



Northampton Area Mental Health Services Records

1970-1984

4 boxes (6 linear ft.)

Call no.: MS 27

Collection overview

In 1973 Hampshire Day House was established to provide day treatment to patients released from the Northampton State Hospital, which first opened as the Northampton Lunatic Asylum in 1858. As the Day House expanded its services it became known as the Northampton Area Mental Health Services (NAMHS). Valley Programs assumed responsibility for the operation of residential programs for deinstitutionalized individuals in Hampshire and Franklin counties in 1983, and seven years later the NAMHS and Valley Programs merged.

The collection consists of reports, financial records, board minutes, and correspondence for the Hampshire Day House.

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Background on Northampton Area Mental health Services

In 1970, Anthony Virgilo, aware that the Northampton School for Girls was about to vacate their campus, set out to fill a gap in the area's community mental health services by establishing a "comprehensive center with children's residential and adult outpatient services" on the site. The Associations for Mental Health and Retarded Citizens were enlisted to begin a lobbying the state to appropriate \$1,000,000 to purchase the property.

During the three years of bureaucratic delays with the state, the Hampshire Day House committee searched for a temporary home and found it in the Conant House on Pomeroy Terrace. This temporary house became a day treatment facility, opening its doors on February 15, 1973, with funding from the state as well as local hospitals and citizens.

In 1974, the owners of the 11 buildings that made up the Northampton School for Girls, tired of delays from the state, sold the property to a local church and private investors. The mental health community responded with frustration and anger. In the wake of protests, the state agreed to buy seven of the buildings recently sold and renovate those for the program.

In 1975, however, just as the Hampshire Day House thought they were finally going to begin the renovation process, the buildings were vandalized, and plumbing, heating and even the electrical fixtures were destroyed, making the buildings uninhabitable. With no more funds to rent and the threat of having the Conant House sold right out from underneath them, Mental Health Commissioner Goldman stepped in. Without delay, he offered to finance HDH's stay at 71 Pomeroy Terrace for the next five years while the Northampton School for Girls property was renovated.

In 1979, the Department of Mental Health Services received approval to renovate the Hathaway House, located on the property of the former School for Girls, and offered it as a permanent home to the Hampshire Day House. On December 12, 1982, days before HDH was set to move to their new location, the building was destroyed in a fire.

Despite the delays and acts of vandalism, the Hampshire Day House continued to thrive and provide services to those who needed them. It became a safe haven for the mentally ill where they were provided with group activities, arts and crafts, therapeutic sessions, and trips to local areas of interest.

In 1983, Hampshire Day House expanded its services to including outpatient and other mental health services and changed its name to Northampton Area Mental Health Services (NAMHS). Over the next twelve years, the newly named NAMHS merged two more times, resulting in its current name ServiceNet. Currently they have expanded its services to the local community from mental health services to behavioral health services, addiction and abuse.

Scope of collection

The records of the Northampton Area Mental Health Services offer insight into the administrative management of the program. With an emphasis on the financial operation and its partnership with the Department of Mental Health, the collection does not focus on client treatment or services. Materials included are correspondence, minutes, newspaper articles, audits, financial documents, and mental health manuals/procedures, representing the Hampshire Day House from its conception in 1970 to its merger in 1983 with Northampton Area Mental Health Services.

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Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Processing Information

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Search terms

Subjects

- Community mental health services
- Hampshire Day House
- Mental health facilities
- Northampton (Mass.) Area Mental Health Services

Contributors

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