



## „We’ll make it!” – the supported housing program for homeless men by Caritas Poland

<b>Name of the project</b>	„We’ll make it!” The Therapeutic Community in combating homelessness.
<b>Aims and Objectives</b>	<p>The program „We’ll make it!” has been conceived and developed in Caritas Poland to help men in early stages of homelessness to stop and reverse a destructive path into deeper social exclusion. We devise a program that is preventive in principle, considering homelessness as a serious psychological condition above all and try to activate individual life potential in each of participants.</p> <p>The main aim is to help a participant to achieve stable sobriety and overcome vulnerability to a stress, loneliness and other dangers, develop more assertive life control, establish higher life aspiring level, eventually learning new skills and jobs.</p>
<b>Description</b>	<p>The very base of the project is a <i>therapeutic community</i> – a support group, that shall enable those who have decided to join the program, to build or rebuild a normal life, stay safe from addictive and psychotic substances and destructive habits, discover and develop their potential in a friendly circle of their fellow-participants. We offer an environment and means aimed to help them to regain lost human dignity and the value of life, learn how to deal with a stress without drugs and alcohol, enter in sound relationships, specify and achieve long term goals including a stable family life.</p> <p>Adopting <i>therapeutic community</i> concept, especially efficient in combating drug and alcohol addiction, social and self-destructive behavioral disorders, we offer to participants a possibility to be lodged up to 2 years in “training apartments” after a 6 month transitional stage, a psychotherapeutic assistance, weekly meetings in a small group with a substantial meal, attractive cultural, social and sports-tourist activities, help in finding a job.</p>
<b>Core elements</b>	<p>Therapeutic community in combating homelessness          Preparation stage followed by housing in training apartments          People with no serious diagnosed psychiatric conditions          Men only</p>
<b>Funding</b>	At the time being this program is supported by Caritas donators exclusively.
<b>Impact/ results</b>	<p>This program is expected, as we hope, to bring a good opportunity to stop a path of total disintegration for those men, who are suffering from a deep social inadequacy complex resulting from complicated personal history, weaknesses or family dysfunctions. It is a long term process based on a sincere personal relationship in a group of men who recognize in a therapeutic interaction their factual problems as existing in a broader scope, discover their weaknesses but also strengths, learn to cope with them and also help other people in their way out of major life crisis’.</p>
<b>Participants</b>	<p>“We’ll make it!” is addressed to men from 25 to 35 years of age who have no regular place to live, nor proper registration of residence, have lost regular earnings and job obligations, whose family and social relations have been seriously severed, and may suffer from alcohol or psychotic substances addiction. Not all participants have such additions, however we require a prerequisite addiction treatment for those who need it. From candidates we expect to have a strong motivation to work on changing their life in a helping team, remain in sobriety, cut-off their pathological relations, resume a stable job and become an active member of the therapeutic community.</p>



We try to select thoroughly candidates among persons who spent at least 2 months in Caritas shelters, directed by local psychologist or by psychologist in a prison if such a case. They also must be willing to cooperate within the group and with the staff. Candidates must have no serious diagnosed psychiatric conditions.

**Staff** A supporting team of professionals and persons experienced in a field of social exclusion is working with and supervising the group. The team is composed of: a chief experienced psychotherapist as a consultant one responsible therapist with supporting person and a social worker.

**Innovative aspects** Therapeutic attitude  
Comprehensive support to participants  
Provision of training apartments  
Preparatory stage before moving to housing

**Sustainability** Not yet determined

**Lessons learned** Relatively low budget. In the specific modus operandi of Caritas the gratification for the staff are the main expenditures. Serious companies are offering help in a structured way (offer job possibilities for participants). To build up upon individual potential of participants in a longer term perspective. Patience, patience and perseverance. Not to much therapy, rather make them actively participate in normal everyday life and correct if necessary.

**Obstacles** Bureaucracy, red tape!  
Initial instability and passivity of candidates.

**Evaluation** During a three year experience we can see a very promising results. Most of participants very fast become more optimistic and relaxed, gladly participate in diverse activities, have renewed family relations, changed their jobs for better ones, learned how to take care of a household and their own life. During this period we've had only 3 cases of a return to addiction and termination of the participation in the program. In general, there is a relatively high percentage of resignations of newcomers participants, mostly due to a psychological instability of people suffering from various addiction in the past . Now there are 9 participants attending this program, 6 of them waiting for a place in a training apartment, none of them is residing in a shelter for homeless people any longer. Some of participants who attended a program **"We'll make it!"** managed to begin a new life after a relatively short time in the group. They are coming to meetings and getting a therapeutic or psychological assistance if needed. We respect an individual and personal path to a normal life of each one of them, reinforcing only their need and drive to a freedom from any addictive substances and destructive habits

Written by Janusz Sukiennik, „We'll make it!” Program leader, Caritas Poland