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Daleen M. Pearse

California State University, Monterey Bay

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Almost Home: An Interim Solution to Homelessness

Daleen Pearse

Gilroy Compassion Center, Mentor: Jan Berstien-Chargin

Collaborative Health & Human Services

Department of Health Human Services and Public Policy

California State University Monterey Bay

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Author's Note

Daleen Pearse, Department of Collaborative Health & Human Services, California State University Monterey Bay.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Daleen Pearse, Department of Collaborative Health and Human Services, California State University Monterey Bay. 100 Campus Center, Seaside, CA 93933

Contact: dpearse@csumb.edu

Abstract

In 2015 there were 4,627 homeless individuals unsheltered in Santa Clara County (Home Not Found, 2015). With very few housing options available many homeless individuals are forced to camp illegally in conditions that are unsafe and inhumane. The Gilroy Compassion Center has addressed the need for an interim solution to homelessness with its Almost Home Camping Program. This program provides stability to individuals who participate by providing transitional housing in a campground setting as an alternative to camping illegally. Participants address their own personal barriers whether it is substance abuse, mental or physical health, as well as other barriers identified through case management. Participants of this program are entered in a data base, Homeless Management Information System, and work closely with a case manager, set goals, and contribute to the camping program by volunteering at the center and various events. In the development of this program, policies and procedures were created that not only could be used to replicate for other agencies interested in developing a camping program for the homeless but also as a model that can be used for a tiny home village in Santa Clara County.

Keywords: *Homeless, Transitional Housing, Santa Clara County, Public Policy, Encampments*

Agency Introduction

The Gilroy Compassion Center (GCC) is a 501© 3 nonprofit that serves the homeless population in South Santa Clara County which includes the cities of Morgan Hill and Gilroy as well as the unincorporated areas of San Martin. The mission of GCC is *“To provide access to the services homeless people need to survive, become stable, and achieve self-sufficient lives”* and their vision is to *“Provide a pathway to stability that maintains self-respect and recognizes the dignity of each human being* (Gilroy Compassion Center [Brochure], 2012). There are certain values that are also really important to this organization such as compassion for those who need help, and respect for people of different faiths, perspectives, and abilities. Every individual that walks through their doors is treated with compassion, respect and dignity. GCC also values cooperation among individuals and organizations working towards the same goal, and partnership rather than duplication of services. This agency believes part of its success and strengths come from its collaboration and partnerships with other agencies in Santa Clara County.

GCC currently has four different programs it offers the homeless community. The first is the Basic Needs program, where homeless individuals can receive clothing, hygiene, supplies, and respite from the streets. The second program offered at GCC is the Almost Home camping program where certain homeless individuals are placed in county campgrounds as an alternative to camping illegally along creeks, streams, and fields. The third program offered is Pathways to Stability program where individuals work with a case manager to identify goals and develop a plan to achieve those goals. The fourth program offered at GCC is Project Homeless Connect (PHC). PHC is an event that takes place twice a year in Gilroy where service providers from all over the county come together in one location to provide services to individuals experiencing

homelessness. In addition to the programs that GCC offers, they also partner with three other agencies, Home First, FOCUS Safe Car Park of Morgan Hill, and St Joseph's Family Center, providing case management for their shelter programs they operate.

Communities Served

The primary population the Gilroy compassion Center serves is individuals and families that are currently experiencing homelessness. In a 2015 point in time homeless census report, 858 individuals including families with children were identified as being homeless in South Santa Clara County, and of these individuals, 439 were identified in Gilroy (Santa Clara County Point-In-Time Homeless Census & Survey, 2015). In 2016, GCC reported having 16,841 unduplicated visits from 571 homeless individuals including families with children (Gilroy Compassion Center agency data, 2016). The majority of the clients that visit the center are predominantly White and Hispanic. According to the Gilroy Compassion Center Housing Trust Fund (HTF) report and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) report, 446 individuals identified as being White and 376 identified as being Hispanic (see Appendix A for complete race and ethnic chart).

Problem

There is a lack of transitional housing in Santa Clara County for people experiencing homeless. A 2015 Homeless Census and Survey found 6,556 homeless individuals during a point in time count in Santa Clara County. Of these 6,556 individuals 4,627 were identified as being unsheltered. 29 % were located in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and safe havens the remainder 71% were identified as being unsheltered, sleeping on the streets, abandoned buildings, cars/vans/RVs, and illegal encampment areas (Santa Clara County Point-In-Time Homeless Censes & Survey, 2015).

