PRESS KIT

Established 1974

Chief Executive Officer Cal Hedigan

Senior Management Team
- Michelle des Roches, Chief Program Officer - Housing
- Chris Lacovara, Chief Financial Officer and General Counsel
- Alysia Pascaris, Chief Program Officer - Non-Housing
- John Williams, Chief Development and Communications Officer
- Morenike Williams, Chief People Officer

Employees 380

Operating Budget $37 million – serving over 3,000 people annually

Website www.communityaccess.org

Facebook www.fb.com/communityaccess

Twitter www.twitter.com/ca_nyc

Instagram Instagram.com/communityaccessinc

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MISSION STATEMENT

Community Access expands opportunities for people living with mental health concerns to recover from trauma and discrimination through affordable housing, training, advocacy, and healing-focused services.

We are built upon the simple truth that people are experts in their own lives.

VALUES

- **Human Rights**: We challenge and lead the mental health system towards greater rights-based policies and practices.

- **Peer Expertise**: We are dedicated to a workforce where at least 51% of our employees identify as having a personal experience using mental health services. We ensure that the voices and wisdom of individuals who have used mental health services have a visible and active presence in all aspects of our work.

- **Self-Determination**: We defend the right of all individuals to create lives of their own choosing.

- **Harm Reduction**: We embrace policies and practices that promote dignity, wellbeing and access to health care.

- **Healing and Recovery**: We seek out and promote culturally relevant, trauma-informed and research-based opportunities for individual and community wellness.
HISTORY

Community Access was founded in 1974 in response to the mass release of patients from New York psychiatric hospitals. To address the widespread homelessness among this population, CA’s founders developed supportive housing—affordable rental housing linked to supportive services—that today serves as the industry standard. Over the past four decades, CA’s mission has expanded beyond housing to include education and job readiness programs, and recovery and crisis services. These programs seek to ensure basic safety for those with mental health concerns, including safety from stigma, discrimination, bullying, and all forms of brutality.

Since its founding, CA has developed 20 affordable housing buildings—including brand new constructions and rehabilitated structures like the historic Gouverneur Court. Community Access’ housing integrates various populations, including people who have been formerly homeless or incarcerated, seniors, veterans, people living with HIV/AIDS, and youth aging out of the foster care system. Community Access advocates for policies that respect basic human rights and dignity—policies that expand access to good-paying jobs, affordable housing, and quality health care.

At all levels of the organization, Community Access staff work diligently to transform the mental health system through integrated housing models, employment of individuals who have had a lived experience in the mental health system, and advocacy for the rights of individuals with psychiatric disabilities to live without fear or stigma.

Community Access believes in the value of peer support, and empowers people with lived experience of the mental health care system to be advocates, peers, and mentors for others. We run the nation’s top job training program for mental health peers: developed in 1995, the Howie the Harp Advocacy Center now has more than 1,100 graduates and counting. The center equips peers with the skills and knowledge needed to find jobs in health and human services.

Our award-winning programs, which are replicated nationally and internationally, empower people with the tools and knowledge they need to rebuild their lives.
SERVICES

**Housing**

Community Access leads the fight against New York City homelessness – as a provider of quality supportive housing, and through sustained advocacy for more housing. CA has developed over 1,315 units of supportive housing in New York.

**Education & Job Readiness**

Person-centered and empowering, our award-winning education and job readiness programs combine research-based methods with the bedrock principles of peer expertise and self-determination. To date, the Howie the Harp Advocacy Center has over 1,000 graduates.
SERVICES

Crisis Services

Community Access has spearheaded the creation and rollout of citywide alternatives to hospitalization, by opening NYC’s first crisis respite center and first peer-operated support line. These models are poised to improve health outcomes for thousands and save millions of tax dollars within the Medicaid Managed Care system. Since it opened in 2013, the Crisis Respite Center has served over 500 people.

Health & Wellness

We recognize that there are many dimensions of health – emotional, intellectual, spiritual, social, financial, communal, and physical. Our staff members help participants access primary care, nutritious meals, and information and resources that help them make informed decisions about their well-being.

Advocacy

Community Access advocates for improving the splintered mental health and criminal justice systems. We train and empower mental health consumers to engage in activities that help shape policies and system-wide change. Community Access has a goal of 51% of its staff being mental health consumers.
Cal Hedigan has dedicated her career to creating environments where people living with mental health concerns can live with dignity, access connection and community, and find allies who will support them in their journeys.

Cal joined Community Access in 1999 as Director of Policy and Program Evaluation, and subsequently served as Director of Corporate Compliance. From 2011 to July 2019, she worked as Community Access’ Deputy CEO leading many agency initiatives including those focused on formalizing data analysis and measuring the impact of our work, program development, expanding participant health and wellness initiatives, and strengthening organizational systems to support our mission.

“After years of working in the field, I finally found a home when I came to Community Access in 1999,” Cal says. “I was drawn to the mission and philosophy of the agency because I too held a belief that all people are experts in their own lives. Over the years I have grown with the agency and have worked hard to realize this goal, shaping the services we provide by listening to the voices of those that we serve. Our work will always be rooted in our commitment to human rights and self-determination, and as we grow and develop as an agency, our mission and values will continue to guide everything we do.”

Cal lives the Community Access ethos of health and wellness on a daily basis. Rain or shine, she can be spotted on her trusty folding bike going to meetings at any one of the agency’s 23 locations. She has completed yoga and meditation teacher trainings and strives to live mindfully. Cal is also an avid cook and enjoys preparing meals that celebrate the healing properties of whole food.

Born in Wales to Irish parents, Cal began her work in the field of mental health in 1985 at the Richmond Fellowship in the UK, a non-hierarchical model where staff and participants live and work together in the community. Inspired by this experience, she went on to hold a variety of positions in residential mental health programs, working in case manager, intake coordinator, supervisor, and director roles. Prior to her tenure with Community Access, she worked as Director of Planning at the Bowery Residents’ Committee in New York. Cal received her undergraduate degree from Brown University and completed graduate studies in social work at Hunter College. She is also a graduate of the National Council of Behavioral Health’s Executive Leadership Program. Please feel free to contact Cal at chedigan@communityaccess.org.

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RECOGNITION & AWARDS

2016: National Council for Behavioral Health Advocate of the Year Award

2014: Finalist, New York Community Trust Nonprofit Excellence Awards

2013: Christian Science Monitor profiles Community Access in cover story on national health care reform

2011: Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) honors CA with national award for excellence

2008: Robin Hood Foundation “John F. Kennedy, Jr. Hero Award”

2006: Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce Award for Excellence in Affordable Housing Development