



Southern California
Counseling Center

STRATEGIC PLAN



ADOPTED JULY 25, 2013
UPDATED SEPTEMBER 24, 2015

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A Message from SCCC Board Chair Margo Peck

It's been two years since the Southern California Counseling Center adopted its current Strategic Plan, which has enabled us to markedly expand delivery of high quality mental health services to the communities we serve:

- We've implemented affordable Psychiatric Services for the first time in 2014, under the direction of Eleanor Curry, M.D.;
- Our program of Trauma & Resiliency Training & Services has grown significantly, with life-changing impact on the clients we serve;
- We've expanded Outreach Services into South Los Angeles by collaborating with the Watts Labor Community Action Committee. This allows us to reach highly underserved, distressed communities with effective support and services to promote violence prevention and address the impact of discrimination and racism on this community.



Such extensive progress has been deeply gratifying and proves the value of working with a living Strategic Plan, one that guides our decisions and choices on a weekly, even daily basis.

In designing the Plan, we were motivated by a dramatic increase in demand for services resulting from the impact of the 2007 financial crisis that continued in 2012, finding so many individuals and families adrift after losing homes and livelihoods. To deal with these realities we extended our hours and increased our volunteer staffing, staying open seven days a week. We also found ourselves seeing clients who were faced with more severe and complex issues as a number of previously available facilities and programs in the Los Angeles area curtailed or completely eliminated mental health services. Through 2012 and into 2013 our Strategic Planning Committee, headed by Board member Grant Abramson, clarified and updated our mission, codified our core values and vision, and set principles and priorities to guide our work going forward. In 2015, we have evaluated our progress thus far in order to focus our efforts and vision for the next two to three years. We continue to affirm our commitment to a unique model that joins the finest counselor training with the delivery of affordable, high-quality mental health services. We honor and preserve the supportive, client-centered culture of the Center while expanding our reach and our repertoire of services to an ever-growing number of people in need.

We see our Strategic Plan as a vital tool for the growth and healing of the communities we serve. As we move forward, we encourage our counselors, supervisors, staff and supporters to fully engage in the ongoing work of strengthening and expanding what we've accomplished so far. We see this effort as the culmination of nearly 50 years of growth and innovation in the delivery of affordable mental health services. But most importantly, we wish to thank our clients for their trust and hard work in the service of change and growth, and extend our gratitude to everyone who has contributed so much to make such progress possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margo Peck". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Margo Peck
Board Chair
September 2015

Mission, Vision, Values

Southern California Counseling Center

Our Mission

We change lives and strengthen communities by providing affordable mental health care to people in need.

Our Vision

We envision and work to create empowered communities where mental health care is a right, not a privilege.

Our Values

Respect: We value and respect every person, honoring their history, cultural values and community context.

Volunteerism: Volunteer counselors and supervisors are at the heart of the Southern California Counseling Center; they are the connection to our client communities.

Training: We provide the highest quality training and education for our volunteer counselors and supervisors, other licensed professionals and individuals in other social service organizations.

Welcoming Environment: Our accessible, supportive environment reduces barriers to participation and to receiving care.

Empowerment: We support our clients as they access the resources required to grow, thrive, and make positive changes in their lives and their communities.

Learning: We continuously evaluate and strengthen our programs and services through collaboration among clients, counselors, supervisors, staff and the wider community.

Strategic Business Model

Since 1966, SCCC has practiced an innovative, volunteer-based model for delivering high quality mental health services to under-served communities. This model has proven to be effective and sustainable, delivering *increases* in both revenue and services-through the 2008 recession. Through this plan SCCC affirms its commitment to this strategic business model and to its unique culture, building upon these strengths and developing skills and capacity to reach more people in lasting ways.

Well-trained volunteer counselors deliver high-quality mental health services to under-served communities through a unique model in which:

- Professional training and services embrace a variety of approaches and modalities with a commitment to attracting leading experts in the field
- A welcoming community culture respects differences and invites all voices
- Small counselor training classes deliver strong connections and quality learning
- Private funding allows resources to be focused on service delivery rather than bureaucracy
- Volunteer counselors and supervisors reduce the cost of providing care
- A sliding scale fee structure increases accessibility and covers a majority of operating costs
- Fiscal conservatism results in sustainability and prudent growth
- The teaching and learning community continuously evolves
- SCCC educates agencies in other communities to use its effective model

Strategic Priorities

Looking ahead, SCCC focuses on five strategic priorities that are essential to advancing its mission, sustaining its impact and using available resources to impact the community:

1. Program
2. Infrastructure
3. Financial sustainability
4. Decision making and governance
5. Communications

The five priorities are inter-related with the Board and staff responsible for all priorities. Each priority is addressed in turn, with a series of goals that are the best opportunities at this time to advance the chosen priority. Staff will lead operational planning through which the goals are developed with timelines, leadership responsibility, and milestones. As a living document, this plan will evolve over time, articulating new goals as conditions and opportunities change.