Causes

According to the 2015 US censuses for Santa Clara County the median household income was \$96,310 (United States Census Bureau, 2015). While the median monthly rent was \$2,436 (Scheinin, R, 2015). According to Avakian (2016), San Jose in Santa Clara County has the fifth-highest rent prices in the Nation .The cost of housing is very expensive and has been a major contributing factor to the cause of homelessness. Many individuals are being forced out of their homes due to rent increases they can't afford. According to a report by the California Housing Partnership Corporation (2014), "There was a shortfall of 53,810 homes affordable to Santa Clara County's very low-income (VLI) and extremely low-income (ELI) households". As a result Santa Clara County has the sixth highest homeless populations in the United States (McCarthy, 2016) In the survey part of the homeless censuses of 2015, 68% of homeless individuals reported that they couldn't afford rent and 38% reported there was no affordable housing available to them (Santa Clara County Point-In-Time Homeless Censuses & Survey, 2015).

Consequences

Health

There is abundant evidence concerning the health consequences of being homeless. For instance at a fundamental level, the homeless have higher premature mortality rate than those who are housed, with injuries, unintentional overdose, and extreme weather events being important drivers of this mortality (BU School of Public Health, 2016). In addition the homeless also have poor quality of life that is characterized by chronic pain associated with poor sleeping

conditions and limited access to medications and other salutary resources. In a 2015 report 65% of respondents reported one or more health conditions, including chronic physical illness, chronic substance abuse, and severe mental health conditions. 39% reported a psychiatric or emotional condition, 38% reported drug or alcohol abuse, 30% reported a physical disability, 25% reported having Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, and 12% reported a Traumatic Brain Injury (Santa Clara County Point-In-Time Homeless Censes & Survey, 2015).

Substance Abuse & Mental Health

There is a misconception that the reason people become homeless is because they are drug addicts or mentally ill. It is true that these conditions does increase the chances of someone becoming homeless, however it is found that two-thirds of the homeless population actually develop these disorders after they become homeless (Johnson & Chamberlain, 2008). What this shows is that substance abuse and mental health disorders are a consequence of being homeless. People without homes are at a greater risk of developing these disorders than those that are housed. The reasons for this are that being homeless puts a stain on people and as a result they often turn to substances to relieve the stress of their current circumstances (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2007). The use of substances helps people to cope with being out on the streets when they have nowhere to go. In addition once a person becomes homeless they are then in an environment where using substances is acceptable and is part of the subculture of homelessness that they are now part of.

Cost of Homelessness

There are high costs associated with providing services for the homeless. Many of these cost includes health care for the homeless with includes mental health services and substance abuse. In a recent study done in Santa Clara County they found that homelessness cost the

County billions of dollars. For instance, Santa Clara County spent over \$3.1 billion by providing services for the homeless. This was done over a six year span with an average cost of \$520 million a year. The cost of health care over six years equaled \$1.9 billion with an average cost of \$310 million. The Santa Clara County Mental Health department spent \$448 million over a year while the County Drug and Alcohol Services spent \$100 million (The Cost of Homelessness in Silicon Valley, 2015).

Criminal Justice System

Homelessness has been associated with an increased risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. Of the US jail population, homelessness made up 15 percent of the population (Greenburg & Rosenheck, 2008). Cities and States across America have adopted policies that criminalize the homeless and Santa Clara County is no exception when dealing with this population. Being homeless increases the risk of involvement with the criminal justice system and involvement with the criminal justice system increases one's risk of becoming homeless. Homeless individuals commit more crimes, such as property crimes, than the general population. Often times these crimes are done for survival reasons such as loitering, theft, breaking and entering, disorderly conduct (going to the bathroom in public) and public intoxication. When an individual becomes homeless and they are involved with the criminal justice system they will have a harder time finding a landlord to rent to them.

Capstone Purpose

The Compassion Center (GCC) was formed to meet the needs of its growing homeless population. This agency is the only one in South Santa Clara County that strictly serves individuals and families experiencing homelessness. One of the many programs GCC offers is respite from the streets where homeless individuals are welcome indoors; receive basic needs

such as clothing & hygiene, warmth, food and companionship. Spending time with homeless individuals, while getting to know them as human beings, has provided GCC with much needed insight in the needs of the homeless population. For instance, a frequent client of GCC who slept in a tent along a creek in Gilroy shared with the staff and volunteers of GCC that she had just gotten her fifth ticket within 30 days for camping along the creek. She also shared that she had lost all her clothes, identification, important papers, and her dentures she had just gotten the week prior because of an encampment sweep that she was not prepared for. Her story was not unique to GCC, they had heard many similar stories of individuals getting tickets and losing all their belongings. The shared experiences of the clients of GCC inspired this agency to advocate for new policies to address homeless issues in Santa Clara County. Some of the things GCC has advocated for over the last few years included:

