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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT AND TRANSITIONAL SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR  
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER YOUNG ADULTS IN LONG BEACH  
New Program Being Planned by Behavioral Health Services, Inc.

Daniel was a 19-year-old, towheaded kid from Strawberry, Arkansas – soft spoken and shy. His was a shyness born of years of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse heaped upon him by a family, a foster care system, and a society which could not accept the fact that he was gay. The only two things Daniel knew about Long Beach when he got on the Greyhound Bus were that there were a lot of gay people there, and it was as far away from Strawberry as he was likely to get on \$46.

I met Daniel in a Long Beach park about 10 years ago when I was doing HIV outreach and testing. He had been homeless for 6 months. He did crystal-meth to stay awake at night when he couldn't find a "john" to take him home. He heard voices that other people couldn't hear; they told him how worthless he was, that he deserved the situation in which he found himself, that he deserved to die because he was gay. He tested HIV-positive in my mobile unit.

It was impossible at the time to find services that could treat the breadth and complexity of Daniel's problems with any level of cultural competence in Long Beach; and, he was unwilling to leave the "protection" of the few friends he had found there who actually treated him with some level of dignity – at least in his mind. I saw him last about 5 years ago. He was skin-on-bones, with a soulless death in his eyes that wrenched my heart.

Of the 9,000+ homeless people on the streets of Long Beach on any given night, about 1,200 of them are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender (LGBT) young adults. The vast majority of these LGBT young people, just like Daniel, suffers from substance abuse and/or mental illness, have no familial connections, and have no social support outside of the streets and the drug using community. Many have accessed the existing service systems and have found it lacking in its' ability to appropriately serve their needs.

Too late for Daniel, but none too soon for 100's of others like him in the streets of Long Beach, Behavioral Health Services, Inc. (BHS) is planning to open a 10-bed Drug and Alcohol

Rehabilitation Supportive Housing Project serving Transitional Aged Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth (ages 18 – 25), with particular emphasis placed on those who are homeless, HIV-positive, or at significant risk for either. Supportive services to be offered at this site, and/or in the surrounding community include medical detoxification; residential and outpatient substance abuse treatment; individual therapy; psychiatric services including medication management for those with co-occurring mental disorders; HIV/AIDS prevention education and counseling; literacy, education, and employment development; mentoring program; and integration into a healthy LGBT social network prior to moving on to independent living.

BHS is a community-based healthcare organization providing substance abuse, mental health, drug-free transitional supportive housing, senior services, HIV/AIDS education and prevention, and other related health services to the residents of Southern California. BHS' mission is to transform lives by offering hope and opportunities for recovery, wellness, and independence.

Since 1973, BHS has provided medical inpatient detoxification and residential and outpatient treatment services to substance abusers. Over the past thirty-four years BHS expanded services to meet the comprehensive needs of its clients, and now provides services from 12 sites located in 4 LA County areas – Hollywood, South Bay, Long Beach, and the San Gabriel Valley. These sites include two free-standing chemical dependency hospitals with medical detoxification and residential/outpatient treatment, two residential treatment facilities, seven outpatient facilities, and one transitional living facility. BHS' Long Beach site, Redgate Memorial Recovery Center, has been in operation since 1982.

As this new program for LGBT young adults is an innovative pilot model of treatment for a specific population, public funding is not readily available to support the project as a whole. We are currently in negotiation with L.A. County entities in order to leverage existing treatment slots to provide some services. We are also engaging outside service providers in the Long Beach Community with whom we have longstanding relationships to provide additional services.

However, there is still much you can do to help young people like Daniel make that move toward independence. If you would like to get involved in this project in any way by providing your expertise, your time, your passion, or your financial support, please call John Kirby, our Associate Director of Program Development at (310) 679-9126 extension 294, or email [jkirby@bhs-inc.org](mailto:jkirby@bhs-inc.org). Financial contributions for this project may be made care of Behavioral Health Services, Inc., 15519 Crenshaw Blvd, Gardena, CA 90249, indicate the TAY LGBT Project in your correspondence.