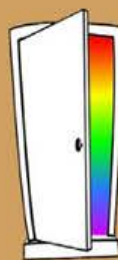




2019 ANNUAL REPORT



Rainbow
Heights
Club



Heights Hill
Mental Health Service
Community Advisory
Board, Inc.

25 Flatbush Ave 5th Flr
Brooklyn, NY 11217

Cover art by Rainbow Heights Club member Allen for our Community Collage Project



OUR MISSION:

To provide support and advocacy services that help improve the quality of life of LGBTQ mental health consumers and their families, in an atmosphere of hope, recovery and partnership.

Rainbow Heights Club is a program of the Heights-Hill Mental Health Service, SBPC, Community Advisory Board.

www.rainbowheights.org



As we face the challenges presented by 2020, we look back...and forward.

Dear friends,

We've always enjoyed sharing pictures and stories with you each year of people coming together at Rainbow Heights Club to support each other as they grow in recovery; from struggling, to surviving, to thriving. During 2019 we continued to expand our programming, providing more services to more people than ever.

In March of 2020, Rainbow Heights Club, along with other health and human service providers, was directed to cease in-person services due to COVID-19. We knew that faced with stay-at-home orders, our members would need support more than ever as they tried to cope with isolation and loneliness and find basic services as programs across the city shuttered.

We are extremely proud of the services we provided in 2019, and we are even prouder of the way our staff and our members came together on the phone to support each other during this pandemic. Despite cuts in government funding, we have met a nearly 30% increase in demand for our peer support services.

Our 2019 Annual Report and COVID-19 supplement offer a glimpse of the incredible resilience and strength the Rainbow Heights Club community has shown throughout this crisis.

We hope to resume drop-in services soon. Until then, with your support we will continue to innovatively promote our members' wellbeing and recovery.

Thank you so much for helping to make our work possible!

Sincerely,

Christian Huygen



Executive Director

Dr. Daniel Garza



Board Chair

RAINBOW HEIGHTS CLUB DELIVERS IMPROVED OUTCOMES



According to our November 2019 Consumer Survey:

95%

of members say they are **more consistent with their mental health treatment** since joining Rainbow Heights Club.

93%

of members were **free of hospital admissions for psychiatric reasons** in the past year. (The average cost of inpatient treatment is over \$300,000 a year.)

92%

of members felt that **being a member of Rainbow Heights Club helped** them remain free of psychiatric hospitalization.

88%

of members reported **fewer psychiatric symptoms**.

84%

of members were free of hospital admissions for **medical reasons**.

Since joining Rainbow Heights Club,
members say they have...

MORE HOPE (93%)
MORE SELF ESTEEM (90%)
MORE SOCIAL SUPPORT (94%)

In 2019, RHC
staff conducted

396

support and activity
groups, plus

3,623

1-on-1 peer
support sessions

Staff Spotlight

MONICA AMEY, LEAD PEER SPECIALIST

"I want everyone living with a mental illness to know this: **You can make it. Even with all that you've experienced. You can still make it.**

The most important part of my job, and of any peer specialist's job, is **interacting and really listening**. You don't have to have the answer, and a lot of the time the person you're supporting already has the answer! You just have to listen to them with understanding and compassion.



"Too often, people don't listen to LGBTQ people living with a mental illness. We get overlooked, or even shunned."

That was my experience before I became a peer. I always fought for what I wanted, though, and for what I felt I needed for my recovery. That took a lot of strength, and a tough skin. **I love being able to draw from those personal experiences to support others.**

I completed my internship for my certification here at Rainbow Heights Club. When I first came here, **I felt at ease immediately** and could be myself. I fit right in, and I loved it. **At the Club, people are safe to be their fullest selves,** with all their flaws, and still be accepted.

After my internship, I got a city job as a mental health therapist aide. I missed the Club, though, and when a full-time position opened up, I knew I wanted to come back. I've been on staff here for two years now, and **I see every day that Rainbow Heights Club is necessary.** Especially during times of crisis, and during cuts to mental health funding. People need places in the community to go and receive support."

-Monica Amey, Lead Peer Specialist

2019

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

"Community engagement is one of the core functions here at Rainbow Heights Club. Through direct engagement, we are able to provide and improve our member's access to care, as well as put a smile on their faces.

