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Homeless Youth Research Project:
Expanding and Improving Services and Resources

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Final Capstone Project Title and Abstract**Homeless Youth Research Project: Expanding and Improving Services and Resources**

The Coalition of Homeless Service Providers is a 501(c)(3) organization working to eliminate homelessness by promoting partnership and interagency cooperation. They serve the homeless community of Monterey and San Benito counties. The U.S. struggles with solving the homeless problem including homeless youth. There are many homeless youths in Monterey and San Benito counties. This project supports the Youth Homeless Demonstration Project's efforts to expand services and improve policies that directly affect homeless youth. This project involved researching best practices in other jurisdiction's Coordinated Community Plans. The expected outcome is to increase the agency's knowledge of these best practices. The primary finding is that the identified best practices can help the agency address the challenges of insufficient and inadequate local services. The recommendation is to incorporate appropriate best practices into the local Coordinated Community Plan.

Keywords: Homeless; youth; young adults; coordinated community plan; CCP; Coalition of Homeless Services Providers; CHSP

Agency Information and Partnering Organizations

The Coalition of Homeless Service Providers (CHSP) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization focused on serving people experiencing homelessness in Monterey and San Benito counties. Their mission statement, “To eliminate homelessness in Monterey and San Benito Counties by promoting regional partnerships and interagency collaboration for a comprehensive system of housing for our diverse population”, demonstrates their purpose which is to facilitate interagency coordination for solutions to homelessness (Coalition of Homeless Services Providers [CHSP], 2021a). CHSP works with their partnering agencies to address root causes of homelessness such as social inequities, physical disabilities, substance abuse, and mental health problems. CHSP has facilitated and/or participated in a multitude of projects across many agencies to achieve their vision of creating, “A community where homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring; where everyone lives with dignity and respect in a home of their choosing that is safe, healthy, and affordable” (CHSP, 2021a). Some of the collaborative programs with CHSP involvement include: the 100 Day Challenge; Project RoomKey (PRK); Emergency Housing Vouchers; the Coordinated Assessment and Referral System (CARS); and Homeless Census/Point in Time Count. CHSP partners with 33 agencies including Member Agencies, Associate Members, Community Advisors, and Supporters (CHSP, 2021b).

The CHSP is the lead agency for the Youth System of Monterey and San Benito Counties, a collaboration of youth-serving organizations with the common goal of ending and preventing youth homelessness in their geographical region. The Youth System community has centered youth in its practice through the creation of the Youth for Action (Y4A) to bring young leaders into this arena. Y4A is the Youth Action Board of Monterey and San Benito Counties Continuum of Care (CoC) (CHSP, 2022). The CoC represents the totality of services and housing available to individuals and families in crisis/homelessness within a defined geographic region. Monterey and San Benito Counties merged in 2011 to form one single CoC in order to create an integrated, regional approach to addressing homelessness (CHSP, 2020). The Y4A

is made up of youth between the ages of 16-24 with lived experience in homelessness to advise, advocate, and lead the initiatives for marginalized populations. Upon identifying an increase in need of funding for areas such as child welfare, juvenile justice, homeless youth serving agencies, etc. the Youth System applied for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP).

The YHDP is a United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funded initiative designed to reduce the number of youth experiencing homelessness. The goal of the YHDP is to support selected communities, including rural, suburban, and urban areas across the United States, in the development and implementation of a coordinated community approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness. (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD], 2022). When selected for the YHDP, a Coordinated Community Plan (CCP) is developed which is a blueprint for how programs and services will be implemented with specific federal funds to address youth homelessness. The CCP lays the groundwork and provides a framework for projects and systems aimed at preventing and ending youth homelessness.

Upon acceptance into, and as a condition of, the YHDP, the Y4A and Youth System Leaders have led sustained community engagement towards development of a CCP for Monterey and San Benito Counties. The CCP, titled, “The Tidal Wave of Changes to Wash Away Youth Homelessness,” was finalized on April 29, 2022 (CHSP, 2022). The CHSP serves as the YDHP lead. Their role is to provide organizing, structure, communication, and training throughout the YHDP process and coordinate integration of YHDP activities with the greater homeless service system. The CHSP approves the YHDP Plan and all project applications.

