Changes in the health care system may mean shorter lengths of stay or treatment episodes for clients and a focus on what is medically necessary. With these changes, we stay committed to ensuring individuals are not prevented from getting the care they need, including the extensive wrap-around services that have helped make our programs successful. We believe that meaningful long-term solutions are possible with thoughtful and systemic change — change that recognizes that a holistic approach can be achieved while maintaining a focus on quality, efficiency and effectiveness.

In this newsletter, we explore these issues and our commitment to continued improvement by evaluating and improving our processes, by advocating on our clients’ behalf, and by being strong and agile enough to remain proactive and on the cutting edge, especially in times of constant change and economic uncertainty.

We also share with you the ways in which we have evolved our funding to ensure more private dollars through the work of dedicated friends like Marin Turney and Cristina Hashbun and the Prototypes Partners. It’s through the efforts of people like Marin and Cristina that we continue helping even more women, men and their families acquire essential skills that enable them to heal, support themselves and thrive.

Thank you for being a part of the Prototypes community,
However, while modest gains have been made in funding for substance use disorder treatment, the field still lags behind that of physical and mental health. Inadequate resources and dated treatment models can hinder disease management and subvert recovery. This is because people with substance use disorders often have a host of diverse issues that must be addressed, often before treatment can begin.

As health care reform takes hold, there is a need to address, seriousness and systemically, the realities clients encounter that often result in barriers to recovery — barriers that can hold people back from accessing and receiving the type of holistic treatment that has been so successful at Prototypes.

REALITY #1: Our society’s most vulnerable must navigate a complex maze of systems.

According to Innovations in Addictions Treatment, a 2013 report by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Integrated Health Solutions, substance users are at far greater risk than non-users of acquiring life-threatening diseases such as congestive heart failure, pneumonia and liver disease. Their addiction may be exacerbated by co-occurring emotional health problems such as depression and unresolved trauma.

Substance users are also extremely vulnerable to other adverse conditions — poverty, unemployment, homelessness, poor nutrition, domestic violence, crime and incarceration. Many lack transportation, which affects the ability to keep appointments. Still others have children whose needs also must be met.

Traditional substance use treatment models tend to focus on addiction alone. This means that when it comes to managing their physical, emotional, financial, legal or logistical challenges, clients are generally on their own. And yet, society is set up to means that when it comes to managing their physical, emotional, financial, legal or logistical challenges, clients are generally on their own. And yet, society is set up to

REALITY #2: The stigma surrounding use is still very real.

Like mental health before it, there is a stigma attached to substance use disorders that can hold individuals back from seeking help.

Gary Tsai, M.D., is Medical Director and Science Officer for the Substance Abuse Prevention and Control division of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. His office is charged with overseeing substance use treatment, recovery and prevention services for the entire county, with a catchment population of about 10 million. Dr. Tsai believes that stigma results from a general lack of understanding of the issue.

“One of the reasons for stigma in substance use is that the symptoms often manifest as behaviors,” he says. “Most people can control their behaviors, and they tend to blame those who can’t. So there’s a certain judgment involved.”

Loch agrees. As an example, she cites funding for the criminal justice system versus that of substance use treatment.

“The resources exist, but they’re going to the wrong place,” she says. “Criminal justice continues to receive the bulk of available resources. This means we’re incarcerating many drug users instead of treating them. More people are going to jail than are getting help to overcome their addiction.”

To reduce stigma and potentially secure more resources for treatment, Dr. Tsai suggests that substance use disorders need to be managed as a chronic illness. “I think that’s in part why NIDA (National Institute of Drug Abuse) has been promoting the idea that addiction is not just a behavioral issue but a brain disease,” he says.

REALITY #3: Understanding substance use disorders is essential to achieving funding parity.

“You can see some of that disparity in the funding that’s available to substance use treatment versus physical and mental health, and also in terms of insurance and Medi-Cal rates,” Dr. Tsai explains. “When you think of an integrated system of care, you view each subsystem as being an equal partner at the table. And if the funding doesn’t reflect that, it’s very difficult to coordinate care, because the system that is the least funded is always the most stretched.” He adds, “We have some work to do to achieve true parity.”

Dr. Tsai believes that getting policymakers to understand the interrelationship of the different systems with regard to substance use treatment will eventually lead to parity in funding. “I think a lot of people agree conceptually with the idea of parity because we’re moving toward treating people through a biopsychosocial approach,” he says. “Understanding it emotionally is a different story.”