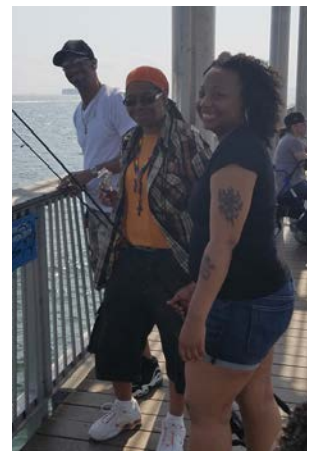
For those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, and are living with mental health diagnoses, a sense of community is vital. Being part of a community provides a sense of safety and belonging, and improves members' emotional well-being."

-Danny Brito, Community Engagement Coordinator



Strengthening Connections

- 51** Weekly Community Meetings held
- 52** Weekly member eblasts deployed
- 184** Outreach calls made to lapsed members
- 3,682** Newsletters mailed to our community



TOGETHER, WE HAVE TONS OF FUN!

Rainbow Heights Club hosted 40 community partner visits in 2019, offering members everything from vision screenings and flu shots, to sexual health workshops and self defense courses, legal and vocational assistance.

We also gathered regularly for weekly community meetings and karaoke nights, and monthly community advisory boards and group birthday celebrations!

Photo descriptions in descending order:

RHC member Corondi on our outing to the Brooklyn Museum; Members pose with Zoe the therapy dog during one of her weekly visits to the Club; Gender and Sexuality workshop with health educator Janée White from Community Health Network; Members enjoying one of our weekly bingo games



Rainbow Heights Club

MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS



SLIM

Slim completed her Workforce Development Program with perfect attendance. Slim shared that **having somewhere to go daily gave her a sense of purpose, and she learned a lot about herself during the training.** One of Slim's favorite quotes is, "I never lose, I either win or I learn."

JESSICA

Jessica has spent months in stunt school taking extreme action classes. Jessica realized stunts are **a great way to channel her energy, and she has learned she works very well under pressure.** Jessica said having a safe space where she could be herself helped her pursue her goals.



VANESSA

Vanessa completed her Howie the Harp training and is now **working as a peer specialist in a psychiatric inpatient unit, facilitating recovery groups.** She plans to focus on how participants can push their recovery forward. Vanessa shared she wanted to give back some of the encouragement she received at the Club.



Members' Evening **MEAL PROGRAM**

In 2019, Rainbow
Heights Club served

6,714

free meals



98% of members **eat**
dinner at Rainbow
Heights Club

91% have helped to
prepare the
community meal

65% say they are **eating**
healthier than they
did before joining
the Club



HOME & COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES

Rainbow Heights Club's Certified Peer Specialist staff creatively engage Behavioral Health Home and Community Based Service participants in settings that are **safe, confidential, and nurture progress toward their recovery**. This year we've supported participants in enhancing their quality of life and increasing their social determinants of health, including:

- Getting and keeping **jobs**
- Utilizing **conflict resolution skills** to deescalate tense situations
- Getting along better with **family and friends**
- Securing **entitlements**, including SNAP benefits
- Making connections to **treatment providers**

In 2019, we increased
our Behavioral Health
Home & Community Based
Service activity by
200%

