

The Westside Clubhouse Membership to Methadone Clients

In early 2025, the San Francisco Department of Public Health Substance Uses Services invited Westside Community Services to open its Clubhouse for the Seriously Mentally Ill (SMI) to clients of its Methadone Clinic. Funding was provided to support efforts to recruit Methadone clients, incorporate them into Clubhouse activities, and track their participation, experience, and outcomes. This report summarizes recruitment progress as of May 30th and initial reports of methadone clients' responses to Clubhouse membership.

The Westside Clubhouse

Westside Community Services is a Behavioral Health Community Health Center in San Francisco. Clubhouses for the Seriously Mentally Ill (SMI) are a well-established form of psycho-social rehabilitation that improve functioning, reduce symptoms and social isolation in clients

In 2023, Westside opened a Clubhouse for the SMI under a planning grant from the **California Health Care Foundation**. As a partner in the Clubhouse project, **Atlas Clarity** designed and managed an outcomes research program tracking experience and outcomes through client surveys and semi-structured interviews

Since 2023, the Westside Clubhouse has enrolled nearly **70 San Francisco inner-city SMI members** who report positive experiences and noticeable improved social and emotional functioning. This report summarizes early efforts to extend membership to Methadone program clients who also have mental health problems and to track their experiences and outcomes

How Did Methadone Clients Join the Clubhouse?

Recruitment Process

In 2025, Westside staff began recruitment efforts in a meeting with Clinic staff to describe the Clubhouse, its approach to supporting the mentally ill and substance abuse clients through social rehabilitation, and daily programs. Subsequently, Clubhouse staff made weekly and bi-weekly visits to the Clinic, bringing refreshments and informally approaching clients attending the clinic to invite them to visit the Clubhouse and explain its activities. (Clubhouse staff confirmed with Methadone clinic counselors approaching a client that he or she have mental illness diagnosis.)

Clients who expressed interest were given instructions for travel and asked to give their names and telephone contact. The Clubhouse Program Director made follow-up calls to all interested Methadone clients inviting them to visit, answering questions, and assuring them that they could choose whether to participate in activities. Overall, Clubhouse staff's recruitment reports indicated that as of May, 27 methadone clients who were approached in the Clinic gave their names and contact information for follow-up. Clients who expressed a desire to go directly from the Clinic to the Clubhouse for an initial visit were given cab coupons when they were available.

Resistance and Concerns to Joining the Program

Most methadone clients when initially approached expressed little or no interest in learning about the Clubhouse. The most common concerns expressed were that they would not feel accepted by other Clubhouse

members, that activities would be uninteresting, and that transportation would be difficult. Comments were made such as *"I am not looking for new things to do"* and *"I only hang out with people I already know."*

Points of Persuasion to Joining the Program

- Recommendations by Clinic counselors

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- Assurances from recruiters that clients would not be forced to join in Clubhouse activities or tasks, and would be permitted to observe only.
- Subsidized breakfast and lunches served by and with Clubhouse members.

What Has Been the Experience of Methadone Clients at the Clubhouse?

As of the end of May 2025, seven Methadone clients have visited the Clubhouse and returned for two or more subsequent visits. All seven have expressed interest in joining the Clubhouse and six have completed Clubhouse application forms and become full members. Below are brief profiles of three clients who recently became members.



T: 64-year-old black man

Background: T is a 64-year-old black man with physical disabilities that prevent him from working. He has severe anxiety and PTSD (self-reported conditions). T describes himself as a “people person” but finds it difficult to socialize.

Joining the Clubhouse: The recommendation of the Methadone Clinic’s Director was his main reason for visiting

“I came to try the Clubhouse because Lisa thought it would be good for me and explained about the activities here”

Experience at Clubhouse: At the time of his interview, T had attended the Clubhouse five times and planned to continue to visit twice a week (both days that the Clubhouse is open for a full program, when the Clubhouse adds a 3rd day in August, he plans to visit three times weekly). He reported participating in the poetry discussion group, helping to clean up after meals, and musical activities.

When asked if he thought that attending the Clubhouse was helping him, T reported that he had experienced feeling emotionally “*much improved*” since joining the Clubhouse and added:

“I like being around the people in this Clubhouse... it is different here...people respect me and treat me like they want me to be here with them. I can get to know people here”

B: a 53-year-old white woman

Background: B is a 53-year-old white woman who describes herself as dealing with bipolar disorder, depression, severe anxiety, and PTSD. B expressed concern about being alone too often and reported clinically elevated levels of loneliness on a validated scale administered during the Westside interview.