Communities Served: Demographic Profile and Needs Analysis

The population served by CHSP are the homeless population of Monterey and San Benito counties. CHSP serves individuals including adults, families, and youth ages 18-24 including intersecting populations: pregnant or parenting youth, youth involved in the juvenile justice system, mental illness, substance addiction, LGBTQ+, unaccompanied minors, victims of sex trafficking, high school and college students, and youth with disabilities. Although CHSP does not provide services directly to this population, they do work with many organizations that serve youth and at-risk youth, homeless veterans, homeless people with mental health illness, domestic violence victims and more (CHSP, 2021a).

The total Point in Time (PIT) Census for homeless individuals for Monterey and San Benito Counties were conducted in January 2019. The census represent a complete enumeration of all sheltered and unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness with several components:

- General Street Count: A count of unsheltered homeless individuals and families including those sleeping outdoors on the street; at bus and train stations; in parks, tents, and makeshift shelters; and in vehicles and abandoned properties.
- General Shelter Count: A count of homeless individuals and families staying at publicly and privately-operated shelters including those who occupied emergency shelters, transitional housing, and safe havens.
- Targeted Street Count of Unaccompanied Children and Young Adults: A count of unsheltered unaccompanied children under 18 and unaccompanied youth 18-24 years old.
- Targeted County Office of Education (COE) Street Count of K-12 Students and Their Families: A count of unsheltered homeless students and their families reported by the Monterey County Office of Education (Applied Survey Research, 2019a).

Table 1 includes PIT census results for Monterey and San Benito Counties. For Monterey County,

14% of the homeless population are under the age of 18, 14% between the ages of 18-24, and those above 25 at 72%. For San Benito County, the PIT census included 0% for those under 18, 5% for those between 18-24, and 95% for those 25 and older. Additional statistics including gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation are also included.

Table 1. Statistics for the homeless population in Monterey and San Benito Counties.

	Monterey	San Benito
Age		
Less than 18 Years	14%	0%
18-24 Years	14%	5%
25+ Years	72%	95%
Gender		
Male	65%	52%
Female	35%	47%
Non-conforming		1%
Race		
White	50%	70%
Black	25%	25%
Multi-racial	20%	2%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2%	1%
Ethnicity		
Latinx/Hispanic	36%	57%
Sexual Orientation		
LGBTQ+	7%	13%

Source: Applied Survey Research, 2019a; Applied Survey Research, 2019b.

Table 2 demonstrates the number of unaccompanied children and young adults found to be homeless during the PIT count by age and shelter status in the State of California. The number of young adults ages 18-24 was more than ten times the amount of children ages 0-17.

Table 2. Estimates of child and youth homelessness in California

California	Number		
Age Group	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total
Ages 0-17	207	595	802
Ages 18-24	2,455	8,915	11,370
Total for Ages 0- 24	2,662	9,510	12,172

Source: U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, Point-In-Time Estimates of Homelessness in the U.S. (Apr. 2021).

Table 3 demonstrates HUD’s 2020 national PIT count and provides information on unaccompanied homeless youth, with 34,210 unaccompanied youth reported to be experiencing homelessness in the United States. The data also shows 9 of every 10 unaccompanied homeless youth identified in January 2020 were between the ages of 18 and 24 (90% or 30,821 people). The remaining 10 percent (3,389 people) were children (under the age of 18) experiencing homelessness on their own (HUD, 2020). Children and youth who experience homelessness on their own make just 23% of all people under the age of 25 experiencing homelessness . Another 7,335 youth were experiencing homelessness as parents, with at least one child under the age of 18 (HUD, 2020).

Table 3. National PIT Count Estimates of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Homeless Youth	Unaccompanied Total Youth		Sheltered Unaccompanied Youth		Unsheltered Unaccompanied Youth	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total (under 25)	34,210	100%	17,271	100%	16,939	100%
under 18	3,389	9.9%	1,682	9.7%	1,707	10.1%
18-24	30,821	90.1%	15,589	90.3%	15,232	89.9%

Source: U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, (AHAR). PIT estimate 2020

Challenges

Homeless youth in Monterey and San Benito Counties face a number of challenges. The unique needs of this population are not being met locally. The target population faces an insufficient amount of services, high cost of living, and mobility and communication barriers. The high cost of living includes a lack of affordable housing in Monterey and San Benito Counties (2.8% and 3.9% rise in housing costs since 2019, respectively) (CHSP, 2022). Their earnings are too low to support the cost of housing. Homeless youth don't often have vehicles and limited bus service is offered especially in rural areas, making transportation to services a challenge. Communication is also of vital importance when seeking services. That communication can be hindered by lack of resources such as cell phones or access to the internet. There are also few services for intersecting populations, such as homeless youth who are parenting, where it can be difficult to find services like affordable child care (CHSP, 2022).