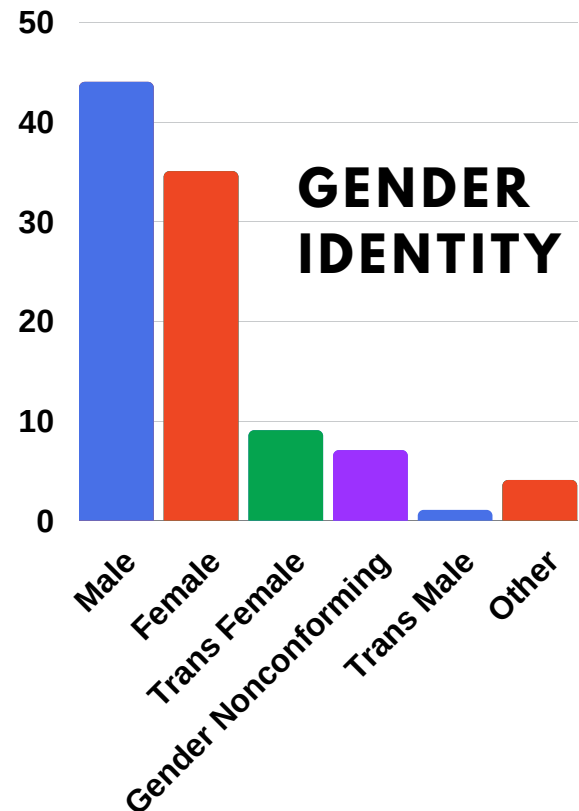
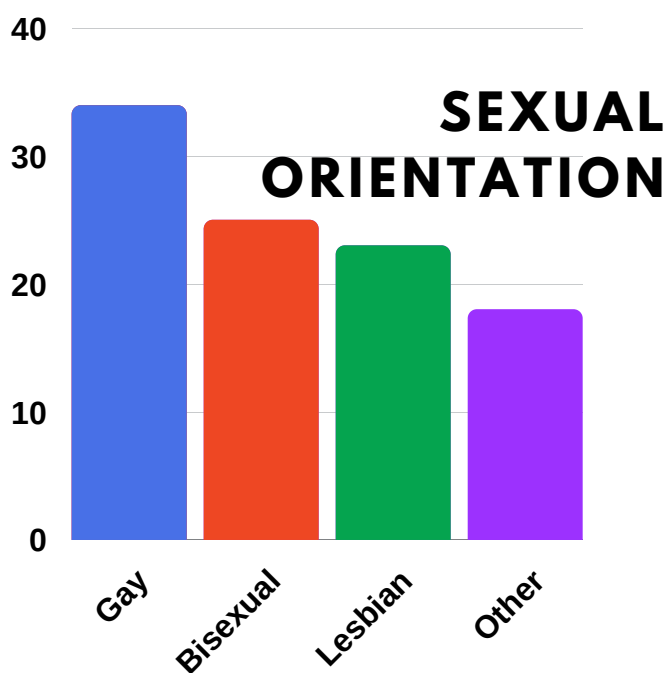
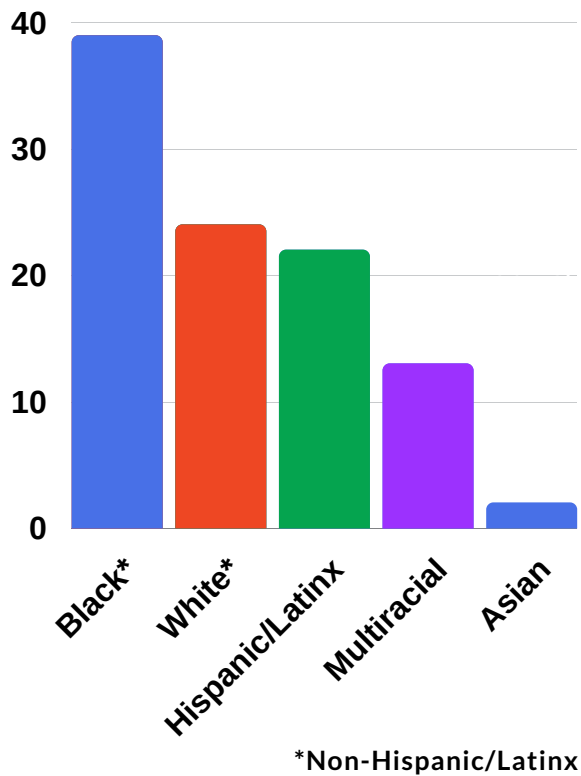
"HCBS brings out the best in me in terms of personal, spiritual and educational goals. For the last six months I have appreciated my strength and capabilities, for I am able to recognize my own individuality because of the encouragement that my HCBS Peer Specialist, Tanisha (pictured to the right), instills in me."

-Mia, HCBS Participant



Member DEMOGRAPHICS

RACE & ETHNICITY



Source: November 2019 Consumer Survey

Behavioral Health

PROVIDER TRAININGS



With the support of the NYC City Council, we've provided LGBTQ competency trainings free of charge to behavioral health providers since 2010. These trainings help ensure that more LGBTQ mental health consumers are able to find the affirming care that they need on their journey toward recovery.

In 2019 we provided over

50 trainings

across NYC to a variety of behavioral health agencies. We trained nearly

1400 providers

on how to provide competent care and create affirming behavioral health environments for LGBTQ consumers.



Rainbow Heights Club

INTERN PROGRAM



"I will forever be grateful for the impact that every single one of you has had on me as a student, a mental health clinician, and as a human being.

