

Friendship House

56 Julian Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94103

Date of Visit: September 5, 2024

Visit by Commissioners of the San Francisco Behavioral Health Commission:
Stephen Banuelos, LCSW Retired & Alex Humphrey, MS, CMHC, APCC, AMFT, SC

The mission of Friendship House is to promote healing and wellness in the Native American community providing high quality substance abuse prevention, treatment, and recovery services while integrating cultural and spiritual traditions.

This site review focused on the Adult Residential Program. It is described as a treatment program for adult men and women offering residential treatment up to 6 months in San Francisco, California, with options of an additional 6 months of extended residential treatment. It offers traditional medicines as well as the latest treatment options available.

It should be noted that less than 40% of residents are enrolled and served through a contract with SF Behavioral Health Services. The majority of clients are served through agreements with various west coast tribes.

You will also be among other Native people, staff and residents, who have experienced their own struggles with addiction and substance use. At Friendship House, everyone is part of a community of healing.

Strengths and Overall Observations

- Its greatest strength is the use of Native American community spiritual and cultural connections as a foundation for its treatment services.
- Many staff have either their own tribal background and/or have been former residents of the residential treatment services. 75% of staff are Native American.
- Clients described the structured programming as very important in striving forward in their recovery.
- Clients also described staff as very supportive. Not only are they frequently checking in with clients of their current well-being, but are also proficient in helping residents find what is most needed (at the time) for their recovery.
- Though based upon Native American heritage, the program is welcoming to all residents and respectful of individual's backgrounds.
- Clients interviewed described Friendship House as much more organized, and structured, than other recovery programs in their past experience. Staff are very aware of problems early enough causing very few problems among residents.
- One client raised on a reservation described the program as feeling like home.

- Clients described staff as being very respectful of individual privacy and emphasizing no gossip amongst residents.
- The program demonstrates using all local community services available helping residents meet their needs, and not just Native American resources though it being their specialty.
- The facility has an appearance of being very clean and well maintained.
- Client rights information is well posted and residents seemed aware of their rights.
- Staff report greater rapport with CBHS Placement staff in getting more clients and decreasing the processing time.

Suggestion and Recommendations

- Younger residents would like to see a dedicated gym on site versus having to leave the site for exercise.
- Because the program, like many programs, is still recovering from the Covid crisis, its census is at 50% capacity. Administration would like the assistance of CBHS in helping fill bed capacity.