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How Long Island Reach is helping Nassau County through compassionate and professional support

Discover how Long Island Reach has provided mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment and alternative education for those who need it most since 1970.

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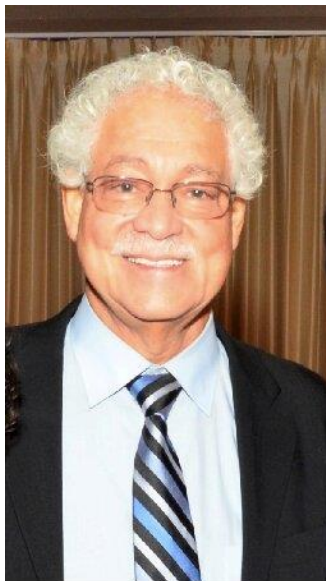
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Brandi Calhoun

Since 1970, Long Island Reach has stood as a beacon of support for individuals and families facing some of life's most difficult challenges. Based in Long Beach, this multi-service nonprofit has quietly and consistently transformed lives across Nassau County through compassionate, professional care.

Dr. Joseph Smith, a licensed psychologist and executive director of Long Island Reach, has been part of the organization for over 50 years. He says the mission has never wavered: "The mission of the agency really has not changed. It's really to reach out and provide people who are troubled with professional services that can meet their individual needs and their needs as families."

Tackling substance use with compassion

Originally founded by community members alarmed by the rise in youth substance abuse, Long Island Reach has grown far beyond its roots to serve a wide population — children, adolescents, adults and families alike.

Their outpatient [substance abuse treatment program](#) is robust and comprehensive, offering individual therapy, group counseling, family and couples therapy, and case management. Many clients are referred after residential treatment or detox programs, and the organization also helps people at the early stages of dependency before it spirals into a larger crisis.

“There's numerous reasons why someone might turn to a drug, but obviously, they do so at great risk,” explains Dr. Smith. “What we try to do is to understand what's really going on and what it might be that's underlying their reliance on drugs or alcohol, and then work on those issues.”

The team includes psychologists, social workers, mental health counselors, nurse practitioners in psychiatry and a consulting psychiatrist. Every treatment plan begins with a thorough assessment to understand the individual's history, current needs and underlying struggles, ensuring a path to recovery that is both personal and sustainable.

Mental health services for all ages

In 2016, Long Island Reach expanded to meet another pressing need: [outpatient mental health care](#). Their licensed clinic supports children, adolescents and adults with emotional and behavioral challenges ranging from anxiety and depression to more complex psychological disorders.

Dr. Smith emphasizes that this service became essential during the pandemic, when the demand for mental health support skyrocketed. “We were able to shift 70 plus staff and close to 700 clients from in-person service to remote service. Though, obviously there are limitations of remote service,” shares Dr. Smith, “but it was still better than I had expected it would be...And we continue to provide telehealth services in some cases where it is the only way that some people will be able to receive treatment services.

A second chance at education

Not everyone thrives in traditional academic environments. That's why Long Island Reach founded the [Harriet Eisman Community School](#), an alternative high school program for teens who need a different path to graduation.

Designed for students who struggle in conventional classrooms — due to behavioral issues, mental health challenges, or unstable home environments — the school provides individualized academic instruction, counseling and the mentorship needed to earn a high school diploma. Volunteers play a key role here, serving as tutors and positive role models for the youth.

A Network that grows with the need

Over the years, Long Island Reach has expanded beyond Long Beach with additional clinics in [Port Washington](#) and [Franklin Square](#). Through mergers with like-minded organizations, including Port Counseling Center and Community Counseling Services of West Nassau, they've broadened their reach while maintaining a high standard of care.

The organization's adaptability has been tested through natural disasters like Hurricane Sandy and global challenges like COVID-19, but their commitment to community never faltered. No one is turned away due to inability to pay. Long Island Reach operates on a sliding scale and is supported by fundraising, private foundations and community partnerships such as the United Way and Port Washington Community Chest.

Donations and community involvement are critical to the organization's longevity. Events like the annual [18 and Dine](#) golf outing and the [Rock for Recovery](#) concert not only raise vital funds, but also bring people together in celebration of a shared mission.

“Fundraising is an important part of what we have to do. And we try to make the events things that people enjoy and want to come back to,” says Dr. Smith. “So [they're] supporting something, a good cause, but they're also having fun. That's the best combination that you can have.”

At its core, Long Island Reach is a place where people in crisis are met with open arms, where teenagers get second chances, families heal together and individuals rediscover their worth.

To learn more about the services offered or to support Long Island Reach, visit <https://longislandreach.org/>.