Additionally, there is a lack of homeless intervention. The population has only 4 community-based organizations, combined, to serve a population of 404 youth across 14 cities. The organizations face a lack of diversity in the types of homeless interventions and the concentration of youth programs are located in urban Monterey County, creating barriers for youth in rural areas such as King City (CHSP, 2022).

Capstone Project Description & Justification

Project Description

This capstone project addressed the problem of a lack of services specifically for homeless youth 18-24 in the local CoC. The problem was addressed through research of a variety of CCPs to identify best practices that could bring additional value to the local CCP and YHDP.

Objectives and action steps for youth homeless services were researched to include into the local CCP. The capstone research was conducted on CCPs from different states including Montana (Montana Continuum of Care Coalition, 2020), Hawaii (Partners in Care, 2020), and Ohio (Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, 2020), to identify best practices to inform the local CoC's approach. The research provided insight and contributed to the understanding of how to best address the needs of the target population. In addition to researching existing CCPs, partnering organizations were contacted for their most recent data on the target population. The data collected contributed towards the Statement of Need for the local CCP development. Findings and recommendations were developed and presented to CHSP to increase awareness and knowledge on best practices. The recommendations would be taken into consideration by CHSP for use in the YHDP program.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders for the project include the homeless youth and service providers for homeless youth, such as non-profit organizations and local government agencies, that provide services in mental and physical health, substance abuse, housing, and more. Additional stakeholders include local advocacy groups, faith-based organizations, donors, community members, and older adults with lived experience. A full list of stakeholders is included in Appendix A.

Benefits

Direct and immediate benefits to the CHSP and the local CoC agencies from the project included increased knowledge from researched information that served to inform and frame the approach towards the local CCP and YHDP. Indirect benefits included the potential for homeless youth spending less time living on the streets as a result of the CCP and YHDP implementation. Less time on the street means less time exposed to a risky lifestyle, unhealthy behaviors, exploitation, and potentially violence. Due to less time living on the street there would be less exposure to potential trauma that could impact behavioral and mental health negatively. Additional longer-term outcomes could include more jobs for professionals working in the field, improvement of policies addressing youth homelessness, and a permanent decrease in homeless youth in the community.

Justification

There are currently too few service providers in Monterey and San Benito Counties' CoC for youth 18-24 experiencing homelessness. Groups most directly affected by this problem are youth experiencing homelessness including intersecting populations, LGBTQ+, parenting youth, unaccompanied youth and children. Local Youth Systems members, including the CHSP, have collaborated to create the local CCP. The capstone project will address the issue by researching multiple CCPs from other states to increase the Coalition's knowledge of applicable best practices to potentially implement in the YHDP. Longer term, the project could contribute to increased and improved homeless youth services.

Micro-Level Problem Statement: The local CoC has limited services and resources that are specific towards homeless youth (CHSP, 2022).

Micro-Level Problem Description: Monterey and San Benito Counties have few direct services and shelters specifically for homeless youth between ages of 18-24.

In Monterey, service providers include, *A Safe Place*, an emergency drop-in shelter and supply facility, and *Safe Passage*, a transitional housing program, both run by Community Human Services (CHS), a local nonprofit organization. The emergency shelter is limited to eight beds with strict entry and exit times that don't allow for storage of possessions or long term stay. The transitional housing offers only six beds and is by referral and acceptance into the program. These two programs are the only options for transitional housing or emergency shelter for this age group. In Salinas service providers include *The Epicenter*, a drop-in facility that offers assistance locating housing, health and wellness, education, and employment, and *Rancho Cielo*, a comprehensive learning and social services center for underserved and disconnected youth. The Epicenter offers on-site and online services not including transitional housing or emergency shelter (Epicenter, 2022). Rancho Cielo includes programs and opportunities such as diploma education, vocational training, and other services, but does not include transitional housing or emergency shelter (Rancho Cielo, n.d.). In San Benito County, there are no transitional age (18-24) specific shelters, transitional housing, or services. The number of youth served by each organization is limited by capacity and according to the 2019 PIT count, unaccompanied youth under the age of 25 made up 13% of individuals experiencing homelessness in Monterey and San Benito Counties. Of that 13% population, 91% were unsheltered.

