



## FACT SHEET

**T**he Aspire Center is a 40-bed, 30,000-square-foot, three-story residential rehabilitation treatment facility located in Old Town, San Diego, and is aimed at promoting recovery in Veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The center provides temporary housing for Veterans who do not need inpatient care but would benefit from intensive PTSD treatment and rehabilitation services. The center includes mental health, vocational and occupational therapies for those Veterans who need them. The ASPIRE Center has admitted Veterans since mid 2014, serving approximately 90 Veterans each year.

### **TREATMENT MODALITIES OFFERED AT THE ASPIRE CENTER:**

- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder treatment
- Case Management/Social Work
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Neuropsychological Assessment
- Psychotherapy
- Chaplain Services
- Educational Classes
- Medication Management
- Acupuncture
- Complementary/Alternative therapies



## **STAFF:**

Staff includes 33 full-time employees including licensed vocational nurses, registered nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers/case managers, psychologists, vocational rehabilitation specialist, psychiatrist, chaplain, pharmacist, peer support specialists, and registered dietitian. The Aspire Center encompasses the best and the brightest from multiple health disciplines. Veterans stand to benefit from multiple perspectives of a varied team of providers with rich, diverse and cutting-edge training.

## **HOUSING:**

The center provides temporary housing for Veterans who do not need inpatient care but would benefit from rehabilitation services for an average of 120-150 days. There are a total of 40 individual beds with 34 beds for males and six beds for females.

## **INTAKE CRITERIA:**

All Veterans are screened and selected for admission through the Mental Health Service in San Diego VA Medical Center. To be admitted, the Veteran must be:

- Honorably discharged and eligible for VA health care services; priority is given to Veterans deployed since 9/11;
- Homeless or at risk of homelessness;
- In need of more intensive Mental Health / PTSD treatment than is available as outpatient;
- Mentally and medically stable, independent in self-care;
- Motivated to participate in all treatment components focused on recovery and reintegration into the community;
- Willing to remain compliant with all program rules (breaking rules can lead to consequences up to and including discharge from the program).

## **FACILITY:**

The Aspire Center is a three-story, 30,000-square-foot building located in Old Town San Diego. The building has been designed with intensive input from medical center leadership and interdisciplinary clinical staff in order to ensure an optimum environment for healing and recovery while ensuring safety and privacy. The building contains numerous therapeutic elements. Its airy interior receives abundant sunlight; rooms have



beautiful views of the I-5 corridor, airport and downtown San Diego; and the interior is virtually sealed from outside noise due to the installation of noise-reducing windows.

The Aspire Center occupies all three floors of the building. The first floor contains the kitchen and great-room area. A professional-grade teaching kitchen is large enough to accommodate groups of Veterans partaking in cooking skills classes. The second floor contains offices for the Aspire Center's staff members as well as two large meeting areas in which classes, group therapy sessions and team meetings are held.

The third floor of the Aspire Center contains private living quarters for the Veterans; each room contains one bed, desk and storage closet with a safe for medications and valuables. There are communal shower facilities for male Veterans. A number of bedrooms designated for female Veterans contain shared bathrooms and are located in a separate, keycard-controlled area. The third floor also contains a communal lounge for Veteran socializing and leisure.

Access to all entry points of the building is controlled by keycard and the building has 24/7 security and surveillance. Parking spaces for Veterans, staff members and visitors are located in an underground garage below the building.

## **THE PROGRAM:**

The Aspire Center provides treatment and rehabilitation through a three-step process: Phase 1: Assessment and Stabilization, Phase 2: Skill Acquisition and Phase 3: Transition to the Community. During the initial Phase, Veterans are engaged in multi-disciplinary evaluation of their psycho-social functioning including full psycho-diagnostic, recovery goals (i.e., housing, work, school, personal) and psychological evaluations. Veterans meet individually with specialists from multiple modalities to facilitate a diagnosis, case conceptualization and the establishment of a recovery plan. During this time residents learn ways to manage their symptoms and function as a member of a therapeutic community. Next, Veterans enter Phase 2 wherein they attend a variety of Evidence-Based Treatments to build mental health skills. Treatments will vary by need and include group and individual psychotherapy targeting mental health conditions, psycho-education, medication management and vocational/ educational skill building courses. We are proud to offer state-of-the-art, empirically supported treatments for PTSD including cognitive processing therapy (CPT) and prolonged exposure therapy (PE) and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). Veterans have a role as members of a Veteran-led government. The Veteran government is designed to empower program participants by increasing their role in program design and mutual aid. Veterans also have access to recreational opportunities (i.e., biking, surfing, hiking) as part of their reintegration into the community. During Phase 3,



Veterans initiate their pursuit of vocational and academic goals by venturing into the community to volunteer, attend classes at local academic institutions, interview for jobs, and secure housing.

The communal environment of the Aspire Center eases that transition towards recovery in civilian life by encouraging social interactions. Several facets of our program promote fellowship including group-based therapeutic and recreational interventions and the Veteran-led government, which are key in building resilience and recovery.

Volunteers play a large part in providing complementary services to the residents, with services ranging from acupuncture, music therapy, acting, service animal training, art therapy, recovery peer support, and training in crafts and trades.

### **DISCHARGE & TRANSITION – SUPPORT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS:**

Our overall goal is to ensure that every Veteran that completes the Aspire Center program leaves with the skills, resources and support necessary to ensure successful integration into the community. In keeping with the recovery-oriented philosophy of the Aspire Center, discharge from the program is focused on the attainment of life goals that each Veteran has identified as important and meaningful to recovery. Therefore, discharge planning is a highly individualized and collaborative process between the Veterans and Aspire Center staff. Planning for discharge begins upon admission to the program. Each Veteran in the Aspire Center works together with our interdisciplinary treatment team to formulate a comprehensive recovery and treatment plan that addresses areas such as activities of daily living, housing, education, finances/employment, social support and aftercare support. Veterans work with our team to identify specific goals in these areas (e.g., securing independent living and employment) and to break these goals down into smaller steps (e.g., learning self-care skills, constructing a resume, completing treatment for mental health issues). Each Veteran's treatment is tailored to help him or her achieve these goals, and the recovery and treatment plan is periodically reviewed to ensure that progress is being made and that the Veteran is receiving the appropriate menu of services to address his or her recovery needs. Effort is made to engage the Veteran in aftercare appointments prior to actual discharge in order to ease the transition into the community.

A rigorous process is followed as Veterans approach their discharge date in order to ensure that they have all the appropriate support in place to ensure a successful transition from the Aspire Center into the community. Steps of this process include coordinating with and educating family members and other support figures, ensuring the Veteran is properly connected to the VA or community agencies for ongoing care, connecting the Veteran with an Aspire Center follow-up nurse who monitors their transition out of the Center, assisting the Veteran with any necessary travel arrangements and reviewing medications, etc.



ASPIRE Notable Numbers

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 33          | Full time employees  |
| 40          | Bed unit (36 male, 4 female)                                     |
| 700         | Admissions   |
| 10,000      | Pens made with Turnaround Vets (average 20pens/wk x52wks x10yrs) |
| 100,000     | Bed days occupied  |
| 378,000     | Meals served   |
| 500,000     | Programming hours (groups, classes, individual appointments)     |
| \$1,000,000 | Combined <u>annual</u> student loan and debt forgiveness         |