His own understanding arose from personal experience, when his mother was diagnosed with a mental health disorder. “We had a very difficult time getting treatment for her,” Dr. Tsai says, “and the difficulties were systems issues, not clinical ones.”

Dr. Tsai’s experience as a family member seeking treatment for a loved one mirrors tens of thousands of Southern Californians seeking treatment for their own or a family member’s substance use. By contrast, Prototypes’ holistic approach to substance use treatment effectively breaks down barriers to care.

Changing realities through a holistic approach

“Many treatment models focus on a single issue or service area,” Cassandra Loch says. “The holistic approach looks at all of the issues a client is dealing with, not only substance use.”

While Prototypes has its roots in substance use treatment, says Loch, “We don’t think of ourselves as just treating addiction or just treating mental illness.” In fact, most clients who come to Prototypes have co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders, and a large percentage also have histories of trauma.
"It makes sense for us as a service provider to help our clients deal with as many of their issues as we can at one time," says Loch. "Clients have a greater chance for success if, instead of a separate plan for each issue, they have one plan that encompasses all of their needs and addresses them in a way they can understand and can follow through."

Indeed, Prototypes' whole-person approach is translating into positive outcomes for its clients. However, in the broader realm of substance use treatment, the traditional model is still pervasive.

"It’s pervasive in terms of health care in general," says Dr. Tsai. “In health care as a whole — physical health, mental health and substance use — how specialized we’ve become is a strength as well as a weakness. It’s a strength in that we can address people’s unique, individualized needs in very specialized ways.” The weakness, he says, lies in the fact that in a region as large as Los Angeles County, the ability of the substance use treatment community to adopt the holistic approach is taking place slowly and to varying degrees.

“We all need to be communicating outside of the silos that have been part of the traditional model,” he says. “But our system is so big here that making fundamental change on the front lines takes time.”

Advocating for meaningful change

Prototypes’ Cassandra Loch points to the need for greater advocacy around substance use disorders in order to effect the kind of change that will help clients on a broad scale. She believes concerted advocacy efforts will help dissolve barriers to treatment and encourage widespread adoption of the holistic approach.

"Over the years, we’ve seen what advocacy has done for mental health treatment," she says. “Organizations like NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) have been instrumental in making sure that policy gets written and passed and that funding gets allocated. Those stakeholder voices are huge, and that’s something that has been lacking in the substance use treatment community.”

To raise awareness for substance use treatment services across the board, says Dr. Tsai, “First, we need to have more compassion for this population, and funding will follow. In order to improve the quality of services we provide and treat people holistically, we need to have the will and the resources. The will is where the compassion comes from. If providers feel passionate about treating this population, they’re going to want to do a good job. And if they are given the resources, they’ll be able to do just that.”

Loch believes that organizations like Prototypes can help educate others on the disease of addiction to help build the compassion and empathy to which Dr. Tsai refers. “If a neighbor’s child becomes sick with cancer, the entire neighborhood rallies around that family,” she says. “With diseases like addiction, people tend to look the other way — not because they are uncaring, but because they may be fearful due to a lack of understanding. Education can help with that.”

Prototypes Saved My Life

DESIREE IS ONE OF MANY PROTOTYPES ALUMNI who were once brought down by addiction and turned their lives around. She puts it more bluntly: “Prototypes saved my life.”

As a child, Desiree's world was marked by instability and neglect. Her parents, both alcoholics and drug users, divorced when she was 7. Growing up with few boundaries and little discipline, she says, "I ran the streets, looking for love in all the wrong places." The one stabilizing force was her grandmother, whom Desiree regarded as her best friend.

At 14, Desiree became involved with a man twice her age and gave birth to her first child, a girl, who was placed in the custody of Desiree’s mother. The following year, her grandmother was hospitalized and passed away mere minutes before the family arrived to say good-bye. Desiree’s stepfather blamed her for their delay in reaching the hospital. Consumed by guilt as well as grief, she turned to drugs for solace.

She eventually dropped out of high school, and the next ten years were marked by homelessness and addiction. She gave birth to two more daughters, for whom her mother again assumed custody. To finance her drug habit, she resorted to theft, and she eventually served time in prison.

On Valentine’s Day 2010, while in prison on a drug-related offense, she gave birth to her fourth daughter. Holding her baby for the first time, Desiree vowed to change.