- Land for a legal campground
- Safe parking program
- Tiny homes for permanent housing

The ways that GCC has advocated is by attending City Council and Board of Supervisor meetings as well as talking with city and county officials about the need for interim solutions to address the immediate needs of the homeless. Because the client mentioned above had no alternatives available to her for shelter GCC bought her camping equipment and placed her in a county campground. Members of the board and staff gave this client rides to and from the campground daily. By no means was this an answer to permanent housing for this client, however it was a solution to camping illegally, having her stuff taken or stolen, not having access to restrooms with showers or the overall stability of knowing where she could sleep at night

safely. Before long other homeless individuals began asking if GCC could help them too with camping fees and transportation.

The need for an interim solution to homeless was not only apparent to GCC but other organizations too. A group of advocates and homeless individuals was formed in San Jose which GCC became involved with. This group put pressure on The Board of Supervisors to approve a plan to address the immediate needs of the homeless such as where they could camp legally until permanent housing became available. The Board of Supervisors formed a special Task Force to explore different options for non-traditional interim solutions. GCC spoke to the Task Force about what they had been doing with some of the homeless in Gilroy, placing them in county campgrounds. GCC asked the Board of Supervisors to approve a piece of land that could be used for a legal, managed camp for the homeless since there was a lack of transitional housing in the county to support those that were unsheltered. Even though the Task Force was impressed with what GCC was doing with a handful of homeless individuals, they were also very apprehensive in approving a piece of land that could be used for a legal camping because of all the news media encampments were getting during this time. A large encampment in San Jose, called The Jungle, had just been dismantled by county officials because of the growing complaints of health and safety concerns. The clearing of The Jungle was very public with news stories and images of large mountains of garbage, human waste, and drug paraphernalia skewed in and around The Jungle. There was a lot of public concern that this would happen again in another area and therefore the public would not support it.

Capstone Project

Almost Home

Project Description

Almost Home is a camping program for individual's experiencing homelessness in South Santa Clara County. This program is an alternative to illegal encampments and functions as an effective, non-traditional transitional housing option that addresses the immediate needs of the homeless population by providing a safe, legal place to sleep. Currently there are four females and seven males in the Almost Home Camping Program. The program is at the maximum capacity of eleven due to limited seating in the agency's van. Individuals interested in the camping program go through a pre application process where they are interviewed by program manager and given information about the program and its expectations. Individuals must agree to case management, volunteering, weekly meetings, and rules of the Almost Home camping program. When an opening becomes available individuals are notified and expected to put in two weeks of sweat equity where they will get to know the other campers in the program. Prospective individuals are then voted on during the next campers' weekly meeting. The reason for this process is because not everyone is a good fit and the dynamics of different personalities should be considered before placing people in a living and working environment together.

Participants of the Almost Home Camping Program are expected to follow the rules of the program. An example of some of the rules includes the five cardinal rules of:

- No violence or the threat of violence, abusive language, gestures, or behavior
- No expressions of prejudice or disrespect toward or about anyone based on race, ethnic background, religion, age, disability or sexual orientation
- No sexual or any type of harassment by residents, visitors or staff

- No weapons or firearms
- No illegal behavior of any kind.

Participants of the Almost Home Camping Program are also required to give back to their community by volunteering at the center and at the different events established by GCC on a weekly basis. In addition to volunteer work, participants attend weekly meetings with their fellow campers. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure any and all issues are worked out in a safe supporting environment. These meetings also foster close relationships while participants develop a support network with each other.

Participants of the program also work with an assigned case manager, setting personal goals that are short term and long term. Individual barriers are identified through this process with steps to overcome them. All participants in this program are entered into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), a secure data base system administered by Santa Clara County where individuals are prioritized for housing.

Implantation

The purpose of this capstone project is to legitimize what GCC had been doing with homeless individuals and families by placing them in county campgrounds into an actual program called “Almost Home”. Over the course of the last year and a half of developing this program a wealth of knowledge was gained in its victories and failures along the way. Indeed there were plenty of both. One of the greatest accomplishments of this capstone project is that it provides a program model that can be duplicated in other cities and counties. The different elements of this program that were developed included:

- Application Process
- Program Rules

- Activities
- Case management
- Weekly Group Meetings
- Volunteer Work & Leadership

(See Appendix C for scope of work).

