

SUCCESS STORY of CINDY

Semcac Outreach & Emergency Services, Mower County

On June 24, 2013, Cindy (her name has been changed to protect her privacy) came to Semcac seeking help. She needed financial assistance with a utility deposit for her new apartment. Our staff member, Heidi, told her that the Energy Assistance Program concluded on May 31st, but asked more about Cindy's upcoming move to determine if we could assist with paying her first month of rent, instead. (This would allow her to use her money to pay the utility deposit.) Cindy opened up to our staff and talked about how she has been living in her car because she is getting out of an abusive relationship. She works fulltime, overnight, and is able to shower and eat at her place of employment. Cindy told us that she has been sleeping during the day in her car in the Wal-Mart parking lot.

A Semcac staff person did go out to verify that Cindy has been living in her car. It was full of piles of clothes and other personal belongings as well as a small pillow and blanket. Her trunk was full as well. Cindy does have family but she has alienated herself from them because of the abusive relationship. She also has very few friends because the boyfriend controlled who she could see.

Our staff member, Heidi, was able to schedule Cindy for an appointment the next day. Human Services was out of funding at the time (funds for adults without children) so Heidi determined that she did not need to visit them. During the appointment, Heidi learned that Cindy receives Social Security but was not able to speak with anyone at the local SS office to get her statement. Semcac staff needs to know the amount of income she receives from Social Security but we did not want to make her wait until the office opened. Our staff member had recently learned from a contact at the Social Security office how to create an account and to print benefit letters for clients. Cindy and Heidi worked together and created an account, they printed off Cindy's benefit statement for our files. Cindy is now able to access these, anytime, on her own. She will print them at the public library. The Energy Assistance Program will begin again in the fall and Cindy will need her Social Security statement to apply for those funds, as well.

Cindy and Heidi reviewed her budget and made an appointment with Jackie Larson, a financial coach through C.T.S. Cindy has met with Jackie and received even more budgeting ideas that are helping.

Semcac also referred Cindy to the Crime Victim's Resource Center. Staff told her about the group therapy sessions for women such as herself so she can receive support and encouragement to keep from returning to her abuser.

During the initial appointment at Semcac, Cindy expressed how badly she felt about her teeth and mentioned that she has Medical Assistance. None of the dentists in Mower County accept

Medical Assistance as insurance, so Heidi referred her to Rochester Community Dental. In the first follow-up appointment with Cindy, she informed us that she made an appointment with this dental office. She eventually had 11 teeth pulled and could not say enough about how well they treated her. She not only has received dentures but also has her smile again.

In another follow-up appointment, Cindy asked if Heidi knew where she could take aluminum cans (that she collects from work) to be recycled. She was hoping to find a place nearby, so Heidi let her know about Jennings Junkyard. They continued talking about recycling because Cindy takes her own garbage into work to save money. (She has permission from her employer to do this.) She wanted to recycle her bottles and cans but did not know how. Heidi let her know about the recycling bins she can pick up (for free) from the Mower County Recycling Center and also the free recycling curbside pick-up service.

Cindy has transformed herself. She progressed from living in her car while in an abusive relationship, to thriving in her very own apartment. This transformation was possible thanks to grant funding through the United Way and help from Semcac Outreach & Emergency Services staff. Having a stable home has enabled Cindy to focus on emotional healing. It has also allowed her to care for the community, applying her desire to recycle.