

Katherine Williams

Writing Portfolio: Grant Proposal

A grant proposal written for a social service organization. Identifying information has been changed.

Organizational Description

In 1984, Chicago Services for the Homeless was established to help relieve human suffering in the city of Chicago. We began as a small, community-based organization staffed by volunteers. We helped about 50 homeless Chicagoans per year until 1994 when an increase in funding enabled us to provide services to 200 individuals per year. Because of continuing growth, last year we were able to help 1,050 homeless individuals and families.

People cannot live healthy, well-rounded lives without safe, secure shelter. For this reason, we help homeless men, women and children and those at risk of becoming homeless find housing and overcome the problems that contributed to their homelessness.

We are successful because we meet homeless individuals wherever they are (i.e., on the streets, in shelters, on public transportation, etc.) and continue to be a part of their lives until they have achieved self-sufficiency.

It is our mission to end homelessness.

Homelessness: One of Society's Most Serious Problems

Nationally, between 2.5 and 3.5 million people are homeless during a single year.¹ In the Chicago metropolitan area 166,000 individuals have an experience with homelessness each year. Of those who are homeless in Chicago, 77% are African American, 38% are families, 48% are single men and 23% are veterans².

Homeless individuals and families face many problems. They deal with the daily struggles of homelessness including lack of food, clothing and shelter; inability to care for their children; lack of safety; and depression, isolation and despair. In addition, they must deal with the problems that contributed to their homelessness.

In most cases, homelessness is the result of a combination of societal and personal problems including a lack of affordable housing, poverty, decreases in public housing, unemployment, lack of living wage jobs, lack of health care, lack of education, mental illness, substance abuse, lack of social support and domestic abuse.³

¹ National Alliance to End Homeless, "A Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness," website: www.naeh.org

² Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, "Homelessness - Causes and Facts," website: <http://www.chicagohomeless.org>

³ Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, "Homelessness - Causes and Facts," website: <http://www.chicagohomeless.org>

Homelessness is one of our most serious problems because without the safety and stability of a decent home, human beings cannot grow, thrive and make positive contributions to society. Since projections indicate that the number of homeless individuals will increase by 5% each year, it is vital that we address and find solutions to the problems that cause homelessness.⁴

How We Help

Homeless Chicagoans are in crisis. Recovering from a crisis of this magnitude is a step-by-step process that requires support from others. From meeting homeless individuals on the street to finding them permanent housing, we are with them every step of the way.

Aggressive Mobile Outreach: The First Step Toward Self-Sufficiency

Our 24-hour *Aggressive Mobile Outreach* Team is out on the streets everyday meeting and building relationships with homeless Chicagoans. Because our mobile units travel the same routes, homeless individuals become familiar with us and come to trust us. On average, it takes six to nine encounters before services are requested or accepted from us. Many of these individuals are referred to appropriate supportive services including our transitional housing program.

Once a person is willing to accept our help, our case manager conducts an assessment to determine the individual's immediate and long-term needs. For example, if a person is ill we will take them to the hospital. If they have a substance abuse problem, we will get them into a treatment center.

A Stable Living Environment: The Next Step Toward Self-Sufficiency

Our *Transitional Housing Program* provides 300 units of housing to homeless individuals and families per year. Our program includes transitional housing for large families as well as for women, who are recovering from substance abuse, and their children. Once homeless individuals and families are off the streets, we connect them with the services that they need to combat the problems that led to their homelessness.

Supportive Services: An Essential Element to Achieving Success

If our only goal was to place individuals in housing, they would not defeat homelessness. This is why individuals in our Transitional Housing Program receive intensive case management services through our *Housing Utilization and Training Services Program*. Our case managers work with program participants, doctors, and educators to develop a plan of action that is based upon program participants' needs. By working with a network of 40 social service agencies, we are able to connect program participants to specialized counseling, educational and job training, medical care, substance abuse treatment and other supportive services. Our case managers

⁴ National Coalition for the Homeless, "How Many People Experience Homelessness," website: nch.ari.net
Katherine Williams
Writing Portfolio

make weekly visits to program participants' homes to provide support, encouragement and help with problems. This level of support and attention ensures that they will achieve success.