Program Goals

GCC who like to accomplish the following goals with the Almost Home program:

- Participants: A safe legal place to sleep that addresses quality of life issues and provides a pathway to stability for homeless individuals in Santa Clara County.
- Community: Tax dollars are saved due to a reduction in encampment sweeps and criminal justice costs and waterways are free from hazardous materials.

Anticipated Outcomes

The Almost Home Program hopes to achieve the following outcomes from participants in the program:

- 80% of individuals will report an improvement in quality of life since joining the program.
- 10% of individuals will be placed in permanent housing while in the program.
- 30% of individuals will have an improvement in income through connection to benefits, working, or job training while in the program.
- Program Rules & Policies and application for admittance to Almost Home program.

Data Collection Methodology

To assess an improvement in quality of life participants will be asked to fill out a survey where they will be given a set of questions concerning quality of life, rated on a scale of zero to

three. A zero on survey means no improvement in quality of life and a three means there was a great improvement in quality of life (See Appendix D for sample survey). Participation in case management addressing housing and income is documented in agency files. An analysis of agency files will be conducted by program manager. Program Rules & Policies and Application process will be reviewed by GCC mentor and approved for use (See Appendix E for Application and Appendix F for Program Rules & Policies).

Project Results/Findings

What the Gilroy Compassion Center had hoped most to accomplish from the camping program was a humane and compassionate approach to addressing the needs of the homeless population by giving them a safe, legal place to sleep. This was indeed accomplished by the formation of the Almost Home camping program. Participants in the program are able to focus on moving out of homelessness because of the stability the program provides them.

In order to measure the effectiveness of this goal a survey was implemented asking participants to rate whether certain activities such as: basic needs, case management, and group meetings, had improved their quality of life. A survey was given to participants earlier this month to gauge the effectiveness of this goal, of the 11 participants 94% reported an improvement in their quality of life since being in the Almost Home program.

Each participant in the program works closely with a case manager with goals of finding permanent housing as well as having an improvement of income through benefits or employment. Over the last year and a half there have been 28 participants in the camping program. Of the 28 participants 50% of individuals acquired permanent housing and 57% of individuals had improved their income through connection to benefits, job training, school, or work.

These outcomes far exceed the original goals developed earlier in this project. A lot of the success of this program can be contributed to the partnerships formed through collaboration. Program Rules & Policies and Application for admittance to Almost Home program was completed and approved by Jan Berstine-Chargin, Board Chair and mentor at GCC.

Strengths and Success

One of the major strengths of The Almost Home camping program is that it provides an alternative to camping illegally in a safe, responsible, and humane way that respects the dignity of each individual. Homeless individuals who participate in the program are able to address their barriers in a stable environment that they otherwise would not have been able to do on the streets or in an illegal encampment. There have been numerous successes in those that have participated, besides the desired outcomes the program hoped to achieve. Some of the greatest successes can be found in personal stories of those whose lives have been changed. For instance, a year and a half ago a 27 year old pregnant female addicted to heroin had asked to join the camping program. This client had been abused her whole life growing up, and had been assaulted numerous times since she had become homeless. She wanted to get clean but needed support and help to do it. She was admitted into the program because of the high risks to her and her unborn child should she remain on the streets. With the help of her case manager she was able to get on a waitlist of a treatment program for expectant mothers. While she waited for a bed to open she worked closely with her case manager and developed a support network with her fellow campers. In her eighth month of pregnancy a bed opened at the treatment facility she was waiting to get into. She entered treatment and had a healthy baby boy one month later. Today she has been clean for a little over a year and a half and her baby boy just celebrated his first birthday

a few weeks ago. This mother is now housed with her son, sober and enjoys being a mommy to precious baby boy. Two lives were saved as a result of the Almost Home Camping Program.

Limitations and Challenges

When the camping program was first developed there were no guidelines that had been developed. Individuals were selected on a first come first serve basis. The only requirement for participation was the agreement that county park rules would be followed when staying in county campgrounds. What the program manager had learned over time was that not everyone would be a good fit for the program and that a waitlist was not an effective way to choose participants. Changes were made as the program manager learned what works and what doesn't work. Today there is a process homeless individuals' must go through to ensure a good fit to the program. Other challenges the program faced was moving campers to different campgrounds every two weeks. County park rules states that individuals can only camp 14 days in a park within a 45 day period. Move days for campers were very labor intensive for staff, volunteers, and participants and would take a full day to complete. This last year the program manager was very fortunate to secure a permanent location for the Almost Home Camping Program in a private campground only ten miles out of town. The difference this has made to the camping program has been huge.

