

The Legacy Project

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N442: Populations and Global Health

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Introduction

The Haven, located at 1812 Western Ave, Mattoon, is where we chose for our Legacy Project. I asked the group if we could do our Legacy project at The Haven to bring more awareness to the facility and the services they offer. Those in my group graciously said yes. They were okay with doing our project at The Haven. Getting this new building going after the old PADS facility was torn down was a struggle. There was much pushback in the community for a new facility to be built because several people did not want another homeless shelter in Mattoon. We came to The Haven on September 11th and again on September 25th. While at The Haven, we helped clean the facility, prepare meals, and visit the clients.

While serving at The Haven, we cleaned the common area, living quarters, bathrooms, and the kitchen and prepared dinner for the 6 pm meal. Cleaning these areas allows the clients to have a clean and hygienic environment and encourages them to maintain a clean environment. While serving time at the facility, we had the opportunity to interview with the Shelter Service Coordinator and find out what populations The Haven serves. While serving time at the facility, we had the opportunity to interview with the Shelter Service Coordinator and find out what populations The Haven serves. This facility serves those in the community who are at risk for long-term homelessness, those with long-term health conditions because of lack of funds and homelessness, those who are victims of violence due to being homeless, those who are homeless because of their violent background, those with inadequate nutrition because of lack of funds and homelessness, those who are homeless because of their addictions, and those who are homeless and have a lack of access to basic hygiene facilities.

Ragin Baker**A systematic review of the nutritional status of adults experiencing homelessness**

Individuals who live in poverty are at high risk for malnutrition. Foods high in sugar and fat are more likely to be consumed by individuals with food insecurity because these foods are often cheaper than healthier foods such as fruit or vegetables. Individuals who experience homelessness are at higher risk for skin, chest, and digestive problems, and they are twice as likely to develop a mental health issue (Huang et al., 2022). All these health concerns decrease the importance or desire to eat healthily. Health problems cause a greater need for nutritional needs. Alcohol and drugs alone cause a challenge with nutrition. These addictions impair an individual's ability to absorb adequate nutrients and can also cause problems with approaching food services. Living in poverty restricts an individual's availability of various food, relying on shelters and soup kitchens.

A study compared the dietary intake of a housed individual to that of a homeless individual. Homeless individuals consumed a low level of vegetables and fruits and had a high level of vitamin C deficiency. Vitamin B12, iron, folate deficiencies, and low hemoglobin were more common in homeless individuals (Huang et al., 2022). The study showed that homeless individuals had a BMI that was more unhealthy than housed individuals.

Homelessness and Public Health: A Focus on Strategies and Solutions

In the United States of America, there are hundreds to thousands of individuals who are homeless. A decline in mental and physical health is closely linked to homelessness. The homeless population faces health problems such as hepatitis A, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, mental

illness, drug and alcohol addictions, and other serious health issues. A lack of food, protection, and housing, barriers to healthcare, and racism and discrimination are different health problems that homeless individuals face. If a homeless individual presents to the emergency department for medical care, they are released to the street once treated. This causes an endless pattern of individuals returning to the emergency department, increasing healthcare costs and resources.

Practitioners, researchers, and community organizers were gathered to express the public health issue of homeless individuals and help show strategies to decrease homelessness and provide more healthcare and housing to these individuals. These individuals tried to answer specific questions about public health and homelessness. Sleet and Francescutti (2021) proposed the question, "What are the implications of homelessness for public health and health services" (p. 2)? To answer the question, the researchers found that the lack of housing, poverty, unemployment, addiction, and mental health issues all give rise to the risk of homelessness (Sleet & Francescutti, 2021). These individuals presented that homelessness is a problem due to state and federal government structure, from neglecting to contribute to the public health system (Sleet & Francescutti, 2021). Overall, shelter and healthcare are basic human needs. Shelter is one of the most significant factors contributing to social health determinants.