You all have taught me the value of being vulnerable, kind, and loving. It has been a pleasure to work with individuals who have faced so many challenges in life, and regardless of them, have chosen to continue to fight and **find a community** to support you along the way. Every single group, every individual conversation in the club room, movie night, and dinner, will forever live in my heart."

-Dani, 2019 Intern

Thank you to NYC
Council Speaker
Corey Johnson
and Finance
Committee Chair,
Daniel Dromm,
for providing
funding for our
Peer Specialist
interns!

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2018/2019

FUNCTIONAL CATEGORIZATION OF OPERATING EXPENSES



Rainbow Heights Club continues to be a cost effective investment in the lives of LGBTQ New Yorkers living with serious mental illness.

Operating as a drop-in center, with an average cost per program visit of \$46.50 per person, our programs have demonstrated that they assist members in remaining in outpatient care and adherent to their medication regimes. Most importantly, our members are active, engaged participants in their recovery and in their community.

During 2019 we worked hard to reduce our administrative and fundraising expenses so that more of your support can go directly to direct client services. We're pleased to report that in 2019 we were successful in decreasing our administrative overhead by 7% when compared to 2018.

2018

**Program
Services (74%)**

**Administration
(16%)**

**Fundraising
(10%)**

2019

**Program
Services (81%)**

**Administration
(14%)**

**Fundraising
(5%)**

2018/2019

FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

Audited Income	2018	2019
Government	\$460,974	\$721,225
Foundations	\$252,761	\$177,819
Individuals	\$18,578	\$22,498
Donated Facilities	\$14,585	\$14,112
Service Income	\$69,481	\$184,131
Earned Income	\$1,420	\$1,683
Total	\$817,799	\$1,121,468



Audited Expenses	2018	2019
Program Services	\$607,244	\$912,153
Administration	\$131,101	\$155,040
Fundraising	\$81,978	\$57,294
Total	\$820,323	\$1,124,487





Board of Directors

Daniel Garza, MD...Chair
Eileen Klein, Ph.D...Treasurer
Samantha Franklin, MSW...Member
Suzy Ritholz, Ph.D...Member
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Eddie Hardaway, LMSW...Director of HCBS & Contract Services
Randy Killings, CASAC-T...Director of Peer Services
Parker Jordan, MSW...Director of Community Engagement



www.rainbowheights.org



ADDENDUM: COVID-19 RESPONSE



RHC staff and members during our first in-person gatherings in five months

RAINBOW HEIGHTS CLUB'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

Prior to COVID-19 and New York's Shelter in Place order, Rainbow Heights Club provided 100% of services in person. In March, we paused in-person services and **pivoted quickly to a telephone model** for one-on-one support and Home and Community Based Services. Soon after, we began hosting our most popular support groups via conference call.

We're proud of the seamless transition we made then, and **we're proud of the work our staff and members have continued to do ever since** to stay connected, practice community care, and cultivate coping strategies as weeks of closure have turned into months.

We currently provide
45-50 services daily,
with one-on-one phone calls,
6 weekly support groups, and
a range of connections and
referrals to essential services
in our members' own
neighborhoods.



Mark with his dogs, Pepper & Julie

"I thank Cesar, Monica, and Chris for their support with the hard time I'm having dealing with staying home. Since Rainbow Heights Club closed, I feel like something is missing out of my life. **Speaking with the staff gives me something to look forward to.** I'm grateful to the Club, it's a special place for me."

-Mark, member for 11 years



Visit our YouTube channel to watch Mark's full message!

SOCIALLY-DISTANCED SOCIAL SUPPORT

In the weeks following our transition to telephone services, we saw a nearly **25% increase in requests for support services** as our members stayed isolated at home. Of those who participated in our recent survey,

95% say Rainbow Heights Club telephone support has helped them manage their mental health symptoms during COVID-19

95% say they received valuable health information related to COVID-19 from Rainbow Heights Club

84% say they received helpful information about COVID-19 food resources from Rainbow Heights Club

Nearly all members surveyed say RHC telephone support has helped them feel **less socially isolated** (98%), and has helped them feel a **sense of community** (95%). Staff encourage members to **share selfies, artwork, and personal coping strategies** for our weekly member eblasts.