Conclusion

Ticketing homeless individuals for quality of life crimes only creates additional barriers for employment and housing and has cost taxpayers 786 million over six years in criminal justice systems (Home Not Found, 2015). The Almost Home Camping Program addresses the social problem of there being a lack of transitional housing in Santa Clara County for individuals experiencing homelessness. GCC has grown a lot in the seven years it has been open. It has gone from being a place where homeless people could hang out and get clothing, hygiene and food to

an agency that looks at creative ways to address the immediate needs of the homeless populations. It was through this creative thinking that the Almost Home Camping Program was born. This program offers an interim solution to providing shelter until permanent housing can be found. Today there are eleven participants in the camping program who are safe and motivated to move out of homelessness. It is recommended that The Gilroy Compassion Center continue to operate the Almost Home Camping Program because of the differences it is making in the lives of those who have participated. It is also recommended that the policies & procedures, and application process used in the camping program be used in the Tiny Village GCC is working out with Santa Clara County.

Advice for Future Capstone Students

You may have an idea of what you want your Capstone Project to be. Don't be surprised if your original thoughts are not what your capstone turns out to be. I also suggest that students don't think too broad when trying to develop their project. I found that when I was formulating a plan for my project I went real broad and as a result my project became too complex. Instead take maybe just one element of your vision and make it what your capstone is about. For instance, when I started capstone classes I had visions of developing a tiny home village for the homeless in Santa Clara County. During my internship I managed a camping program that wasn't really a legit program that was recognized in the county. It had no policies or procedures and very little structure with no goals or outcomes. My initial thoughts for my capstone were that I was going to use my experiences in managing this program as a model for a tiny home village. It wasn't till my last semester that I realized that all the work I was doing was actually a great project in itself. My capstone then shifted from a tiny home village to legitimizing the camping program into an actual program called Almost Home. I am really proud of the work I have done

on this project and the impact it has had on its participants. I believe that it not only can it be replicated in other cities and counties but also a beginning model for a tiny home village.

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Appendix A

Gilroy Compassion Center Race and Ethnic Demographics 2016

| Race | | Hispanic |
|---|-----|----------|
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 67 | 51 |
| Asian | 3 | 0 |
| Black or African American | 24 | 9 |
| Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | 2 | 0 |
| White | 446 | 305 |
| American Indian | 18 | 7 |
| African American or Black and White | 3 | 0 |
| American Indian and African American or Black | 6 | 3 |
| Balance | 1 | 1 |

Appendix B
Problem Model

CAUSES CONTRIBUTE TO
HOMELESSNESS

High costs of rent in Santa Clara County and availability of housing.

PROBLEM

Lack of transitional housing in Santa Clara County for individuals experiencing homelessness

CONSEQUENCES

Costs of Homelessness

Development of health conditions

Substance Abuse & Mental Health

Incarceration

Appendix C

Scope of Work

| Activities | Deliverables | Timeline |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Identify Need for Project | Knowledge/Generating Ideas | Oct 2016 |
| Meetings with clients weekly | Knowledge/Generating Ideas | Oct 2016-Nov 2017 |
| Attend Monthly Collaborative Meetings | Building Relationships & Support | Oct 2016-Nov 2017 |
| Research | Knowledge/Generating Ideas | Oct 2016-May 2017 |
| Focus Group | Strategies/Program Elements | May 2017 |
| Develop Program Goals Outcomes | Outcomes to Measure Program | Sept 2017 |
| Survey-Improvement in Quality of Life | Outcome Data | Oct 2017 |
| Implement Survey | Outcomes | Nov 2017 |
| Create Application Process | Application for Agency to use | Oct 2017 |
| Program Rules | Manual | Nov 2017 |
| Program Policies | Manual | Nov 2017 |
| Identify Program Outcomes | Capstone Report | Nov 2017 |

Appendix D

Sample Survey for Almost Home Program

**Almost Home
Client Satisfaction Survey, November 2017**

To what extent have the following services of the Almost Home Program improved your **quality of life**? (By “**quality of life**” we mean the feeling of life being less stressful, more hopeful and/or less difficult.)

N/A means I have not received this service

0 means these services have provided no improvement in my quality of life

1 means these services have provided very little improvement in my quality of life

2 means these services have provided some improvement in my quality of life

3 means these services have provided a lot of improvement in my quality of life

| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Basic needs: shelter, food boxes, clothing, camping equipment, mailing address, personal care supplies, respite from the street, transportation | | | | |
| Weekly group meetings | | | | |
| Case Management: Setting goals, Connection to other services, Employment initiatives, Medical & Mental Health Care, Substance abuse, Legal services | | | | |

Comments: (Is there anything else you'd like us to know?)