In addition, the *Chicago Services for the Homeless Educational and Training Center* provides literacy classes, computer training and life-skills enhancement to individuals in our Transitional Housing Program as well as others who are in need of educational and computer training. Through the center, program participants improve their reading, math and language arts skills; learn keyboarding, software applications and the Internet; and gain self-esteem and self-motivation through workshops and exercises. After participants have completed the program, we help them find jobs by preparing them for the job search (i.e., helping them prepare resumes, teaching them interviewing techniques, etc.) and setting up interviews with prospective employers.

We also provide case management services to homeless veterans and persons living with HIV/AIDS. Often times, these groups are ostracized from society. As such, they do not know where to turn for help. Our *Expedient, Prioritized, Individualized Case Management Program* takes into account the obstacles and issues that veterans and persons living with HIV/AIDS face. The program provides intensive case management services that help them find housing and receive job training and placement.

Permanent Housing and Self-Sufficiency: The Ultimate Goal

Our transitional housing program, case management services and referral system are the foundation and safety-net that homeless Chicagoans use to regain stability. With hard work, determination and support, they do overcome the problems that contributed to their homelessness. They improve their education, receive job training, find jobs, defeat substance abuse problems, and get health care for physical and mental problems. At this point, they are placed in affordable permanent housing. Because this transition can be challenging, we continue to support them by visiting their homes once a month for six months.

We are a Part of a City-wide Effort to End Homelessness

We are a member of the 2001-2002 Governing Board of the Chicago Continuum of Care, a consortium of private, public, non-profit and for-profit organizations that is committed to ending homelessness in Chicago. The Continuum is the system that provides housing and support services to homeless Chicagoans; oversees the planning process for ending homelessness in Chicago; and manages the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's funding process, which brings approximately \$30 million of federal support to homeless programs each year. With the goal of ending homelessness in Chicago by 2012, the Continuum has completed a five-year strategic plan that will implement a new model for helping people who are homeless as well as for preventing homelessness.

Target Population

We serve homeless families, individuals, seniors, veterans and people living with HIV/AIDS. We also provide services to those who are at risk of becoming homeless such as residents of the Chicago Housing Authority who are being displaced due to redevelopment.

Goals and Objectives

Goal: Help homeless individuals and families obtain residential stability and achieve self-sufficiency

Objective: 800 homeless individuals and families will be placed in housing and receive the supportive services needed to overcome the problems that contributed to their homelessness

Goal: Provide comprehensive support services that will prepare program participants to live independently

Objective: 70% of program participants will achieve long-term (1 year) independent living

Goal: Help homeless adults increase their education, receive job training and secure jobs

Objective: Program participants will be referred to appropriate basic education, GED and vocational training programs (numbers served depends on the educational needs of program participants)

Objective: 60 program participants per year will be enrolled in the Chicago Services for the Homeless Education and Training Center, which teaches job search skills and provides basic data processing and computer training

Objective: 450 program participants will receive job training and find jobs through our collaboration with 20 job training and placement programs

Evaluation

Information for each program participant (i.e., demographics, health status, personal history, etc.) is entered into our MIS-SPSS database. The database is compatible with information that funders such as the Chicago Department of Human Services request. From this database we can track program performance over time and produce statistical analysis for research purposes and quarterly reports.

These statistics along with qualitative and anecdotal information from case managers and program staff enable us to thoroughly review our programs and make changes when necessary.

Conclusion

Homeless individuals and families cannot overcome homelessness alone. They need a strong support network: a foundation on which to rebuild their lives. As a support network and advocate, we help them gain personal well-being, residential stability, financial independence and self-sufficiency. Their success helps strengthen and revitalize communities, because they can contribute financially and socially to the communities in which they live and work.

We hope that the McGee Foundation will become a part of the foundation that supports homeless individuals as they build strong, healthy lives for themselves and their families. A \$10,000 contribution will help us provide much needed housing and supportive services to homeless Chicagoans.

Denise became homeless after fleeing an abusive relationship. When we met her, she was living in a shelter. She was suffering from severe asthma and a hearing impairment. Denise did not feel very good about herself, and was so discouraged that she did not believe she could rebuild her life. We referred her to a local rehabilitation agency that provided her with a hearing aid and counseling. We also placed her in housing and enrolled her in the Chicago Services for the Homeless Education and Training Center. After she graduated from the center, she enrolled in a nursing assistant's program. Denise has a new lease on life and is well on her way to self-sufficiency.