Presley King

Homelessness and police-recorded crime victimization: a nationwide, register-based cohort study

Homelessness is at risk for many different things. One of those is crime victimization. According to Nilson et al., (2020), "Victimization is associated with substantial public health problems as it increases the risks of mental illness, physical health problems, exacerbates

existing health problems, increases the likelihood of being a perpetrator of violence, reduces quality of life, and is costly to healthcare and social services." (p.333). The rate of sexual and physical assault in homelessness has increased by 25% in one year (Nilson et al., 2020). The homeless are vulnerable to crime because many are unable to find a safe place to stay. There are many assumptions when it comes to the homeless population. Many find themselves at an increased risk of violence due to them finding themselves in settings where drug and alcohol use is prevalent. Often, the police have taken the reports of these issues from the homeless less seriously due to their living conditions.

It is vital to understand that homelessness is not a choice. Unfortunately, the homeless population is at a disadvantage when seeking help due to biased opinions against their status. Many factors, including their physical appearance, untreated mental illness, and being victimized for crime, stand in their way of seeking help or being turned away when they dare to do so.

Effective intervention for homeless population: The evidence remains unclear

Evidence supports the decline of long-term health in homelessness. According to Whickham (2020), "The damaging effects of homelessness on the health of children, including physical changes in brain structure, negative educational outcomes, social and psychological outcomes, are stark. Strong evidence suggests that tackling poverty through increasing income and good quality housing are effective ways to achieve multiple positive health outcomes across the lifespan" (p.304). Homelessness goes much deeper than physical appearance, especially when the children are involved and being analyzed. Increasing the quality of housing and increasing the income of these families could have a positive outcome for the health of these children.

Quality of life comes into question where homelessness is concerned. When children are involved, the stakes are much higher, as their literal brain structure can change due to their living conditions. We must measure levels of homelessness and the effects accurately.

Vanessa Jackson

"I don't think of it as a shelter. I say I'm going home": A qualitative evaluation of a low-threshold shelter for women who use drugs

The correlation between homelessness and addiction is complex and involves a range of economic, psychological, and social factors. The article highlights the surge of encampments in downtown Boston from 2021-2022 and the increased levels of drug usage and homelessness in the city (Beaugard et al., 2024). The city official's response was to remove the encampments and replace them with low-threshold shelter programs (Beaugard et al., 2024). Low-threshold shelters have more flexible rules, such as valued daytime access, allowing storage of personal items instead of forced disposal, and longer-term bed assignments.

The research used qualitative interviews with 12 staff members and 16 guests and thematically analyzed (Beaugard et al., 2024). The goal was to assess the guests' perceptions of the shelter's policies, staff, and overall experience. As a result, the guest expressed strong feelings of autonomy, safety, and dignity (Beaugard et al., 2024). The guests also appreciated the staff's commitment to relationship-building, which helped reduce drug use. The evaluation shows the importance of low-threshold shelters versus their traditional shelter counterparts. While officials recognize that low-threshold shelters do not replace the need for housing reform, they help provide shelter for those needing immediate assistance (Beaugard et al., 2024).

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WaSH) insecurity in unhoused communities of Los Angeles, California

Addressing hygiene issues amongst the homeless population is challenging because they often lack access to basic hygiene facilities. UNICEF developed the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WaSH) program to help communities worldwide provide water access. The article focuses on the WaSH services in the nation's second-highest number of unhoused individuals, Skid Row, in Los Angeles, California (Johanna et al., 2023).

A cross-sectional study with 263 unhoused individuals was conducted, and the communities were analyzed on how they cope with accessing WaSH services and the factors that affect their ability to do so (Johanna et al., 2023). Results showed that access to WaSH services was particularly challenging at night. About 19% of individuals used buckets for sanitation inside their tents (Johanna et al., 2023). Access to hand hygiene was limited, so 17% relied on hand sanitizer (Johanna et al., 2023). Those who lived outside Skid Row were twice as likely to struggle with sanitization access (Johanna et al., 2023). In conclusion, the study revealed a severe lack of access to clean water and sanitation services during the nighttime hours. Programs like WaSH require continuous investments and maintenance to address these issues and provide fundamental human rights.

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