For the next four years, Desiree stayed clean and raised her youngest daughter. But with little money and no support system, she drifted back into drugs and turned to crime to pay for food and rent. In 2013, she was convicted for burglary, and her daughter went to live with Desiree’s eldest daughter, now 19. Facing six years in prison, Desiree became despondent.

“I was so afraid of losing my little girl,” she says. “I was ready to do anything to get her back.” In prison, she took refuge in prayer and resolved to fight to regain custody.

With help from Prototypes’ counselors and an understanding judge, Desiree was referred to the Los Angeles County’s Second Chance Women’s Reentry Court, which works with Prototypes to tackle the root causes of women’s nonviolent crimes — drug addiction, mental illness and trauma. At Prototypes’ Pomona residential facility, Desiree immersed herself in the agency’s family-focused services. She attended Grief and Loss classes, working through the guilt and pain that had plagued her since her grandmother’s death. In Prototypes’ highly structured environment, she received evidence-based treatment to address her addiction, mental health concerns and past history of trauma while also learning discipline and other life skills that she did not acquire growing up.

On September 18, 2014, ten months after her arrest, Desiree regained custody of her youngest daughter, who joined her at Prototypes. With the cloud of addiction lifted and her daughter happily with her again, Desiree began to believe in herself for the first time. After a year in residential treatment, she transitioned to Prototypes’ outpatient program and found permanent housing nearby.

Today, mother and daughter are practically inseparable. They swim, skate, ride bikes and take long walks together. On weekdays, Desiree volunteers at Prototypes while her daughter attends the Head Start program located on Prototypes’ campus. Desiree is active in her recovery, attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings and working a 12-step program. This fall, she will enroll in classes and earn her GED. An attorney is working to reduce her prior convictions to misdemeanors, which will improve her chances of gaining meaningful employment. She is in regular contact with her three other daughters and is now a grandmother of three.

Once so shy she would ditch school to avoid speaking before her classmates, Desiree is now eager to tell her life story at Prototypes events, including the agency’s annual Celebrating Mothers Luncheon in May. “The more I share my story,” she says, “the more confident I feel.”
Prototypes from the Client’s Point of View

How does an organization take what they are currently doing well and make it even better? How does an organization ensure the best possible experience for its clients, from initial phone call to eventual discharge from care?

This was the challenge posed by President and CEO Cassandra Loch to Prototypes’ quality team. In a twist on the “secret shopper” model, a dozen staff members, posing as clients and their families, conducted coordinated walkthroughs of four Prototypes facilities, experiencing the agency exactly as clients do.

The walkthroughs, which took several months to plan, carry out and analyze, are part of an ongoing effort to achieve two goals of Prototypes’ three-year strategic growth plan: meet the holistic needs of clients by delivering a fully integrated system of care across both mental health and substance use spectrums, and maintain a high-quality, interdisciplinary, team approach to delivering the Prototypes treatment model.

“Having staff actually step into the role of the client to determine how well we’re doing and how we can improve — that is unique.”

Christy Beaudin, PhD

Beaudin and staff volunteers from Prototypes’ program locations and administrative headquarters planned and participated in walkthroughs of the agency’s outpatient behavioral health centers in El Monte, Pasadena and Pomona, and its Pomona residential facility. To guide the process and ensure validity, Beaudin developed a customized walkthrough tool based on evidence-based practices and models from the Network for the Improvement of Addiction Treatment (NIATx), the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (AHRQ) and the Institute for Health Care Improvement (IHI). For each location, staff assumed the role of a client and the client’s parent, sibling or partner. Vignettes for each family were created based on client composites drawn from a number of sources. For example, Beaudin posed as an unstable mother of a young woman, a heroin user who suspected she was pregnant. Each team expanded on the client and family’s history and rehearsed their roles to create a family dynamic. Then one of them contacted Prototypes for an appointment.

Staff interacting with the walkthrough participants did know their “clients” were Prototypes employees. The teams’ experiences validated some expectations, revealed some opportunities for improvement, and provided valuable data to inform improvement planning. Beaudin and her team were highly impressed by the professionalism of their intake specialist, who had to contend with a very unruly family. “We took advantage of the situation by having some difficult conversations and creating some havoc,” Beaudin explains. “Dealing with the unexpected comes up. The specialist was able to stay focused and keep us on track.”