Joining the Clubhouse: The recommendation by B’s counselor was the initial reason for joining. B “*always found her [counselor’s] advice to be good*” and she expressed interest in joining some of

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the tasks that member do to help run the Clubhouse (call “work units”), such as helping to prepare meals, dusting the Clubhouse, and arranging hygiene products that are donated to Clubhouse.

Experience at the Clubhouse: At the time of her interview, B had attended two times and planned to come twice weekly. The Clubhouse is helping her meet new people who are not judgmental and treat her “*like a real person.*” B found the discussion group about substance use interesting and hopes that the Clubhouse schedules for discussion groups.

“The food is great!”

J: 34-year-old black man

Background: J is a 34-year-old black man who is currently employed. J has elevated levels of loneliness as measured on a validated screening scale that is part of the Clubhouse member survey.

Joining the Clubhouse: J was hesitant to visit the Clubhouse but his counselor persuaded him to visit. He reports enjoying the Clubhouse atmosphere and finding it more comfortable than he expected.

“[I was] afraid that I just would not be up to being in the Clubhouse with a lot of other people I did not know”

Experience at the Clubhouse: At the time of the interview, J had attended the Clubhouse twice weekly for three weeks. He plans to continue twice weekly visits for breakfast and lunch and leaving in time for his afternoon through evening job. J enjoys Clubhouse poetry groups and art projects. He joined a member group painting a wall mural and particularly enjoys pottery sessions which he described as “*very soothing.*” He has also arranged reading materials and non-perishable food products in the foodbank.

From his experience so far at the Clubhouse, J found the Clubhouse to offer “*stimulus to [be] more present and engaged...*” He was relieved to know that there are “*people I can relate to*” and he has “*already started*” to get to know other members.

“[The Clubhouse] helps a person not succumb to isolation. It gets people in motion and helps them stay in motion.”

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How do Methadone Clients Joining the Clubhouse Compare to Other Clubhouse Members?

Prior to the current effort to recruit Methadone Clinic clients, Clubhouse members had primarily come from Westside mental health programs for adults. Clients recruited thus far from the Methadone Clinic are similar in demographic descriptors to other Clubhouse members.

- Age range of 34-65 for methadone clients (21-77 for other CH members)
- 50% of Methadone clients identify as Black (40% for other CH members)
- 50% of Methadone clients are unemployed (83% for other CH members)
- 100% of Methadone clients have permanent housing (53% for other CH members)

Clubhouse Management Tasks (work units) and Social Activities in which Clients have Participated

Meal Preparation/ Meal Clean-Up

Meal Clean-up and putting away food

Tending Clubhouse plants

Cleaning Clubhouse –dusting, vacuuming, recycling

Sorting clothes donated to the Clubhouse

Poetry and reading groups

Discussion Group re substance abuse issues for people taking pscyhotropics

Stretching and strength building

Watching movies and talking about them with other members

Cleaning up after meals

Organizing Clubhouse books and magazines

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Note: Additional survey data was collected for emotional and social functioning. These will be included in later reports when more methadone clients have responded to surveys. Initial methadone client responses indicate similar values to averages for other members.

What Do Methadone Staff and Counselors Observe?

Methadone Clinic staff were asked for their observation on recruitment and the likely CH impact:

- >Have you observed any apparent effect of clubhouse participation on your clients who are attending the clubhouse?
- >Have any of your clients described to you their experience at the clubhouse to you?
- >Do you have any suggestions for making the Clubhouse recruitment or experience better for your clients?

Comments from Counselor #1: referred four clients to the Clubhouse. Each of the four have attended multiple times, completed the member application form, survey, and structured interview:

"My clients love the Clubhouse. It gets them out to a safe place with no temptations to use...and helps them to start socializing. And they love having breakfast and lunch in the Clubhouse."

"Transportation is the big challenge for our members. When you can give them tokens to get to the Clubhouse that helps a lot. We don't have tokens, now but if we could get some that would really help to just get them there."

Comments from Methadone Clinic Manager:

"The Clubhouse is working great for our clients. They love being there."

"Now that we know the Clubhouse works for our clients, we can refer more."

"It would help our clients' access if the Clubhouse were open more days a week."

Comments from Counselor #2:

"Our clients need someplace safe to go and be able to socialize without negative influences. The Clubhouse gives them that."

"One of my clients who I got to go try the Clubhouse was resistant, but once he went he thought it was great and now he loves going there. He now has been sober for three months and the Clubhouse has been a big help with that."

"The main thing you all need to do is have the Clubhouse open more days a week. When you are in recovery you need something positive to do each day. The Clubhouse gives them something positive to do and somewhere to be on two days a week, but my clients need more days a week."

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“Your outreach here has been very collaborative and that works well... we need to get those taxi vouchers back again. If I can offer a client a voucher to get there the first time, they are likely to go. Once they get there, they feel they are treated well, and they love it.”