Table 4. Micro-level Problem Model

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
Lack of available service providers including Runaway Homeless Youth specific providers.	The local CoC has limited services and resources that are specific towards homeless youth. (CHSP, 2022).	Homeless youth without access to transportation may not be able to access local services (CHSP, 2022).
Competition for funding.		Lack of available bed space.
Lack of Coordinated Assessment and Referral System specific for homeless youth.		Lack of specific assistance for youth homeless intersecting population (CHSP, 2022).

Factors that contribute to the limited services include lack of available service providers, competition for funding, lack of Runaway Homeless Youth (RHY) specific providers, and lack of a specific Coordinated Assessment and Referral System (CARS) system for homeless youth (personal communication, Kai Reynolds, April 2022).. The above named providers are the only ones that cater specifically to homeless youth 18-24 and although an array of services are available, it is limited by capacity of the organizations, especially in emergency shelter and transitional housing. Funding for these services is also limited and competitive thus reducing opportunities for increasing service.

Limited homeless youth services and resources creates consequences such as difficulty obtaining transportation to the facilities, limited bed space, and it doesn't address other unique needs such as specific housing and services for intersecting populations. A consequence of having limited services is that youth without transportation may not be able to access the services. Monterey County is ~3,700 square miles which means that for someone who lives in King City or further south in the County, it may be impossible to reach the services in Monterey or Salinas. Also, few beds means competition for this limited resource. Another consequence is that Monterey and San Benito Counties are limited on specific services for homeless youth intersecting populations (CHSP, 2022).

Macro-Level Problem Statement: There are youth in the United States that are homeless.

Macro-Level Problem Description: Each year, an estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults experience homelessness, of which 700,000 are unaccompanied minors, meaning they are not part of a family or accompanied by a parent or guardian. On any given night, approximately 41,000 unaccompanied youth ages 13-25 experience homelessness (NCSL, 2022).

Table 5: Macro-level Problem Model

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
Demographic risk factors such as race, pregnant or parenting, and/or sexual orientation.	Youth are homeless in the U.S.	Increased risk for and untreated physical and mental health problems, including suicide.
Children in Foster Care		Increased likelihood of being lured into prostitution.
Human Development		Youth homelessness can result in poor educational outcomes.

Source: (NCSL, 2022)

Contributions to youth homelessness in the United States include: demographic risk factors; children in foster care; and stunted human development (NCSL, 2022).

In a March 2019 report the Congressional Research Service identified demographic risk factors such as a youth’s sexual orientation, sexual activity, school problems, pregnancy and substance use as primary risk factors for youth homelessness. Also noted in the congressional report, females are more likely than males to run away, and among white, black and Hispanic youth, black youth have the highest rates of running away with approximately half of youth running away before the age of 14. Children in foster care face multiple factors that increase their risk of homelessness, including the number of foster care placements, history of running away from placements, and time spent in a group home (NCSL, 2022). Human development also plays a role. Rational decision-making, inhibition, planning and reasoning are not well developed until young people mature, making young people more likely to engage in high-risk behaviors, such as unsafe sexual activity and substance use. Without safe and permanent homes and caring adults, runaway and homeless youth are at even greater risk of engaging in high-risk behaviors or putting themselves in unsafe or risky situations (NCSL, 2022).

The consequences faced by youth experiencing homelessness are vast. Runaway and homeless

youth are vulnerable to multiple threats, including not having their basic food and shelter needs met, untreated mental health disorders, substance use, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection, sexual exploitation (including survival sex to meet basic needs), physical victimization and suicide. According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, one in three teens on the street will be lured into prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home and the American Academy of Pediatrics finds youth experiencing homelessness are twice as likely to attempt suicide as their peers who are not homeless. Also, youth who are homeless often experience a significant disruption in their education due to the transient nature of homelessness (NCSL, 2022).

Project Implementation Plan and Scope of Work

The implementation plan consisted of researching the YHDP and 3 CCPs, from Montana, Ohio, and Hawaii, in order to determine the best practices that may be implemented locally. Additionally, partnering agencies were contacted for their most current data on intersecting homeless youth populations. Once the data was collected, it was submitted to the data analyst to support the Needs Statement of the local CCP. Once the research phase was complete the findings were synthesized into a presentation for the benefit of the CHSP. An assessment survey was developed to determine knowledge gained by the agency.

Capstone participants would include the CHSP Program Coordinator who is an author of the CCP and a reviewer and approver of the capstone project recommendations. The Program Coordinator oversaw the project, providing guidance and research material such as specific CCP. The findings were presented to the Program Coordinator for an initial review.