Jamarr enjoying the sun



Ike on a walk in the park

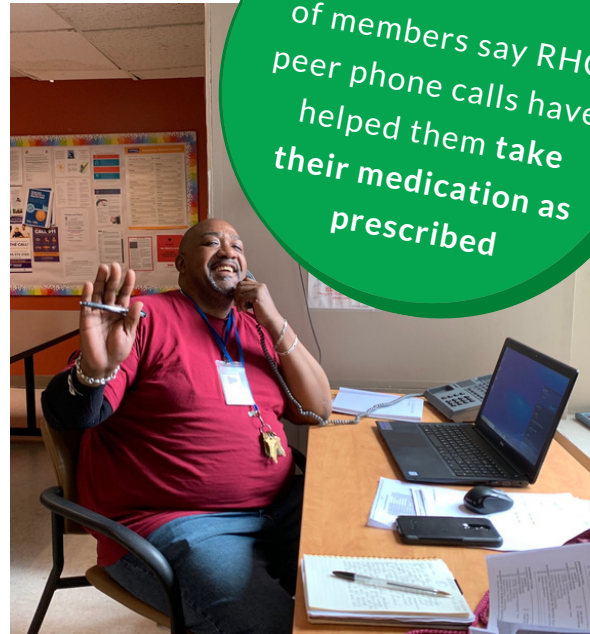


Debbie practicing guitar

SUPPORTING CONTINUITY OF CARE

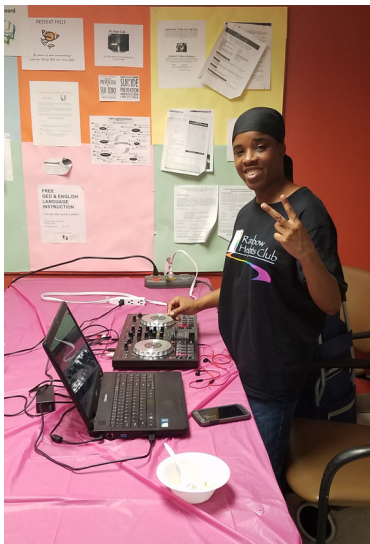
As part of every support call, **Rainbow Heights Club** staff ask how members are feeling, if they have enough food and medication, and if they can reach their therapist or psychiatrist if needed.

We're thankful that **95% of members** have been able to speak with their psychiatrists via tele-health services, and **100%** have spoken with their therapists.



76%
of members say RHC
peer phone calls have
helped them take
their medication as
prescribed

As RHC staff member Chris Arroyo (pictured above) noted in our Spring newsletter, **"COVID-19 might keep us in, but it can't keep us down!"**



"The Club is important to me during COVID-19, because we need to be able to still network with our peers, with our staff, so we can get through these trying times and have **the support that we need.**

During COVID, I've learned that taking care of myself doesn't stop. I have to keep taking my medication, keep routines, and keep occupied so that I don't end up back in the hospital.

In the most trying times that we face, we cannot give up. God is not gonna give us more than we can bear, and Rainbow is always gonna be there. I can't stress that enough, that we are always gonna have support from the Club. 100%."

-Trina, member for 14 years



Visit our Youtube channel to watch Trina's full message!

SUPPORTING CARE PROVIDERS



Our E/Quality Care provider trainings were also impacted by the shutdown, but with the support of the NYC Council and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Rainbow Heights Club community engagement staff quickly **redesigned our LGBTQ 101, 201 and Trans 101 curricula**. Now facilitated as a series of interactive webinars, our E/Quality Care trainings are reaching more providers than ever.

We're grateful to be able to give this remote support to behavioral health providers as they work to support our members and others through COVID-19!



Between June and August 2020, we've provided

11

virtual LGBTQ competency trainings for over

650

behavioral health providers, care managers, program administrators, and more!

POST-TRAINING FEEDBACK POLL RESULTS

After today's training, when I think about working with trans clients, I feel...



LOOKING FORWARD

Staff mailed collage materials to members who expressed missing Art Group, to be assembled into a larger **Community Collage** upon the Club's reopening. At the encouragement of Randy Killings, Director of Peer Services, **members also share other creative work**, like poetry and piano playing, during weekly calls.



Collage art by RHC members Mia (top left), Maria (bottom left), Gayle (middle), and Dottie (right)



SO HAPPY TO SEE YOU!

In late August we gathered in person for the first time in over five months at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Members and staff were thrilled to see each other face to face, and we look forward to more outdoor service provision prior to the Club's reopening for drop-in services.

Follow us for service updates and other news, and sign up for eblasts by visiting rainbowheights.org