Southern California Counseling Center

Five Strategic Priorities to Advance the Mission



1. Program Priority: Increase reach and impact through expansion, innovation and community partnership

Goals:

- 1.1. Review current scope of services offered and determine additional services that can be added and their impact
- 1.2. Increase our reach by expanding the scope of our services and exporting our model to others
- 1.3. Provide influential leadership and policy advocacy in understanding and advancing mental wellness
- 1.4. Develop and implement outcome assessment tools for all programs in order to learn from results, improve programs, and establish program effectiveness
- 1.5. Meet the high demand for services by maximizing use of physical space and counselor time, exploring technological options, and possible opportunities for partnership collaboration for service delivery
- 1.6. Track and respond to changes in policy, community resources, needs and gaps in services to inform SCCC programming
- 1.7. Recruit and retain a community of counselors and alumni that reflects the diversity of the clients whom the Center serves

2. Infrastructure Priority: Provide the facilities, technology, and processes to support delivery of high-quality training and services

Goals:

- 2.1. Address staffing concerns by assessing current capacity, identifying needs, and determining strategies for addressing those needs.
- 2.2. Assess and improve use of data, including client data base and program expenses
- 2.3. Develop a plan to provide the necessary facilities while considering culture, finances, and sustainability
- 2.4. Evaluate whether our current facility is adequately serving the Center's long-term goals
- 2.5. Prioritize low-cost and no-cost opportunities for expanding space through partnership with mission-aligned organizations

3. Financial Sustainability Priority: Maintain financial health by leveraging resources and careful stewardship

Goals:

- 3.1. Leverage resources (e.g. counselors, supervisors, facilities) to reach the greatest number of clients within the current cost structure
- 3.2. Review and update endowment and reserve policies to maintain an appropriate reserve for organizational sustainability and to articulate appropriate uses of available funds; articulate how much reserve cash can be used for Center priorities following what guidelines
- 3.3. Prioritize possible uses of reserve cash, including opportunities to increase services, support staff, and/or strengthen human and physical infrastructure
- 3.4. Expand unrestricted funds generated through various funding sources
- 3.5. Strengthen connections with alumni

4. Decision Making and Governance Priority: Provide proactive, responsive leadership to advance the Center's mission and sustain its unique character

Goals:

- 4.1. Establish board responsibilities, meeting design, committee and task force structure, decision-making and accountability processes to support implementation of the plan
- 4.2. Engage board members through ongoing education in their roles, governance, Center activities, trends in the field and opportunities to contribute
- 4.3. Involve staff, supervisors, and counselors in decision-making processes and implementation of the plan
- 4.4. Recruit and orient qualified new board members with the skills and talents to implement the plan and bring the diverse perspectives of the community served
- 4.5. Maintain an open, connected, client-centered culture among board, staff and volunteers
- 4.6. Support, train and strengthen senior staff to prepare for leadership succession

5. Communications Priority: Use effective messages and modes of communication to educate, inform, and involve internal and external constituents in advancing the mission

Goals:

- 5.1. Assess current formal and informal communication methods and tools
- 5.2. Improve tools for internal communication and education
- 5.3. Provide ongoing, regular, interactive communications that involve the community in current mission, vision, values, and strategic direction
- 5.4. Refresh branding through a review of Center name, logo, written and electronic materials. Expand and make more effective use of social media
- 5.5. Increase awareness of SCCC among potential clients, donors and community partners through a Center-wide public relations effort directed at targeted audiences

Implementation and Tracking

The SCCC Board of Directors adopts this strategic plan to guide decision-making in the coming years. The Strategic Planning Committee has lead responsibility for incorporating the direction and strategies of this plan into the Board’s ongoing thinking and decision making, for assuring regular monitoring of progress toward the plan, and for promoting adjustment when necessary.

