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HOME FRIEND PROGRAM

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Hoarding Workshops Year End Report January 2024 – December 2024

New Community Home Friend Program (HFP) addressed the critical challenge of understanding and managing hoarding behaviors among senior clients in the Central Ward of Newark. Hoarding significantly affects seniors' quality of life and limits the ability of Home Friend workers to provide adequate support services. To tackle this issue, we implemented a series of weekly workshops to educate Home Friend workers about hoarding disorder and introduce Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)-based techniques to support clients. The primary goals of the workshops were:

- To provide foundational knowledge about hoarding disorder.
- To equip workers with practical skills to assist clients in managing hoarding behaviors.

To improve Home Friend workers' confidence and emotional resilience when addressing hoarding-related challenges. Each training session covered the following topics:

- **Understanding Hoarding Disorder:** Participants learned to recognize hoarding as a diagnosable mental health condition, including its prevalence, impacts, and associated risks, such as fire hazards, infestations, and mental health challenges.
- **Key Aspects of Hoarding Behavior:** Education focused on compulsive buying, acquiring free items, difficulties in discarding possessions, emotional attachments to belongings, and cognitive distortions commonly observed in individuals with hoarding behaviors.
- **Health and Safety Risks:** Workers explored functional impairments and safety concerns arising from hoarding.

The workshops included group discussions and exercises that allowed participants to share experiences and challenges in managing hoarding cases and develop strategies to simplify decision-making for categorizing and decluttering items. The training sessions yielded several notable outcomes, reflecting the effectiveness of the workshops and offering optimism about the future impact of the Home Friend Program on our client's lives:

- **Increased Awareness:** Many workers, initially unaware of hoarding disorder as a mental health condition, gained valuable insights, enabling them to recognize and address this challenge more effectively.
- **Enhanced Confidence:** Participants reported a significant boost in confidence, particularly in managing the anxiety and emotional complexities associated with decluttering tasks. This increased confidence highlights their growing expertise and ability to handle challenging situations gracefully and professionally.
- **Improved Well-Being:** The workshops enhanced workers' emotional resilience and significantly improved their overall well-being. This positive impact on their mental health demonstrates the effectiveness of the workshops in fostering healthier, safer, and more functional living environments for both the workers and their clients.

The impact of the workshops was assessed through participant feedback. This feedback highlighted the effectiveness of combining education with hands-on exercises, providing participants with actionable strategies. This project equipped our Home Friend workers with psychoeducation and practical CBT strategies to better support their efforts in creating safer, healthier, and more functional living environments for our clients.

NCC hopes to continue collaborating with FFA through a future grant to provide ongoing training to support our Home Friend workers in delivering efficient and appropriate services to meet the needs of our aging population in the Central Ward of Newark and ensure that our workers are well-equipped to handle the complex challenges that the senior population faces. This funding will help us achieve our goal of creating safer, healthier, and more functional living environments for our clients. Our experience with the Foundation for Aging (FFA) has been overwhelmingly positive. The Foundation's generous support has enabled us to deliver high-quality, impactful training sessions that combine education and practical exercises.

We remain deeply grateful for FFA's ongoing commitment to improving community mental health and supporting initiatives like ours. We look forward to building on this partnership to further the impact of our work in the Central Ward of Newark.

Dr. J. Andrews, Director

Dr. B. Robinson, Program Coordinator