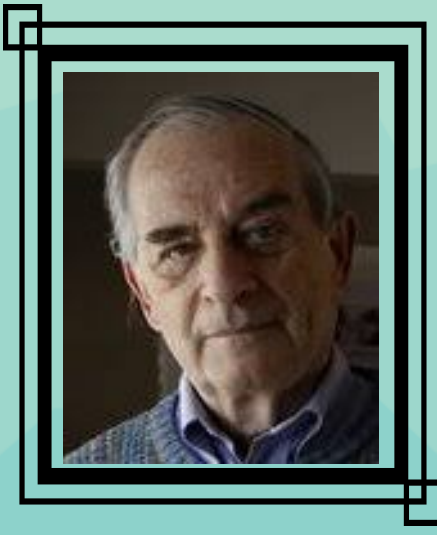


In His Own Words: The Original 6 Goals for Thresholds by Dr. Jerry Dincin

A mental health innovator who focused on life skills and community-based rehabilitation, Dr. Jerry Dincin helped forge a community to help thousands of people with serious mental illness live with dignity and independence. He served for nearly 40 years as Executive Director of Thresholds.



"The 6 goals emerged from members' needs. They demanded our attention. Members throughout the history of Thresholds have striven to remain outside of the hospital, hold down a job, gain an education, find their own housing, and handle stressed-out family situations and shattered social networks."

"Psychiatric rehabilitation at Thresholds is guided by six goals. These goals form the basis for our service plans, our outlines of a general treatment strategy for each member. Much as the markings on the closet wall at Thresholds' original location marked physical growth, the degree to which a member fulfills the six goals marks his or her progress and growth."

The 6 GOALS

1. Prevent unnecessary psychiatric hospitalization.

2. Obtain paid employment for every member capable of working.

3. Provide a wide array of housing consistent with member needs.

4. Improve social relationships and communication skills.

5. Offer educational opportunities at the appropriate level.

6. Promote and monitor physical health.

Unnecessary Hospitalization

"Thresholds began as a rehabilitation center to help psychiatric patients cross over from a life in the wards of psychiatric hospitals to life in the community.

Making that transition to a permanent life in the community remains central to our programming today.

Thus, it only makes sense that preventing unnecessary hospitalization of members is our and our members' overarching first goal, and that is where Thresholds staff focus much of their energies."

"Simply put, that goal is stop the revolving door."

"Thresholds realized that . . . it had left this mandate to others, naively believing that someone, somewhere, somehow, was taking care of members' physical health. Belatedly, we saw that this was not happening."

Promote & Monitor Physical Health

"For poor people with psychiatric problems, taking care of their own physical health was almost impossible without help.

We became determined to offer this help, and gradually, that determination became a full-fledged program goal."

Obtain Paid Employment

"Our belief is that most members truly motivated for paid work can do so, and it is our job to help members realize the goal.

This belief is based on a deep respect for the value of work in improving self-image, in gaining self respect and respect of others, in normalizing the person who works, and for providing an income that produces a number of benefits."

"We believe that everyone deserves a chance to work."

"The goal of education excites members in a different way than do the goals of preventing hospitalizations and finding employment."

Offer Educational Opportunities

"Members are encouraged to go as far as they can or want to in academic pursuits and vocational education. Since the value of education in American society is almost as great as that of work, the normalizing effect of academic achievement is an important motivator for further education.

For many members, then, there is a longing to complete what their peers and other family members have completed."

Provide Housing Consistent with Members' Needs

"When Thresholds started housing members over twenty years ago, staff were responding to a very basic problem: too many places where members lived were awful, disgraceful, and insulting.

They were psychiatric ghettos, disgusting SROs, or miserable apartments or boarding homes."

"We use a very simple criterion to evaluate whether housing is decent: is it good enough for our own brother or sister?"

"It is better to have friends and participate in leisure time activities than to isolate oneself and be alone."

Improve Social Relationships & Communication Skills

"Mental illness tends to separate members from their earlier peers, their families, and the general population, and the symptoms of mental illness almost always include a diminished capacity to enter into and enjoy social relationships."