Resources

Resources needed for this project included access to program documents, time with local CCP co-author, participation in Youth System meetings. Program documents included CCPs, HUD YHDP documents, and the local CoC governing charter. Time was spent with agency personnel, especially CCP co-author, to discuss and understand details of the YHDP. Time was also spent attending Youth Systems meetings to have a better understanding of how the community all contributed to the development of the local CCP. Lastly, resources included contacts from partnering agencies that provided current data on intersecting populations.

Challenges

Challenges included time management and communication. The project schedule required time adjustments due to timing and pace of the development of the CCP. Not all planned activities were possible and were revised as the project progressed. Another challenge was communication with the various organizations that were contacted for data collection. Responses were not all in a timely manner, did not

always contain the information requested, and some did not respond at all.

Scope of Work

A scope of work developed for the capstone. The scope included specific activities, deliverables, and associated timelines. Five phases were developed including selection of the Capstone project, project planning, project implementation, project assessment and finally presenting the final project findings and recommendations. Capstone activities were initiated in September 2021 and were completed in May 2022. Multiple activities and associated deliverables are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Capstone Scope of Work

Phase		Activity	Deliverable	Timeline
1	Select Capstone Project	Discuss capstone project ideas with mentor and agency staff	Generate a list of capstone project ideas	9/21
		Discuss capstone project ideas with mentor and agency staff	Submit a list of ideas and final project option to mentor for review and approval	10/21
2	Plan project	Collect program documents and develop scope of work	Submit Scope of Work to mentor for approval	11/15/21
3	Implement project	Research “best practices” and different approaches used in Coordinated Community Plans	Submit findings to mentor for review and approval	1/15/22
		Identify and collect secondary data for CHSP CCP application (e.g. intersecting populations.)	Submit collected data to mentor	1/31/22
		Develop summary of professional experience	Submit summary to mentor	2/28/22
		Conduct review of Draft Final local CCP	Summary of Draft Final local CCP for review	3/31/22
4	Assess project	Conduct Project Assessment	Survey questionnaire from mentor and co-mentor	4/15/22
5	Present	Present research findings to mentor and co-mentor	Presentation via Google Slides	4/29/22
		Present at Capstone Festival	Final Capstone Festival presentation!	5/13/22

Project Assessment Plan

Outcomes

An assessment plan was developed to understand the effectiveness of the project. The expected immediate outcome was to provide the CHSP with knowledge from the conducted research and the perspective of an individual who works with the target population and who can easily speak to the challenges faced by homeless youth and the systems that serve them. An intermediate-term indirect result would be for the researched best practices and recommendations to be included in the local YHDP and CCP. A possible long-term, indirect result would be an increase to services to local homeless youth.

Table 7. Immediate project outcome (short-term) and potential, indirectly related results (intermediate and long term).

Short-Term Outcome	Intermediate-Term	Long-Term
Increase agency's knowledge on best practices for homeless youth services.	Inclusion of identified best practices in the local YHDP and CCP.	Increase in services for homeless youth 18-24.

Assessment Plan

The project assessment measure was based on how effectively the information from the research was conveyed. The assessment method survey (Appendix B) consisted of five questions to be answered on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 was the highest possible score and 1 the lowest. Feedback was also provided for each question. The assessment questions were focused on the content, organization, and delivery of findings and recommendation to the CHSP.

Findings, Assessment Results, Recommendations, Conclusions

Findings

Three similar goals were identified and selected among the reviewed CCPs including housing, education, and social emotional wellbeing. Specific objectives and action steps were identified as having potential to benefit the local population. This was determined in part based on professional experience working with the target population. Table 8 below summarizes the findings including objectives and proposed actions that would help to advance each goal.

Table 8. Project findings

		CCPs			
Goals	Objectives	Montana	Hawaii	Ohio	Professional Experience
Housing	Emergency Shelter	Prioritize of Funding	Extended Stay		Need for ES with more services.
	Alternative Emergency Housing	Considers AirBnB			
	Transitional Housing		Extensive wraparound services	Service intensive	Clients specifically request mental health and other services
	Permanent Housing	Central Housing Directory			Clients not able to find affordable housing.
Educational	Educational Supports	Debt-free community college			Clients need academic support (tutor) at home.
Social Emotional Wellbeing	Training	Develop training webinars			Training/ Re-training for service providers.
	Trauma Informed Approach				Enforcement of rules.

