



February 21, 2020

Dear Mr. Martinez-Vidal,

Throughout her 30-year professional career in community-based mental health and leadership, Ann Oshel has maintained a deep personal belief that it is the community's collective responsibility to respond to the needs of its most vulnerable citizens. She has spent that career advocating for them and developing the partnerships that have been uniquely successful in leveraging her principles into practice.

In her role as head of Alliance's Community Health and Well-Being department she oversees critical initiatives including System of Care, housing, jail diversion, training, education, and member engagement. Previously she served as Chief Operating Officer for NC Easter Seals UCP and Clinical Instructor at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work, Jordan Institute for Families.

Alliance Health is a behavioral health managed care organization serving individuals insured by Medicaid and those who are uninsured in central North Carolina. Broad collaboration and community partnerships are foundational to Alliance's work to meet the unique needs of our region, including almost 400,000 Medicaid-eligible and uninsured people.

Leading the Community through Disaster

In October 2016, Hurricane Matthew slammed into North Carolina hitting Cumberland County, part of Alliance's service area, especially hard. The devastation was massive. Under Ann's leadership and direction, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services charged Alliance with administering FEMA's crisis counseling program called "Hope4 NC" that provided door-to-door crisis counseling, education, and referral to crisis interventions to over 16,000 local survivors.

Less than two years later Hurricane Florence brought raging winds and torrential rains, overflowing riverbanks and streams once more. Again Ann directed Hope4NC efforts, and worked with NC Housing Finance, NC Coalition to End Homelessness, and the NC Governor's office to coordinate the Back@Home project, the first in North Carolina and only the fourth nationally to support individuals who were precariously housed prior to the disaster but did not qualify for FEMA assistance. The initiative provided assessments to 125 individuals in the disaster shelters and coordinated ongoing lodging, food, and necessities for survivors as the shelters closed.

Ann understood the impact that complex trauma from repeated disasters could have on a community, and especially on children. She championed a child specialist team to conduct outreach and support to children in schools and community centers. Realizing the importance of continuity of care, she collaborated with a long-term disaster recovery organization to ensure critical support for survivors once Hope4NC concluded. Through her leadership, Hope4NC project made over 85,000 contacts with those affected by Hurricane Florence and left a more resilient community.

During both of these trying times Ann also coordinated an extensive emergency shelter response by Alliance staff and members of our provider network and, never shying from the trenches, she spent many

hours outside her normal work day in shelters attending directly to the behavioral health needs of displaced citizens.

Again, Spearheading a Community Response

The McDougald Terrace housing complex in Durham, NC, owned and operated by the Durham Housing Authority and built in the early 1950s, houses more than 1200 people, including 500 children. Upon learning that the residents of McDougald Terrace were exposed to toxic levels of carbon monoxide, the city undertook a massive evacuation of the complex. Willing residents were displaced to 15 hotels across the city, and the situation was so dire it received coverage in national news media. Ann's long-established relationships with city and county leadership, the local housing authority, and countless governmental and other community stakeholders made her the go-to contact for the psychological health of displaced residents.

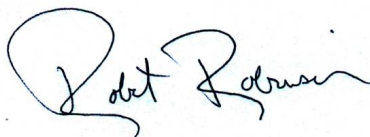
In the tense first meeting between the displaced residents and city leaders, Ann was asked to attend and to speak, directly following the mayor and the head of the housing authority. That a representative from a behavioral health plan was considered the third most important person in this public health crisis spoke volumes about Ann's community standing and the position of trust she holds there. As the crisis deepened over the following weeks, television cameras and newspaper reporters seemingly lost interest. Ann did not. She continued to sound the alarm about the mental and physical well-being of the displaced residents, particularly affected children. Ann worked with city leadership to convert its "mobile city hall" RV into a mobile clinic, serving the 15 hotels in which the displaced residents were staying. Ann reached out and brought other key stakeholders to the table, partnering with a physical health provider to offer co-located behavioral and physical health in her makeshift clinic, reflecting Alliance's commitment to the whole-person care of the people we serve. As she has been so many times in the past, Ann Oshel was the glue that helped prevent a community crisis from becoming a catastrophe.

Redesigning a System that Builds Community

As part of Alliance's commitment to addressing social drivers of health, Ann has been instrumental in establishing and nurturing partnerships in the spirit of the Olmstead Act that have resulted in thousands of individuals having access to safe, affordable housing. She has led a multi-year effort to redesign the social service system in our region to ensure that individuals with severe mental illness, many of whom were thought incapable of living independently, have the support needed to move into the community of their choice. This transformative work began with Ann's belief that recovery cannot be fully actualized as long as individuals with serious mental illness are simply relocated from institutions to group homes, where they often languish for years without ever becoming integrated into a community.

Over time, Ann created a first-of-its-kind dedicated housing team at Alliance. She built local relationships with the broader public housing system, and through creative partnerships and strategic investments was able to secure set-aside housing vouchers and develop long-term set aside arrangements so individuals with mental illness, and in many cases months of homelessness, would be prioritized for permanent housing options.

For these reasons and many others, the individuals and families that Alliance serves, and indeed all of us here who value and benefit from a healthier and more equitable community, owe a great debt of gratitude to Ann Oshel for her passionate and unwavering commitment. I am proud to nominate her to receive ACAP's 11th annual Making a Difference award.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rob Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a stylized "Robinson".

Rob Robinson, Alliance CEO