Appendix E
Almost Home
Application

Date: _____

Legal/Given Name: _____

Name Used: _____

Race: _____ Ethnicity: _____ Gender: _____

Driver's License/State ID # _____ State Issue: _____

How do we contact you?

Location: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Where did you sleep last night? _____

Date of birth: _____ Circle one: Single / Married/ Partnered

Is your spouse/partner applying to Almost Home? Yes / No

If so spouse/partner's name: _____

- ❖ Couples must agree to abide by the intervention policy in the Almost Home Manual if they have fallout which results in one person moving out of the couple's tent. This must be filled out during the interview process. Please choose which person in the couple will move bellow:

“We, the couple, in the event of fallout resulting in an inability to live together and causing one person to move out of the couple's tent, will agree to Almost Home Policy that _____ will move out of the couple's tent.

Do you have children with you? Yes / No If so how old are they? _____

Do you have a car? Yes / No RV? Yes / No Insured? Yes / No

How much stuff do you have? Backpack / Car load / Truck load / Storage unit

Do you have pets? Yes / No Registered? Yes / No Immunized? Yes / No

If so, what kind? _____ How many pounds? _____ Spay/neuter? Yes / No

Almost Home
Intake Questionnaire

1. How did you become homeless?

2. How long have you been without stable housing? _____
3. Are you a Gilroy resident? Yes / No If so how long? _____
4. Is this your first experience being homeless? Yes / No
5. Do you have a source of income? Yes / No If so, what source? _____
6. Do you get Cal-Fresh? Yes / No If not, do you want help applying? Yes / No
7. Do you get Medi-Cal? Yes / No If not, do you want help applying? Yes / No
8. Do you receive SSI/SSDI? Yes / No If not, do you want help applying? Yes / No
9. Are you on any housing lists? Yes / No If so, which? _____
_____ If not, do you want help applying? Yes / No.
10. Have you ever lived in any transitional housing? Yes / No
 If so, which one and for how long? _____
11. Are you a veteran? Yes / No Branch: _____ Type of discharge _____
12. Are you employed? Yes / No
 If so, where do you work and how many hours? _____

13. Are you interested in job training? Yes / No
14. Do you agree to attend weekly group meetings with fellow campers? Yes / No
15. Do you have a disability or special needs? Yes / No If so, please describe: _____

16. Female head of household? Yes / No

17. What goals do you have for yourself? _____

18. Is there anything you would like to tell us about yourself? _____

Almost Home Skills Inventory

1. What is your educational level? Circle one: did not graduate from high school / high school diploma or equivalent / associate degree / bachelor's degree / masters or higher.
2. What did you study? _____
3. Any plans to go back to school? Yes / No To study what? _____
4. If so, do you need help in applying? Yes / No
5. Have you worked for pay? Yes / No If so, what kinds of work have you done?

6. What is the best job you ever had? _____
Why? _____

7. What are your hobbies? _____

8. What of the following do you have experience with? (Check all that apply)

| | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Rough Carpentry | Computers, Web Development |
| Finish Carpentry | Computers, Word |
| Plumbing | Processing/Spreadsheets |
| Electrical | Computers, Data Entry |
| Gardening | Computers, Programing |
| Farming | Office Manager |
| Security | Activism/Community Organizing |

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Permaculture | Management |
| HVAC | Spiritual Leadership |
| Inventing | Sales |
| Masonry | First Aid |
| Driver | Bookkeeping |
| Mechanic/ small engine repair | Cashier/Handling Money |
| Roofing | Writing |
| Cabinetry | Business Owner |
| Cooking/food service | Manufacturing/Warehouse |
| Other: | |

9. Do you agree to contribute 8 hours of sweat equity each week while in Almost Home Program? Yes / No

10. Task you are interested in doing: (Check all that apply)

| | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Sorting Donations | Filing |
| Gardening | IT/Computer Repair |
| Event Set Up | Data Entry |
| Fund Raising | Speaking/Presenting to Groups |
| Receptionist Support | Attend Homeless Task Force Meetings |
| Opening Center/Set Up | Phone Calls |
| Plumbing | Painting |
| Cooking/Serving | Cleaning |
| Other Talent that Could be Beneficial: | |

Almost Home Background Check Form

Notice: We will conduct a background check on all applicants. This will be used as a tool to access eligibility for the Almost Home program. The only criminal offenses that automatically exclude applicants are forcible/ aggravated rape on others and sexual predation on children. All other offenses will be considered for good fit to program. Applicants will be given an opportunity to explain any personal goals they might have to be law abiding citizens. A written agreement may be used in such cases. PLEASE BE HONEST!

