Host Site Name: Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Center for Health Equity and Community Wellness-Friendship Benches

Position Title: Peer Community Health Member

Location: East Harlem Health Action Center 158 East 115th Street, New York NY 10029

Tentative Schedule: Monday-Friday 9am-5pm

# of member Slots in this Position: 2

Need for the specific project on which AmeriCorps Member is serving:
Friendship Benches have been proven to enhance community engagement, increase access to care, reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety and increase social cohesion. The provision of services, workshops, lay worker training, and employment established through shared leadership and cross-sector partnerships can improve outcomes of complex mental health interventions and reinforce community power, individual efficacy and localized networks to support self-care in NYCHA and other communities.

Expectations and Goals for the specific project on which AmeriCorps Member is serving:
Friendship Benches NYC serve as non-traditional public meeting spaces installed with aims to reduce mental health treatment gaps by using community health workers to deliver problem solving therapy, a cognitive behavioral therapy-based technique, provided on a primary care level to address depression and anxiety, and motivational interviewing to support strength-based approach to identify opportunities for self-care. These non-traditional counseling spaces can also facilitate referrals to social services and ongoing care, cultivate social cohesion through creative programming, and serve as pop-up stations for health promotion.
The Peer Community Health member is an individual with lived experience who can utilize their lived experience with homelessness, criminal justice and/or mental health to engage and support community members. The Peer Community Health member will help expand the Friendship Benches Program reach, conducting outreach and connecting at least 7 community members to resources daily. During the member service, Friendship benches will work to reduce the treatment gap in high-need, hard to reach neighborhoods and populations across NYC, reduce stigma associated with mental health, and provide resources (i.e., referrals) to mental health services (NYC Well).

**Member Position Summary:**

The Peer Community Health member will serve as a peer counselor and referral specialist for residents and community members through the activation of the Friendship Benches and referrals from partnering programs. The Peer Community Health member will be trained to provide one-on-one mental health coaching sessions to help resident participant’s identify alternative approaches to solving problems, accessing social services and identifying signs and symptoms of substance misuse and common mental illnesses like depression and anxiety. Sessions will be held either at the Friendship Benches or public community events. With shared life experience, Peer Community Mental Health member will serve as peer counselors, educate participants about self-help techniques and teach effective coping strategies and symptom management skills and assist in the referral of community support systems and networks.

**Detailed Tasks:**

- Provide mental health coaching support to walk-up visitors and individuals referred to the Friendship Benches
- Maintain referral and visitor session notes
- Connect participants to community clinical and social services
- Model positive mental health management behavior
- Complete tasks including documentation, coaching, health education and data entry in accordance with organizational guidelines
- Prepare case-related reports including but not limited to outcomes, successes and challenges.
- Engage in case conferencing with Community Mental Health Worker Supervisor
- Communicate health complications and risks to Community Health Worker Supervisor when necessary
- Serve as a positive example and role model as the representative of the organization internally and externally

**Required Skills for AmeriCorps Members (set for all program members):**

- Strong commitment to national service and the mission of the host site
- Desire to work in the non-profit sector
- Desire to serve with diverse communities
- Excellent organizational and communication skills
- Ability to conduct community outreach and make presentations to community groups
- Willingness to take initiative to achieve goals
- Strong foundation in project management/multi-tasking abilities
- A clear plan for living on the AmeriCorps stipend in New York City
- Availability to lead and/or attend events during evening and weekend hours (frequency varies by position)
- Minimum high school diploma or equivalency
- Ability to pass a criminal background check
- US Citizen or lawful permanent resident (AmeriCorps regulations)

Preferred Academic or Experience Qualifications, Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

- Bilingual preferred (English/Spanish or English/French) but not required
- At least 3 years of relevant work experience preferred
- Experience in public speaking or presentations preferred
- NYCHA residents strongly encouraged to apply
- Strong relationship builder with excellent interpersonal and communication skills
- Experience providing coaching, mentoring, adult learning, counseling, outreach, workshop facilitation, and/or group/community presentations
- Ability to work independently, travel city-wide, be flexible, and handle changing workload with multiple projects and changing priorities
- Working Conditions: 90% Community outreach, 10% Office and Supervision
- A strong commitment to engage residents on a personal level and be able to reach agreements on future health commitment/goals
- Experience working with marginalized populations preferred
- Healthcare related experience is a plus
- Knowledge and familiarity with NYCHA systems is a plus
- A commitment to collective action and community organizing
- Peers with lived experience strongly encouraged to apply
- Microsoft Office & administrative experience preferred

*Please note:* The duties and responsibilities in this service position description may be subject to change. In the rare event that there are any changes, members will be notified prior to beginning the service year and the position description will be amended. All changes will be reviewed and approved in advance by NYC Service.