Goal 1: Housing

The goal of housing was addressed by all researched CCPs with numerous objectives identified including emergency shelters, alternative emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing.

The Montana CCP shows emphasis for youth-specific emergency shelters where they acknowledge that temporary shelters are not a solution but an essential piece of the Continuum of Care. A related action step was to prioritize YHDP funds to increase emergency shelters and crisis housing beds. Montana also planned to investigate an AirBnB emergency shelter model as an alternative to traditional shelters (Montana Continuum of Care Coalition, 2020). The Hawaii CCP provides a statement from a homeless youth where it is pointed out that a tent in a park or on the beach offers more stability, privacy, and comfort than a shelter where they are asked to leave early morning, don't have anywhere to store their possessions, can't bring their dog (a major barrier for many youth who have strong emotional attachments to their dog) and have to leave back to the streets after numerous days. To this end, the Hawaii CCP suggests that emergency shelters have policies that allow 24/7 access, and provide shelter until a more permanent solution can be found (Partners in Care, 2020). Likewise, professional experience with the local population identified the need for more services or amenities associated with the emergency shelter. The local population indicated a need for an emergency shelter with a washer and dryer, with more flexible entry and exit times, and for temporary storage of possessions.

In the area of transitional housing Hawaii discusses the need for extensive supportive and wraparound services. The CCP acknowledges that youth who have been homeless need support with independent living skills, adhering to housing policies, and meeting education and employment goals (Partners in Care, 2020). Ohio planned on using YHDP funding to support transitional housing which would provide youth a safe and secure place to live for up to 2 years. Transitional housing would include on site intensive services that will be individualized to meet the unique needs of the homeless youth population

(Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, 2020). Residents of local transitional housing expressed the need for more services to be included in the program. They have expressed the need for mental health services, assistance with finances, assistance with locating housing, and social or community based activities. Although each resident comes from a different background and circumstances, they all have the need for specifically tailored services to meet their individual needs.

In the area of permanent housing, the Montana CCP discussed the need for increased market-rate housing options and landlord incentives to house youth. To achieve this objective, Montana would create a central directory including a catalog of fair housing priced rentals to facilitate securing a residence for homeless youth. The directory would also include landlords who are open to working with the target population (Montana Continuum of Care Coalition, 2020). Local homeless youth have expressed that finding affordable housing in the area is an incredibly difficult challenge. Typically, only a room in a shared apartment is financially feasible based on average income levels and only limited options exist.

Goal 2: Education

In the area of education, Montana proposed to gain a better understanding of the local community college model for debt-free college for foster youth who experience homelessness. The CCP proposed utilization and expansion of that model to include debt-free college for all youth experiencing homelessness. Additionally, Montana's action steps included providing professional development workshops for school counselors on how to help homeless students access post-secondary options and an increased awareness among youth about post-secondary options including college and vocational education (Montana Continuum of Care Coalition, 2020). The residents of the local transitional housing program have demonstrated difficulty navigating online classes and with their academic workload. It would be beneficial to the local homeless youth population to incorporate academic support to students such as a tutor as part of available services.

Goal 3: Social Emotional Wellbeing

Under the goal of supporting and augmenting social emotional wellbeing for homeless youth, the objectives of training and trauma informed approach were identified.

The Montana CCP discussed the need to increase the role of community partners in improving the social and emotional well-being of youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness. This would in part be achieved by creating a central training and webinar library where all training materials could be found in one location and would facilitate training and retraining requirements. This training would help service providers to understand how to approach clients with a trauma informed approach when working with youth and the many circumstances that have contributed to the homelessness (Montana Continuum of Care Coalition, 2020). Locally, there is a need for readily available training materials and processes for service providers and community partners. A wide range of types of trainings would augment and facilitate the ability to provide services to the local population.

Trauma-informed care is a strengths-based service delivery approach that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma. Trauma informed care emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment (SAMHSA, 2014). Under the objective of trauma informed care, the local CCP prioritizes low barriers to housing and shelters, including less stressful rules in shelters, to support social emotional wellbeing. The CCP suggests “less stressful rules” are needed. However, it is recommended in this report that the local CCP consider that rules and structure are valuable, and it is equally important to consider how the rules are enforced or managed. For example, there is value in having the skill to recognize when a simple rule infraction can be addressed with a verbal warning, and when a rule violation calls for documentation or a follow up with disciplinary action.

