs per the acuity needs of the STAR program.
- Selection interview for special assignments will be conducted in mid-January for various staff to provide the services, which will include some cooking, cleaning and laundry services as well as all extensive behavior, medical and programming services.

Stabilization

Training

Assistance

Reintegration



STAR

- Staff will be selected based on their expertise, experience and their willingness to work in a unique program.

- Staff will be provided with—and must pass—intensive, specialized training before the program opens.

- The program will be a unique program and will start under the direction of the Senior Psychologist and will not be part of the general population or programs of SDC.

- New and innovative behavior and psychiatric services will be piloted within the STAR program with the eventual goal of expanding the new practices to other programs.

- Individuals who are in crisis in the community will be referred to the STAR program via

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STAR (Stabilization, Training, Assistance, Reintegration)

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the Regional Centers and the Regional Project per the legislation and will have a stay of no greater than approximately one year. Discharge planning will begin on the day of admission.

This is a rare opportunity for SDC to serve the community, for staff wanting a unique challenge, and for SDC to step up to a higher degree of innovation in behavior programming. Anyone requiring more information may contact Brad Backstrom, Senior Psychologist. (See article below for contact information.)

Senior Psychologist's Message

by Brad Backstrom, PhD

Greetings SDC,

I am excited to be a part of the new STAR program as the program manager. I have spoken to many staff about the opportunity to work in the STAR program and have been thrilled to meet so many staff who are interested in contributing their skills and enthusiasm to the new team. Many staff members have had questions about the program. Here are some common questions I have been asked and my answers:



Brad Backstrom

Q: What are the benefits of working in the STAR program?

A: I have found that working with individuals with developmental disabilities has been personally rewarding. Those with challenging behaviors need intensive supports from highly trained, direct care and professional staff. SDC staff have the talent and experience needed to provide the supports that are often not available anywhere else. In the past, when SDC received admissions similar to the individuals the STAR program will be serving, I saw how effectively our direct care and professional staff were able to stabilize individuals and give them a fresh start to return to the community. Being part of a team that can make such a difference in someone's life, especially one who needs highly specialized supports, is personally gratifying.

Additionally, STAR staff will be provided with extensive training and experience working with behavioral and psychiatric issues in a home-like environment. This will be a valuable opportunity that could lead to reaching any career goal.



Individual living room

Q: Will I receive training to work with the residents at STAR?

A: Yes, prior to opening, all selected STAR staff will receive an intensive week-long training developed for those who will work in the home. This will include training in psychiatric conditions and treatments, innovative approaches for trauma-informed care, de-escalation techniques, and crisis interventions.

Q: Will the STAR program have its own set of policies and procedures?

A: STAR is a program in the Immediate Care Facility (ICF) under the ICF license. All regulations and SDC policies that apply to ICF will apply to STAR. Residents of STAR will have access to all the same resources as any other SDC resident (e.g. GAC, clinics).

Q: What is the assessment process, and how will residents be admitted?

A: The Sonoma Regional Project (SRP) will receive a referral from the Regional Center for a person who is diagnosed with a developmental or intellectual disability and who currently has a crisis of placement (i.e. the person cannot reside in community living due to behavioral instability, or further supports that are required to meet their needs are not yet available). An assessment team comprised of SRP staff, unit supervisor or designee, and psychologist will assess the individual. If the person meets the criteria for admission, the Regional Center may move forward for a court order for a crisis admission to SDC. Residents will reside at the home no longer than one year.

Q: Where will residents be admitted from, and will residents have mental illness?

A: STAR residents will be admitted from a supportive living environment, group

home, family living, psychiatric hospitalizations, or any other situation where there is a crisis of placement. All residents must have a developmental disability and must be served by the Regional Center. As SDC has experienced with previous admissions, some

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Kitchen

STAR (Stabilization, Training, Assistance, Reintegration)

Senior Psychologist's Message, continued from previous page
individuals may have a dual diagnosis—a severe mental illness in addition to a developmental or intellectual disability. STAR staff will be trained in how to treat individuals with dual diagnosis.

Q: What does the home look like and what will it be like for residents living there?

A: SDC is fortunate to have very skilled and talented painters, carpenters, and workers in Plant Operations department who have completely remodeled the home to a safe, home-like environment. This includes enriched bedrooms, bathrooms, and activity rooms, a fully functioning kitchen, and a new laundry room. With the support of direct care staff, residents will be able to independently shop for their own food, prepare their meals, and develop their own goals for daily living and activities.

Q: This is a very exciting opportunity and program. I would like to be a part of the team. How do I apply?

A: Please submit a completed application (STD 678; Examination/Employment Application) to the Human Resources Department, Attn: Exam Unit, Room 124; P.O. Box; 15000 Arnold Dr., Eldridge, CA 95431.

Thank you to all of those who have already contributed so much time and effort in the development of the program. I appreciate all of the positive support and encouragement that so many staff have expressed. Please contact me if you have any questions at (707) 938-6614 or Brad.Backstrom@Sonoma.dds.ca.gov.



Part of an individual living room



Bathing room



*Above: Dining room
Right: Individual bathroom*



Sports room

Hiring!

The Acute Crisis Unit (STAR) will provide short-term crisis stabilization for up to five individuals with developmental disabilities. STAR staff will provide mental health and behavioral treatments for severe psychiatric and behavioral conditions. Additionally, STAR staff will focus on supporting the individual in a home-like setting while maintaining and increasing independent living skills, vocational and leisure skills, and coping and communication skills.

Only current SDC employees in same classification may apply for these assignments.

Applicants may be considered for a shared time base and dual-location assignments.

All assignments are open until filled. Assignments needed to staff STAR are as follows:

- Clinical Social Worker, Permanent/Quarter Time
- Custodian, Permanent/Full Time
- Food Service Technician I, Permanent, Full Time
- Individual Program Coordinator, Permanent/Quarter Time
- Psychiatric Technician, Permanent/Full Time
- Psychiatric Technician Assistant, Permanent/Full Time
- Psychologist, Permanent/Half Time
- Registered Nurse, Permanent/Full Time
- Rehabilitation Therapist, Permanent/Quarter Time (Music, Art, Dance, etc.)
- Senior Psychiatric Technician, Permanent/Full Time
- Teacher, Permanent/Quarter Time
- Unit Supervisor, Permanent, Full-Time

Submit completed application (STD. 678) to the Human Resources Dept, Attn: Exam Unit, Room 124; P.O. Box 1493, Eldridge, CA 95431.

More photos on back page!

STAR (Stabilization, Training, Assistance, Reintegration)



Left:
Individual living room

Below left:
Individual bathroom

Below:
Individual bedroom



Both photos above and photo at left:
Scenes from the dining room

Right:
New clinic room



Above: The newly painted and planted front of STAR

Submitting articles to the Eldridge Press:

The *Eldridge Press* gladly accepts submissions of articles about events at Sonoma Developmental Center, news about the Center's departments and programs, employee recognition, and other information of interest to the Center's employees, consumers and other stakeholders. Articles may be edited for grammar, punctuation, and clarity. To submit your article, send it to the Office of Planning and Communications, Room 102, Sonoma Developmental Center, P.O. Box 1493, Eldridge, CA 95431. Deadlines are the 15th of the month prior to the publication date (for instance, January 15 is the deadline for the February 2015 issue).

Eldridge Press
Volume 11, Number 1, © January 2015

Published by:
Sonoma Developmental Center
P.O. Box 1493
Eldridge, CA 95431

Edited by: Jorge (JJ) Fernandez
Office of Planning & Communications

Photography & layout: Nancy Flack
Central Program Services

Proofreading: Renee Bliss
Program 4