One common client experience that was more fully revealed through the walkthroughs was the challenge for both staff and clients of working through reams of paperwork. Prototypes’ government-funded services come with myriad regulatory and funder requirements. The walkthroughs found processes that effectively facilitated paperwork compliance, but it sometimes came at the expense of best clinical care or consumer experience.

The walkthrough process concluded when all clients and their families had seen a clinician and, in the case of Beaudin’s team, the client was admitted to residential care. At that point, all of the data resulting from the exercise was analyzed and a workgroup was convened to review issues around integration and client access to care. A summary of the results was presented to Prototypes’ senior leadership team in March, then discussed with staff supervisors and soon will be shared with all Prototypes employees.

An outgrowth of the evaluation process was the formation of a Clinical Leadership Team to address clinical integration across the organization. Eli Veitzer, Prototypes’ Chief Operating Officer, is part of that group and will be leading the effort to make both short- and long-term changes to ensure seamless, holistic clinical care.

Along with clinical integration, efforts are underway to improve Prototypes’ intake and assessment processes. Information gleaned from the walkthroughs is informing process redesign, focusing on reducing wait times between initial contact and enrollment in treatment, reducing paperwork bottlenecks and ensuring that the focus remains on the consumer and her or his needs.

The experience of care walkthroughs have yielded such valuable insights that Prototypes plans to create additional teams to assess the client experience in all of its locations. The exercise will also be useful for maintaining the agency’s accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

For Beaudin, who has worked in the field of health care quality for nearly 20 years, the walkthrough was a one-of-a-kind experience. “I’ve never seen such dedication to client service,” she says. “Having staff actually step into the role of the client to determine how well we’re doing and how we can improve — that is unique.”

Veitzer adds, “Every organization has a quality improvement plan. But this was more than that. It was an active commitment to transparency and identifying what’s really happening, so we can determine ways to make Prototypes’ services even better.”
**Prototypes Partners**

**Where L.A.’s Professional Women Are Making a Difference**

**MARIN TURNEY AND CRISTINA HASBUN HAVE BEEN FRIENDS SINCE THEY WERE TODDLERS. Both have close relationships with their mothers, who are also friends. Each is established in her career, doing the work she loves. And both have worked together for the past four years to establish Prototypes Partners, a group of young professionals dedicated to raising funds and other needed support for the women and children of Prototypes.**

Both Marin and Cristina grew up in the Greater Los Angeles area watching their mothers give back to their local community, and they started volunteering during high school. Marin says it was an easy decision to make when approached by her college friend and current Prototypes Board Member Brandon Matloff about starting a group of young professionals who could support the work of Prototypes.

“I was looking for a nonprofit organization to get involved with, so I could stretch myself and add value to the community,” says Marin. “And because I’m in the male-dominated field of commercial real estate, I was immediately drawn to an organization that serves underprivileged, single mothers.”

Marin watched her mother take the lead as a solo parent when her father moved to Asia during her teen years. While he was still very much involved with her life, the day-to-day duties of raising a teenage girl fell to her mother.

“My mother is a strong woman, and I have ultimate respect for her, especially because, while she was raising me, she was always giving back to women in our community. Her values have carried over into the woman I am today.”

Likewise for Cristina, who says she was at a point when giving back to her community could become a priority.

“Once I felt established in my career as a graphic designer, I knew it was time to find a new opportunity where I felt like I could make a difference in the lives of mothers and their children,” she says. “When Marin told me about Prototypes, I was committed 100 percent.”

The immediate attraction for both women was Prototypes’ dedication to keeping mothers and children together during difficult lifestyle transitions. Prototypes was founded on the idea of not only keeping families together but also ensuring that mothers receive the tools to be the best mother they can be – which impacts the next generation in so many ways. This became the catalyst for the Partners’ fundraising efforts.

Since its inception, the Partners have raised nearly $100,000 by hosting their annual Celebrating Mothers luncheon. Proceeds from the events augment Prototypes’ Mother and Child residential treatment programs, including enhancing prevention and treatment for children, the purchasing of school supplies and clothing, supported interventions to enhance mother and child bonding and other needs Prototypes might identify each year.

The group also regularly visits Prototypes locations throughout Southern California. On one such visit to Prototypes’ Oxnard residential facility during the holiday season, the Partners made cookies with the women and their children and then gifted the residents with goodie bags containing personal hygiene and grooming products. Both said how touched they were when they saw the women’s reactions to “feeling like a woman; feeling feminine.”