Assessment Results

Survey respondents conveyed that the professional experience was successfully integrated into the research, findings, and recommendations. The analysis, professional experience, and recommendations were presented in a manner that was easy to understand which allowed the respondents to gain insight into the project findings. The consistent workflow produced an organized presentation of information. The professional experience provided a great deal of insight and perspective and would be used in part to implement the YHDP. Although there were challenges in aligning the timeframes of the project and the CCP development, the information obtained was helpful in moving the CHSP forward. Final assessment survey scoring and feedback included in Appendix C.

Project strengths and successes included researching and identifying methodologies and best practices from other states' CCP to identify those that would be applicable and beneficial locally. Another strength of the project was that the information presented was well received and the agency stated that it would, in part, augment the YHDP.

Challenges faced included changes that occurred during project implementation. Coordination of timing and communication with others, and other projects, proved to be difficult. There were numerous instances where timing of the YHDP and CCP did not stay in line and correspond with the timing and implementation of the capstone project. This limited the scope of the project.

Recommendations

Recommendations to the agency were made based on the findings. Recommendations included modeling action steps from all three CCPs. Within the objective of emergency shelters and alternative emergency shelters, it was recommended to prioritize YHDP funding towards creating more shelter space with flexibilities to allow for extended stay, flexible exit and entry times, and to include services or

amenities such as on site washer and dryer, and temporary storage of personal effects. Investigation of the AirBnB model was recommended as an alternative to traditional emergency shelters, which might provide additional options in this extremely high real estate market. Recommendations for transitional housing included inclusion of personalized, wrap-around services for the transitional home program, with a special emphasis on required mental health counseling for residents. In the area of permanent housing, it was recommended to develop a directory of available, affordable, permanent housing options including landlords who are open to working with the target population. Within the area of education, it was recommended to investigate the possibility of a debt free local community college option for homeless youth. Additionally, academic recommendations included in home tutor support. A centralized training and webinar library site was recommended to be developed for all local service providers and staff to access. Inclusion of trauma informed care would be available for all service providers. It was also recommended to consider causes of stress in the transitional housing environment. Specifically, it was recommended to consider that rules, in and of themselves, are not necessarily stressful, but to consider that how rules are enforced could be the cause of a stressful environment.

Often, policy makers in our country are not the same individuals as those who have “boots on the ground” who are directly implementing those policies. Sometimes this creates a disconnect between the high level policy view and the practical need and ability to implement. This project’s potential contribution to the macro-level problem of youth homelessness in the United States was to act as a bridge between these two areas. The findings and recommendations were based on first hand experience and contributed towards a plan developed to fulfill policy. The findings and recommendations would hopefully allow for the creation of realistic CCP objectives and action steps that allow for ease of implementation and fulfill practical needs of the population with the ultimate goal of reducing youth homelessness.

Conclusion

This capstone project experience has provided many, many insights. Firstly, although not directly part of the capstone itself but indirectly involved in my everyday workings at the internship, was the challenge of changing professions after over 20 years in the food service industry to an office environment. Knowledge was gained daily in the areas of office edicate, office communication, office equipment (multi-function device!), software use, and the list goes on. Learning how to plan and coordinate with other individuals was also a new experience that was essential to planning for the capstone. Upon starting the internship, I had already been working as a service provider for homeless youth for over a year. In planning for the capstone, I knew I wanted to somehow incorporate this experience into my project but didn't yet know how that might be integrated. When first discussing capstone ideas with my mentor and the possibility of a project involving the YHDP, we realized that could be a perfect opportunity to involve my experience from working directly with homeless youth.

One of the most important insights I gained from the year-long capstone process was that coordination of timing and communication with others, and other projects, is very difficult. There were numerous instances where timing of the YHDP and CCP (as being moved forward by the agency) did not stay in line and correspond with the timing and implementation of the capstone project. Although there were regular meetings with the mentor, co-mentor, and stakeholders, the lesson I learned was that schedules don't always align and communication to keep schedules aligned proved to be quite difficult. That said, flexibility was also required as the original project scope was altered several times to adjust for schedule changes that were occurring.

The single most noticeable area of personal growth was in my confidence level. The process of researching, planning, implementing, and assessing a year long project was relatively new to me. Initially, the idea seemed quite daunting. Also daunting was the idea of reading and understanding numerous, long

and complex documents on a topic I was not familiar with. With time I began to have more confidence in the capstone process and the tasks began to feel less difficult than previous. The progress contributed to a gradually increasing sense of confidence and accomplishment.

