

DMH EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT – JULIE VALDEZ

We're starting up a new set of stories spotlighting LACDMH employees who shine! This week, we're featuring...



JULIE VALDEZ
Program Head, Licensed Psychiatric Technician (LPT) &
Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)

Julie started her career at LACDMH with LACDMH's first 23-hour Crisis Evaluation Unit (CEU), located on the grounds of Metropolitan State Hospital. It was the department's only 24/7 facility staffed by LACDMH employees. The program evolved into today's 24/7 program known as the ACCESS Center.

"I have worked my entire career in LACDMH's 24/7 facility. ACCESS Center is a national, toll-free hotline providing telephone triage, ambulance dispatch, information, referral services, after-hours gatekeeping, PMRT dispatching and Patients' Rights Services on a 24/7 basis. The ACCESS Center also operates another toll-free warmline for supportive listening and consumer support seven days a week from 10PM-6AM. And, beginning this year, we began scheduling clinic appointments to link Medi-Cal consumers to the local mental health plan," Julie explained.

Julie started with LACDMH in November 1984. "I started as a volunteer in 1983 while working the night shift for Metropolitan State Hospital as a LPT."

What do you like about your job? "It's a job that requires a team effort. Knowing we have helped people in crisis situations – and many that we can't discuss or report about because of confidentiality reasons. The job and program is continuously changing and evolving. The best part of the job is working with new and old employees at ACCESS who move on to other programs in LACDMH and advance their careers having ACCESS as their training ground to bigger and better things in the department."

Who/what inspires you? "My 100-year-old grandmother and my 14-year-old son."

What quote inspires you? The Serenity Prayer: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.”

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time? “I enjoy spending all my spare time with my husband of 30 years, watching our 14-year-old in club water polo, basketball and baseball. When I’m not with them, I’m with my grandmother or she’s with us watching sports.”

Do you have any words of wisdom for other LACDMH employees?

- Be kind and sensitive to your fellow employees.
- Don’t be afraid to say hello and thank you.
- Never be intimidated by hierarchy if you feel you have something important to contribute.
- Everyone we work with has some sort of stress or crisis situation going on at some time in their lives. These situations do pass with support.
- Take care of each other.