Marin says Prototypes Partners is always looking to expand its membership.

“We’re so supportive of the tremendous service Prototypes provides to women in need. We believe that every child, especially every girl, deserves a mother who can show her how to be strong. The more fundraising and awareness raising we can do, the more lives we can impact.”

Cristina adds, “Prototypes Partners has allowed each of us to take on a leadership position in our community. We continually meet other like-minded professionals from different fields who become our friends. It’s rewarding on so many levels.”

Prototypes Partners has allowed each of us to take on a leadership position in our community.*

**Cristina Hasbun**

Prototypes Partners are expanding their events to include networking and professional development events for members and additional volunteer opportunities to support mothers and children at Prototypes. To learn more about Prototypes Partners, contact Marin Turney at partners@prototypes.org.

**Marin and Cristina were the co-hosts for the 2015 Celebrating Mothers Luncheon.**

**$1-Million Gift Establishes Prototypes Endowment**

**A GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION FROM THE C. JARECKA LIVING TRUST has provided Prototypes with its first endowment. Endowments are critical to an organization because they make possible a steady, ongoing source of revenue that allows for growth and development in perpetuity. For Prototypes, this means having the resources to expand outreach efforts and serve more women and their families.**

“We’re thrilled to have received this one-of-a-kind gift that ensures a reliable source of funding to continue meeting the needs of Southern California women and families impacted by substance use, mental illness and domestic violence,” says Prototypes President and CEO Cassandra Loch.

In honor of this gift, Prototypes has named a building at its Women’s Center in Pomona The Carushka Sober Living Home.

Prototypes Partners members, Marin Turney and Cristina Hasbun, join Cassandra Loch at their annual fundraising event.
The Prototypes Community

Clockwise, starting top left:
Prototypes’ President and CEO Cassandra Loch shares the organization’s life-changing work with guests; client speaker Desiree embraces Cassandra before giving her speech; Prototypes Board Members Kahlil Reid, Barbara Velasco and Michael Kemp; the 2015 Celebrating Mothers Event Committee; the team at Emplicity pose for the FlashTag Photo Booth; Prototypes Board Member Karen Pointer and her guests.

Celebrating Mothers

More than 165 guests gathered at the Del Rey Yacht Club in Marina del Rey on May 2 to honor mothers, grandmothers, family and friends at the 3rd Annual Prototypes Partners’ Celebrating Mothers Luncheon. The luncheon was established in 2013 by the Prototypes Partners, young professionals who share a commitment to helping the women and children Prototypes serves. This year’s event featured a silent auction and a moving presentation by Desiree, a Prototypes client who overcame tremendous odds to reclaim her life and provide for her daughter (read Desiree’s story on page 5).

The luncheon garnered more than $54,000, which will help support programs and services for Prototypes mothers and their families. We deeply appreciate the Prototypes Partners for their leadership in spearheading this wonderful Mother’s Day-themed event,” stated Prototypes’ Director of Development, Ashley Hernandez. “And also extend special thanks to Shamrock Foods, Telecomcepts, Emplicity, International City Bank and Brookfield for their generous sponsorship.”

Back-to-School Time Means Helping Kids Thrive!

Most children come to Prototypes with almost nothing — a few articles of clothing, maybe a doll or toy. When they begin a new school year, it’s important that they have the resources they need to learn and grow. This means having backpacks and basic school supplies as well as new shoes and jackets. Every summer, Prototypes holds a Back-to-School drive to make sure our children are fully prepared when they head back to school.

This year’s drive takes place from July 6 to August 7.

We’re looking for caring individuals to donate these items or to set up Back-to-School drives in their offices. For more information and to learn how to give deserving children a great start this fall, please contact Ashley Hernandez at 213.393.5296, or email ahernandez@prototypes.org.

You can provide a life line!
Help women like Danielle meet the challenge of a lifetime. Your support provides the treatment women and families in crisis need to go from barely surviving to truly thriving.

Your gift will help make the following critical services possible:

$100 helps a homeless family get to Prototypes and begin treatment to change the course of their lives
$250 provides a child with a week of housing, food, child care and treatment to support growth and learning
$500 ensures a pregnant woman receives the services needed for a healthy delivery for her and her baby
$1000 provides a woman in need with a week of intensive, life-saving addiction treatment and mental health services

Support Prototypes today!

To make a donation, please use the enclosed envelope or visit us online at prototypes.org.