



Champions for Behavioral Health

ServiceNet is a non-profit mental health and human services organization with over 100 programs across western Massachusetts, working with individuals and families to help them live their lives to the fullest. www.servicenet.org

Daisy Pabon is a case manager with ServiceNet's Shelter & Housing services in the Berkshires. These services include the emergency shelter for adults, which has been based at St. Joseph's High School in Pittsfield since the pandemic began and will soon move into its new Fenn Street location; Our Friends' House, a family shelter; and associated outreach and case management services.

What inspired you to enter the Behavioral Health field?

I have always been drawn to human services and previously worked in several administrative state agency roles. But I was looking for more personal connection, more direct impact - and when I heard about ServiceNet, it sounded right up my alley. My grandmother always told me that "service is the rent we pay for the room we have here on earth," and I finally understand what she meant.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?

I often meet people when they are at the lowest point in their lives. Connecting them with the resources and services they need to move forward, and seeing them progress, is the most rewarding part of my job. That might involve setting them up with counseling services, or with the Living in Recovery community - whatever support they need as we work on finding them a more permanent place to live. And always, it involves listening, paying attention, checking in and letting people know you care. It's humbling to accompany people through these challenges and to witness their victories.

Please tell us about the programs/activities that you implement.

As a case manager, my primary purpose is helping people find permanent housing. To do that, they need some form of regular income. So, step one may be to work with them on getting the basic documents - their social security card, birth certificate, Mass ID or driver's license. Without these, you can't apply for a job or for disability benefits, sign up for classes, or complete an application for housing. We might then connect them with MassHire or a job skills training program, whatever they identify as the next steps needed to reach their goals.

Do you have any words of wisdom for someone wanting to enter the field?

If you have compassion, the ability to listen and to understand what someone is going through, and a desire to stay right with that person through setbacks and struggles, then this work could be rewarding for you. And if you're looking to move up in the field, bring your full self to work every day - be who you are, show what you can do, and the rest will follow.

Finally, is there anything you would like for the community to better understand about behavioral health?

I want people to recognize each homeless person as a complex human being who has faced some significant struggles in life. Probably more than most of us can imagine. The guests in our shelters want to do better, they don't want to be stuck, but they can't always do it alone. By showing some kindness - a smile, a few words - you can let them know they are surrounded by a community of caring people. Just that, a bit of kindness, can make a bigger difference than you will ever know.