

EMERGENCY CONTACT

A Flash Competition for Neighborhood Mental Health Centers

Competition Brief

About

For a city that prides itself on its neurosis, mental health care in New York City isn't always easy to come by. Private therapy for routine visits is among the most expensive in the world. The number of hospital psychiatric wards to address mental health crises has diminished as hospitals transition valuable square footage to more profitable services. While lucrative urgent health-care centers proliferate along neighborhood corridors for those suffering physical injury, visible mental health care remains out of reach for many.

In a moment of crisis, many New Yorkers turn to dialing 911, and often police respond by placing would-be patients in jail rather than in doctors' care, reinforcing systemic criminalization of mental illness. In many communities, mental illness faces continued stigmatization, and treatment offices are simply too far away.

Part of *u feel ok? Health & NYC*, the Van Alen fall program festival held Nov. 11 – 13, *Emergency Contact* is a one-day flash competition that challenges interdisciplinary teams to design practical solutions for affordable, replicable neighborhood mental health treatment centers to efficiently put patients in contact with treatment. Proposals for an archetypal public mental health treatment center will provide an imaginative street-level presence for a range of mental health services integrated within local communities, address the gap in access to mental healthcare, and help destigmatize mental illness.

Following a closed-door daytime workshop on Nov. 12 among finalist teams, the teams will present their proposals to the public that evening. A jury of design and mental health advocacy experts will judge the entries and announce a winner at the conclusion of the day-long event. The winning team will be awarded a \$1,000 cash prize, and finalist teams will receive a \$200 honorarium.

We're seeking multidisciplinary teams from diverse fields including public health, anthropology, sociology, psychology, architecture, graphic design, visual art, and urban planning.

Background

In 2015, in partnership with First Lady Chirlane McCray, New York City launched ThriveNYC, an action plan to begin changing the way people think about mental health and the way the city government and its many partners deliver services. ThriveNYC has introduced expanded mental health-care programs, including mental health hotlines, training in mental health first aid for community leaders and members, support services meant to streamline access to treatment and therapy, and the construction of two community-diversion centers, which provide temporary housing and treatment to keep people with mental illness from unnecessary imprisonment.

ThriveNYC aims to create additional centers, and this one-day flash competition can provide ideas for what those centers might look like and interact with in their urban surroundings. A successful proposal will consider how existent services can be integrated into new neighborhood-level mental health centers.

Questions to Get You Started

- How can design address social stigma surrounding mental health and empower people to seek the care they need?
- How can a neighborhood mental health center take advantage of existing physical spaces?
- How can design address the public safety dimensions of mental health crisis response, such as an emotionally distraught person, while remaining an inviting, community-oriented space?
- How can a neighborhood mental health center address acute crises requiring both emergency response and preventative care, such as education and routine counseling?
- How does your proposal make use of or improve upon initiatives and services that already exist for those confronting mental illness?

Evaluation Criteria

Jurors will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:

- It puts forward a unique design for an affordable, replicable neighborhood mental health treatment center to efficiently put patients in contact with treatment.
- It accommodates a range of mental health services.

- It responds to local neighborhood contexts and capitalizes on existing physical spaces.
- It is visualized through dynamic, eye-catching imagery.
- It connects to and builds on existing initiatives.

Eligibility

To participate, you must be part of a multidisciplinary team of up to four members; individuals may not participate alone. Your team must include at least one professional from architecture or urban planning. This competition is open to both professionals and students. Members of the team must be available to participate in a workshop and present at Kinfolk 94 in Brooklyn on Sunday, Nov. 12.

Entering the Competition

Entry fee: There is no entry fee for entering the flash competition.

Number of entries: Individuals may participate on only one team. Each team is permitted to enter only one submission.

Submission of concepts: Teams must submit a 150 – 200 word concept by noon EDT on Nov. 10, 2017. Finalists will be notified by 6 p.m. Nov. 10, 2017.

Your entry must include a written concept description of your proposal. Clearly state your proposed solution(s), the name(s), contact information, title, and affiliation of the team members. Accompanying illustrations of your concept are accepted but not required. Team members have the option to upload a portfolio of past work.

All entries must be in English. Proposals must be uploaded using the submission link on vanalen.org by noon EDT Nov. 10. Entrants will receive a confirmation that the files have been uploaded and should retain this confirmation for reference. Failure to comply with any of these submission requirements will result in disqualification.

All information required to enter can be found on vanalen.org. If you have questions, please contact Steven Thomson, Van Alen Institute at sthomson@vanalen.org.

Legal

Further details on competition proposal requirements and presentation formats will be provided to the finalist teams.

Publication restrictions: Entrants may not refer to projects that have already been implemented or that have been designed on the basis of any agreement entered into by the entrant or entrants with a public, public/private or fully private body with the intention of actual development of the project in question. Similarly, entries may not refer to projects published before the last day of the deliberations of the judging panel.

Infringement of copyright and other intellectual property: All work submitted for the competition must be the entrant's original work. Finalist teams will retain ownership of all intellectual property rights over their work. It is the entrant's sole responsibility to ensure that the work submitted does not infringe upon the intellectual property rights of any third party, including, but not limited to copyright, trademark and design right. Van Alen shall not be responsible for entrant's infringement of any third party intellectual property rights, regardless of whether said infringement was known or should have been known by entrant.

Use of submitted works: Entrant agrees that Van Alen is granted the nonexclusive reproduction rights to all entries for Van Alen's advertising, promotion, exhibition, print publication, and internet purposes directly relating to the competition. Van Alen shall have no responsibility for any unauthorized use of the entrant's works by any third party, including but not limited to the sponsors.

About

Emergency Contact is part of *u feel ok?: Health & NYC*, Van Alen's fall program festival from November 11-13 exploring: How does the shape of the city impact our health? What is the physical imprint of healthcare in a city as dense as New York? How can designers and everyday citizens create spaces for everyone to thrive? We'll prescribe the urgent topic of health to design and other arenas like transportation, land value, and race, through four days of back-to-back debates, tours, and provocations across New York City.

These programs are made possible through our Program Leadership Council, co-chaired by Andy Bernheimer (Bernheimer Architecture), Katherine Chia (Desai Chia Architecture), Sara Grant (Murphy Burnham and Buttrick Architects), Stephan Jaklitsch (Jaklitsch / Gardner Architects), Matthew Moss (Think Construction), and Joel Sanders (Joel Sanders Architect).

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About Van Alen Institute

Van Alen Institute brings more than 120 years of experience organizing design competitions, as well as developing cross-disciplinary research and provocative public programs. Van Alen Institute collaborates with communities, scholars, policymakers, and professionals on local and global initiatives that rigorously investigate the most pressing social, cultural, and ecological challenges of tomorrow.