Staff develop annual operational plans and a shared tracking tool that identify which goals are addressed, with what leadership, and with what objectives. The priorities are embedded in reports, agendas and discussion of the staff, Board and committees throughout the year.

Twice each year, including at the annual retreat, the Board and management team review progress in achieving the plan, and consider modifications that may be needed. The Board’s role is to guide SCCC’s strategic direction, and make decisions consistent with the mission, vision and values to assure that progress on the identified goals ultimately moves the organization toward the vision.

Strategic Planning Methodology

The strategic plan approved in July 2013 is the culmination of a year-long process, guided by a Strategic Planning Committee of board members and executive staff, with consulting support from Elizabeth Sadlon and C Reed of Sadlon & Associates, Inc.

In 2012 the Planning Committee conducted interviews with staff, counselors and supervisors as well as a client satisfaction survey to identify issues and opportunities. In their 2012 retreat, the Board provided input on strategic issues to be addressed through the planning process.

The consultants built upon this initial data gathering by holding a launch retreat with the Planning Committee to focus on key issues, identify preliminary priorities, and design the process. Counselors, supervisors and staff provided input through a series of meetings and discussions. Consultants and staff held conversations with stakeholders including foundations, graduate programs, and community partners to identify SCCC’s unique strengths and future opportunities. Workgroups formed around each strategic priority to consider data, reflect on stakeholder input and develop goals.

The Board and management staff came together in June 2013 for a half-day retreat to review and revise the proposed priorities and goals. The Planning Committee led additional integration of perspectives to deliver a draft plan for final Board review and approval.

The strategic planning committee designed the 2015 annual retreat as an opportunity to review and refresh the strategic plan. The Board built on progress reported regularly through the tracking tool, while stepping back to test its assumptions from 2013, explore changes in external and internal factors, and set goals for the next two years. These changes were incorporated into the plan, reviewed by the Board, and approved in September 2015.

SCCC is dedicated to continuous strategic thinking that builds upon the results of this plan. This is a living document, open for revision as conditions change, assumptions are challenged and new opportunities arise.

2012		2013			2014	2015		
Data gathering	Board retreat	Work groups and analysis	Board retreat	Plan adopted	Ongoing Implementation	Progress review	Board retreat	Updated Plan adopted

APPENDICES

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Strategic Planning Committee

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Audrey Hanneman, *Board vice chair*
Brian Jacobs, *Board member*
Robert Mendelsohn, *Clinical Director*
Margo Peck, *Board chair*
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Gail M. Wilburn, *Executive Director*

With consulting support from Elizabeth Sadlon and
C Reed, Sadlon & Associates, Inc.

Programs and Services

The Southern California Counseling Center provides an array of counseling services and programs to address mental health needs. Throughout our programs, SCCC seeks to help clients build upon personal strengths in order to create more satisfying, fulfilling lives. Our core program offers **Individual, Family, Couples and Group psychotherapy** for adults, children and youth seven days a week. Services address the full range of mental health concerns and needs, with sliding scale client fees.

The Counseling Center offers programs focused on Violence Prevention. Our **Abuse Prevention Program** provides treatment and support for both batterers and survivors in a group setting, with separate groups for men and women. Clients can be self-referred or court ordered to receive services.

Additional groups that comprise our **Outreach Services Program** address the realities of youth and community violence, including our **Rage Resolution Group** for those wishing to manage stress, injustice, and frustration without resorting to violence. Our **Teen Violence Prevention Group** offers teens nonjudgmental groups in which to explore in their lives and what they would like to change, with a focus on nonviolent solutions. The **LGBTQI Teen Group** provides a safe, nurturing environment in which teens of nonconforming genders and sexual orientations can navigate the extra complexities in their lives.

The Outreach Program also provides training for the broader Los Angeles community. The **Gang Awareness Training/A Therapeutic Education (GATE)** focuses on gang culture within the context of the larger community and society by examining assumptions and judgments. The **Community Counselor Certification Program (CCC)** provides training for professionals and paraprofessionals from community-based organizations to work more effectively with their respective populations. And finally, SCCC through the Outreach Programs has entered into a partnership to provide individual and group counseling through the **Watts Labor Community Action Committee** in South Los Angeles, an organization with a 50-year history. SCCC counselors provide individual psychotherapy, anger management and empowerment groups, teen substance services, and a **Trauma-Informed Anger Management** program that directly addresses personal trauma and community violence.

