Job Description: Peer Support Specialist (Transition Aged Youth)

Avalon Housing is a non-profit supportive housing provider created in 1992 as a long-term solution to homelessness. Avalon owns and operates apartments at sites throughout Ann Arbor, manages rent vouchers with private landlords, and partners with both the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti Housing Commission to provide housing alternatives for formerly homeless adults and families throughout Washtenaw County.

The Family Services Team provides outreach, intensive case management, care coordination and housing-based support services to family households in a supportive housing setting. The families served by this position face many challenges including mental illness, substance abuse disorders, chronic medical conditions, domestic violence, and the involvement of child protective services.

Utilizing a “Housing First” approach, the Family Services Team works closely with Avalon property managers to help tenants achieve housing stability and move beyond homelessness. Services staff also collaborates with community partners to ensure the coordinated delivery of a broad range of services that meet the mental, physical, psycho-social and housing needs of the families either through direct service or linkage to appropriate resources.

Core Responsibilities include, but are not necessarily limited to:

The Peer Support Specialist for Transition Aged Youth (TAY) will be responsible for providing additional support to tenants between the ages of 15 to 24, to achieve community inclusion and participation, independence, recovery and resiliency. The Peer Support Specialist is an individual in recovery with a self-identified lived experience and journey in receiving services and supports from mental health, substance use disorder, and/or housing/homeless service providers. The Peer Support Specialist helps TAY tenants build and/or regain control over their lives and over their own recovery process, as they define it.

- Provide assertive outreach and engagement to TAY tenants
- Provide extra support and assistance to TAY tenants with accessing and navigating community resources
- Assist and support TAY tenants in maintaining cooperative and effective relationships with their primary service provider and other partner agencies, as well as their families (if applicable)
- Coordinate and collaborate with a network of care for TAY tenant, including natural supports, connection to mutual aid groups, and sponsorship (when appropriate)
- Use experience with personal recovery in assisting and supporting the team and tenants
- Enhance team decision making by assuring tenant voice and choice is included in planning
- Promote recovery through role modeling and sharing experiences, providing hope and encouragement and connection to community
- Participate in planning and implementation of appropriate assessments and action plans as needed
- Accompany staff during outreach and engagement to build rapport with service provider
- In coordination with the Community Builder, assist in the coordination of social, educational and recreational activities for TAY, initiate peer-led groups and events for TAY tenants
• Facilitate mutual aid groups for tenants onsite, with an emphasis on options embracing multiple pathways to recovery
• In coordination with the Community Builder, initiate and oversee TAY tenant leadership development opportunities such as tenant leadership training, speaker series, and/or a tenant council, collaborate with Youth Leadership staff and Youth Programming Staff
• Assist TAY tenants in the development of life skills such as resolving interpersonal conflicts in their environment and families, maintaining and/or securing their own housing, developing work skills, safety skills, social skills, receiving and maintaining benefits
• Help tenants aspire to roles which emphasize their strengths by sharing personal experience
• Provide education and support regarding issues affecting population and work to reduce stigma related to those
• Adhere to housing first and harm reduction model of peer advocacy
• Participate in staff meetings and trainings
• Assist TAY tenants as needed with activities of daily living such as transportation, housekeeping, meal preparation, medication, shopping, laundry, or other hands on assistance as needed
• Meet documentation requirements as dictated by program need

Supplemental Job Duties:
• Work with clients in their homes, in community centers, and in the larger community
• Attend staff meetings, retreats and professional training sessions

Required Qualifications
• Completion of CCAR or other certification training within one year of hire
• Person who has progressed in their own recovery and has minimum one year of addiction recovery who is actively involved in recovery activities

Desired Skills and Abilities
• CCAR Trained or other peer training certification
• Lived experience as a youth struggling with homelessness, substance use, or mental illness strongly preferred
• Experience with or interest in multiple pathways to recovery
• Basic understanding of homelessness and various characteristics of homeless youth population; experience with the issues of mental illness and/or substance use specific to youth and Transition Aged Youth preferred
• Basic understanding of developmental stages of youth transitioning into adulthood
• Knowledge of peer support, community resources, entitlements
• Ability to effectively work with diverse populations in a non-judgmental way
• Ability to recognize appropriate boundaries with clients
• Ability to maintain confidentiality practices
• Ability to work as part of a team
• Must possess a highly positive and enthusiastic attitude and strong commitment toward helping those in need
• Interest and experience in working with individuals who are difficult to engage and refer to traditional programs, subscribe to a philosophy of tolerance and ability to engage with individuals in their current stage of change, expressed knowledge, acceptance, and/or experience with principles of harm reduction
• Ability to work flexible hours as required by programs and staffing needs
Physical Demands
The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. While performing the duties of this job, the employee will be required to sit for long periods of time, drive a vehicle with passengers, communicate with other persons by talking and hearing, required to lift and carry items weighing up to 25 pounds and to operate computer hardware systems.

A valid driver's license and reliable transportation is required.

Title: Peer Support Specialist
Reports to: Associate Director of Services
Status: Part Time

To apply please send a resume, cover letter, and references to jobs@avalonhousing.org or mail to:

Avalon Housing, Inc., Attn: Personnel
1327 Jones Drive, Suite 102
Ann Arbor MI 48105

This posting will remain open until the position is filled.

Please include the job position title in your email subject line.

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