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What Happened to the Clubhouse?
An Investigative Study on a Program for Children with Autism in the UCLA Medical Center

ABSTRACT

As the state of California deals with severe budget cuts due to a suffering economy, programs offering services to those with disabilities are often the first to lose funding and close their doors to the public; the closing of the Clubhouse program was no exception to this trend. As of late June of 2010, UCLA Medical Center closed the Clubhouse program due to a lack in funding. While it was still in operation, the Clubhouse program served the Los Angeles community as a social-recreational program for children with autism, between the ages of three and six years old. The program aimed to better equip its participants with social skills that would help them better assimilate into their immediate community, which can include their elementary school or local YMCA. The purpose of this study is to pinpoint the specific reasons behind this decision made by the UCLA Medical Center. In accomplishing this task, this study will investigate different issues. First, this study will attempt to understand the context in which the program functioned by situating the program within the UCLA Medical Center and the larger Los Angeles area. Going further, this study will look into why the Clubhouse closed rather than other programs, such as ECPHP (Early Childhood Partial Hospitalization Program), which similarly offer services to children with autism. Possibly, how the medical center classified the Clubhouse program might have made the program a more preferred candidate for closure. Lastly, this study will investigate the perceptions of disability within the UCLA medical community and how the medical model of disability affects budget decisions made in the hospital setting.