We provide support for parents with our **Best Practice Parenting** program focuses on developing strengths, insight and self-soothing skills that assist people in being the kind of parents they wish to be.

During the school year SCCC counselors provide one-on-one counseling for students at Mid-City public elementary, middle and high schools through our **School-Based Counseling Program**. Counseling is provided free of charge to the school, with additional no-cost counseling offered to students' families that choose to come to SCCC offices for additional services.

The **Trauma and Resiliency Training and Services** program supports all of the above services by providing direct services to our clients and a third-year training program to counselors and supervisors, who receive state-of-the-art training in somatic trauma treatment. Our field increasingly recognizes the role of adverse experiences and their effects as fundamental to an understanding of child and adult dysfunction. From The Abuse Prevention Program to Outreach Services, trauma-informed work has become central to our mission.

We provide **Psychiatric Services** as an urgently needed adjunct to our mental health services. A consulting psychiatrist provides psychiatric assessment and ongoing medication management one day per week at our Pico location. In addition, she provides training on the interface between psychiatric services and mental health counseling to our counselors, adding an important element to our training programs.

All of these programs are supported by SCCC's rigorous, highly regarded **Mental Health Training Program** for counseling interns and paraprofessionals. Counselors complete a year of Clinical Skills Training, a second year of Family Therapy Training and an optional third year of Trauma and Resiliency Training. All counselors participate in weekly group and individual supervision with licensed mental health professionals. Additional training programs develop skills in treating trauma, school-based counseling and outreach, cognitive behavioral and gestalt counseling. SCCC also offers an AAMFT-approved **Supervision Training** for licensed psychotherapists who wish to supervise interns.

A Brief History

When the Southern California Counseling Center (SCCC) opened its doors in 1966, its novel approach to mental health care shocked many in the field of psychology. SCCC's pioneering model, based on volunteerism and paraprofessionals, involved training lay counselors under the supervision of volunteer mental health professionals to provide affordable counseling to the general public. The Center's founders, psychologist Hans Hoffman and psychiatrist Ben Weininger, believed that no one should be denied counseling because of a lack of financial means, and that carefully chosen and trained paraprofessionals could provide high quality, cost-effective care.

Since those early days, SCCC has continually evolved. By the 1980s, the volunteer counseling staff came to be made up mostly of those seeking licensure as marriage and family therapists in the State of California. Not only do lay counselors continue to train alongside those seeking licensure as psychotherapists, but in response to the civil unrest in Los Angeles in 1992, the Community Counselor Certification Course was established to provide counseling skills training for those who work with other community-based organizations to address the needs of underserved populations and communities throughout Los Angeles County.

Independent since its inception, SCCC has never sought or received government funding, relying instead on client fees, training fees, foundation and corporate grants, and a broad base of dedicated individual donors, many of whom are alumni of the Center's training programs. Because of that independence, SCCC has also been able to respond to community needs by developing new programs in a timely fashion.

For example, in further response to violence in communities, SCCC developed GATE (Gang Awareness Training and Education), a training program designed to increase awareness about the nature and realities of gang culture.

Another program was begun to address the dire need for effective mental health services at local public schools, with counselors working one-on-one with children on campus each week during the school year in grades K-12 free of charge.

In 2012, the Center instituted the innovative Trauma and Resiliency Training and Services Program, preparing our counselors to serve the needs of those impacted by intimate and community violence, child abuse, racism, poverty and discrimination.

In 2014, SCCC entered into an agreement with the Watts Labor Community Action Committee in South Los Angeles to provide individual and group counseling to their clientele on site. In 2015, that program was expanded to include trauma treatment services, which are desperately needed in a community where violence is an everyday occurrence.

Also in 2014, SCCC was able for the first time in its history to provide our clients with low-cost, on-site psychiatric care. Accessible, affordable psychiatric assessment and ongoing medication management is a scarce resource in the mental health community due the elimination of a number of programs in the Los Angeles area in recent years.

The 1960s produced many organizations involved in the human potential movement. Few have survived. Founded on the principle that people can transform themselves in an atmosphere of support and respect that values their knowledge and experience, SCCC's philosophy and once-maverick counseling methods continue to thrive, serving over 2,500 men, women and children each year.