Last Name: _____ First: _____ Middle: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Last 4 digits of SSN: _____

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense? Yes / No

If yes, please state the charges you were convicted of, the date of the conviction, and the City/Town, County and State. (Please use the back of sheet if you need more room).

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. _____ State, County | 4. _____ State, County |
| 2. _____ State, County | 5. _____ State, County |
| 3. _____ State, County | 6. _____ State, County |

Are you currently on probation or parole? Yes / No

This information on this form is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I give permission to verify all information provided.

Applicant Signature

Date

Appendix F

Almost Home

Program Rules

Program Overview

The Almost Home Camping Program provides an alternative to illegal “encampments” by providing a safe, responsible, and humane camping experience that respects the dignity of each individual. Homeless individuals who participate in the program are able to address their own barriers in a stable environment while working closely with a case manager. Participants of the Almost Home Camping Program are required to give back to their community by volunteering at the Compassion Center and at different events established by GCC on a weekly basis.

As a condition of admittance to the Almost Home Program, each applicant will be required to sign a rules agreement that is consistent with the rules and policies in the remainder of this section of the management plan.

The following rules and policies have been adopted by the Board of Directors by of the Gilroy Compassion Center for use for the Almost Home Program.

Cardinal Rules

Violation of any of these cardinal rules is grounds for removal from the Almost Home Program.

- No violence or threat of violence, abusive language, gestures, or behavior;
- No expressions of prejudice or disrespect toward or about anyone based on race, ethnic background, religion, age, disability or sexual orientation;
- No sexual or any type of harassment by residents, visitors, or staff;
- No weapons or firearms;
- No illegal behavior of any kind.

Campground Rules

- All participants’ belongings must be contained inside their site. Site must be kept tidy and free from garbage or leftover food.
- Only equipment meant for camping is allowed in campsites.
- Participants may not build any accessory structures or make alterations to campsite or facilities.
- Vehicles must be registered.
- Smoking is permitted at your site. Butts need to be in a can or fire pit. NOT on the ground.

Work Contribution

All participants contribute a minimum of eight hours of service each week by doing assigned work intended to contribute to the Almost Home Program. These tasks will be organized and assigned by the program manager. The number of required hours may change from time to time by program manager depending on how much work needs to be done. Special consideration will be given to those in school, attending classes, and working.

Weekly Group Meetings

Participants are required to attend weekly group meetings with program manager. Not attending these meetings may result in removal from program. The purpose of these meetings is to build comradeship, improve social skills, exchange ideas, share information, and work out problems & issues amongst each other. These meetings are vital in ensuring that the program can function in safe and respectful manner.

Participant Goals

All applicants will meet the Program Manager prior to moving in and establish goals they will work on achieving while in the Almost Home Program.

All applicants that enter the Almost Home Program with an active addiction must include becoming clean and sober as one of their goals, and agree to be held accountable for achieving this goal. Periodic drug and alcohol testing may be conducted to ensure honesty and accountability.

Visitors and Guests

- Visitors must abide by the five cardinal rules.
- Visiting hours are between 9 AM and 10 PM. Program participants are responsible for their visitors should they violate any of the rules.
- Visitors may not bring any illegal drugs to the campground; doing so will be grounds for being permanently banned.
- No visitor may stay overnight without advanced permission from the program manager.
- Visitors should only be in the area of the person they are visiting and respect the privacy of the other participants and other campground guests.

Quiet Hours

The Almost Home Program is located in a private campground. Participants are expected to respect those that are staying there by abiding to the following quiet hours so as not to disturb others.

- Sunday thru Thursday, 10 Pm to 9 AM

- Friday & Saturday, 12 AM to 9 AM

Leaves of Absence

The Almost Home Program provides is an alternative to camping illegally and is intended for individuals who have limited options available to them for shelter. Space is limited in this program with many homeless individuals are interested in joining. Participants are expected to stay/sleep at their assigned site. Leaves of Absences are allowed on a limited basis and must be arranged and approved in advance by program manager. If a participant leaves the program for 3 days or more consecutively without letting the program managers know, they are subject to withdrawal from the Almost Home Program.

Consequences for Rule Violations

There are times when it is necessary to ask someone to leave the Almost Home Program because of inability to comply with the rules of the program. This is always a difficult decision to make. Program manager will attempt to provide every opportunity for participants to correct and amend program violations to avoid being discharged from the program. Verbal and written warnings will be given when appropriate. The repetition of violations justifies removal from the Almost Home Program.

Almost Home Program Policies & Procedures

Discharge Policy

The Program Manager will have sole authority to discharge participants. The Compassion Center board may at times play an advisory role on these decisions. Participants removed from the program have the right to appeal the decision to the Program Manager and the Board of Directors.

Appeal Process Policy

An appeal may be filed by initiating the following action:

- Step I Formal Conference** – within five (5) days of the occurrence, request a formal conference with the Program Director by presenting the grievance and request for review in writing. The Program Director will schedule a conference within five (5) working days and a written decision will be provided within (5) working days following the conference.

Step II If a resolution is still not reached, a final appeal may be made to the Gilroy Compassion Center Board of Directors. A written decision will be provided. The decision of the Board is final.

Service Animal and Pet Policy

Participants are not allowed to own pets unless they are service or certified companion animals. Visitors and volunteers may bring pets to the campground during visiting hours if the visiting pet is not disruptive or dangerous.

Participants are required to have a letter from a physician to verify that an animal is their service or companion animal. Service and companion animals are subject to strict rules regarding licensing, spaying/neutering, inoculations, sanitation, standards of care and behavior with documentation of these requirements.

Drug/Alcohol Policy

Addiction is a disease, and those who are chemically dependent need to be treated respectfully and provided treatment that will help them to enter recovery from their addiction. Individuals recovering from addictions need a safe and supportive community that encourages them in their recovery.

We know that addiction is a relapsing disease and those with addiction deserve opportunities to try to be in recovery, fail, and try again. While we understand the complexity of this disease, we believe that the expectation should be that participants be clean of illicit drugs and alcohol at the time they enter the program.

These are the requirements for the drug/alcohol policy of the Almost Home Program:

- Almost Home Program will be a welcoming and safe environment for those who are recovering from drug or alcohol addiction.
- No illicit drug use, possession, distribution, or manufacturing will be allowed in the program.
- UA and Breathalyzer tests may be used at the direction of the Program Director or Board of Directors. These tests are intended to be tools for recovery and accountability. They may be used to address problematic behavior of individual participants, or randomly to ensure that everyone in the Almost Home community is living by the rules.
- Drug dealing and sharing of drugs must never happen. If drugs are dealt or shared this will be seen as an extremely serious offense, with strong and immediate action taken. Drug dealing or sharing are selfish acts that directly affect other participants and steal their recovery, their sense of hope for a new life, and their safe haven.

If a participant exhibits behavior that indicates alcohol inebriation, illicit drug use, possession, distribution, or manufacturing, Program Manager will require that the participant meet with them

to discuss their drug or alcohol-related behavior and the cause of that behavior in the following ways:

- If the participant acknowledges that they have been drinking excessively or using, or have been found using illicit drugs or being inebriated while in the program, they will be required to develop a collaborative plan to address their drug/alcohol use and behavior. This may include attending meetings or religious observance, or substance abuse treatment or counseling. This is an opportunity for the participant to create a plan with the help of the Program manager that they believe will work for them. Participants will have to turn in documentation showing that they are following through with this plan. Participants that don't follow their plan and continue their drug or alcohol-related use and behavior will be required to complete a chemical dependency assessment through GATEWAY and must follow the recommendations of that assessment.
- If the participant denies illicit drug use or a drinking problem, the Program Manager must decide whether to ask participant to submit to a UA or breathalyzer. If the test shows the presence of illicit drugs or alcohol, the participant will be required to develop a collaborative plan to address their drug/alcohol use and behavior. This is an opportunity for the participant to create a plan with the help of the Program manager that they believe will work for them. Participants will have to turn in documentation showing that they are following through with this plan. Participants that don't follow their plan and continue their drug or alcohol-related use and behavior will be required to complete a chemical dependency assessment through GATEWAY and must follow the recommendations of that assessment.

If participant of the Almost Home Program refuses to discontinue their alcohol abuse, drug use, drug behavior, drug dealing, or drug sharing or decides not to comply with the rules stated above, The Program Manager may take corrective action up to and including asking the participant to leave the program, especially in cases where the drug use and behavior is affecting other participants. Asking a participant of the Almost Home Program to leave is never the desired outcome and should only occur when someone has been given chances and has shown over a period of time that recovery is not one of their goals.