The internship experiences that contributed the most to professional growth and contributed to learning goals was the time spent working with the staff from CSUB's Community Human Engagement while they managed Project RoomKey (PRK) project, as well as participating in the Recreational Vehicle (RV) encampment project.

Project RoomKey was a large, collaborative effort to provide shelter to homeless people with pre-existing chronic illness. The goal of the project was to provide hotel rooms to homeless people who would be most vulnerable to the potentially deadly consequences of contracting COVID-19. Working with and shadowing the case managers over numerous months allowed me to gain great insight into the daily tasks required to operate a large scale project such as this one. I had the opportunity to observe case managers facilitate group meetings, participate in the intake assessment process, and work directly with the clients to ensure program success. The work with the Project RoomKey staff allowed me to take part in a positive collaboration where the project goals were achieved.

The RV encampment project was a great opportunity to work independently with a clear vision and understanding of the problem, goal, and solution. The problem was that there was a large population of homeless individuals living in RVs or other vehicles that were broken down, had unpaid tickets, and lacked registration. If these individuals were to get violations for any of these issues, they would potentially, and likely, lose their only shelter and possessions. The project goal was to achieve a functional and "street-legal" status for the vehicles providing the homeless individuals more security towards achieving a permanent housing status. The RV encampment responsibilities were to coordinate with the project participants to ensure mechanical issues were fixed, parking tickets were paid, emission tests were done, and

vehicle registration was completed. Working independently, with little supervision or oversight from the internship organization allowed me to prove to myself that I am capable of this type of work. I completed this project with accolades from my agency team and sincere gratitude from the population I helped.

The advice I would give to another student who might begin at my internship site would be to put in as many hours as possible in order to learn the culture of the organization, to not be intimidated by the work or type of work or any thoughts of self doubt, and to try to enjoy the time at the internship because it will pass faster than previously thought.

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[Appendix](#)

Appendix A - Stakeholders for the Local CoC YHDP

Type of Stakeholder	Name of Stakeholder	Collaboration
CoC/ESG Homelessness Program	Coalition of Homeless Services Providers	YHDP Lead Agency; convenes all key stakeholders and supports the YAB throughout development and implementation of the Coordinated Community Plan to end youth homelessness; supports YAB recruitment and growth; oversees administrative functions of YHDP.
CoC/ESG Homelessness Program	City of Salinas	Participate in the planning and implementation of the Coordinated Community Plan to end youth homelessness; provide program support as ESG recipient; participate in needs analysis and community planning process.
CoC/ESG Homelessness Program	Central Coast Center for Independent Living	RRH Provider; support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness.
CoC/ESG Homelessness Program	Community Homeless Solutions	Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness; provide emergency shelter and PSH.
CoC/ESG Homelessness Program	Sun Street Centers	SLE/TH Provider; support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness.
CoC/ESG Homelessness Program	YWCA	Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness; provide emergency shelter and PSH.
CoC/ESG Homelessness Program	Bay Area Community Services	support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness; provide emergency shelter.

CoC/ESG Homelessness Program	Community Human Services	CoC policy/program decision maker; support and participate in YHDP governance; serve as advisors to the YAB; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness; provide emergency shelter, RRH and TH to youth.
Child Welfare Agency	Monterey County Department of Social Services - Family and Children's Services	CoC policy/program decision maker; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness; align child welfare and PCWA system with the goals and activities of YHDP; support and participate in YHDP governance; provide supportive services for YYA.
Youth-Led Advisory Group	Youth for Action (Y4A)	The leaders in the planning and implementation of the Coordinated Community Plan to end youth homelessness; participate in needs analysis and community planning process; serve as program evaluators for YHDP programs; support and participate in YHDP governance.
Local Government Agency	Monterey County Board of Supervisors	CoC policy/program decision maker; support and participate in YHDP governance.
Local Government Agency	Monterey County Health Department	CoC policy/program decision maker; support and participate in YHDP governance.
Local Government Agency	San Benito County Health and Human Services Agency	CoC policy/program decision maker; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness; align San Benito HHS system with the goals and activities of YHDP; support and participate in YHDP governance; provide supportive services for YYA.
Local Government Agency	City of Seaside	CoC policy/program decision maker; support and participate in YHDP governance.

Local Government Agency	City of King	CoC policy/program decision maker; support and participate in YHDP governance.
Local Government Agency	City of Gonzales	CoC policy/program decision maker; support and participate in YHDP governance.
Local Government Agency	City of Hollister	CoC policy/program decision maker; support and participate in YHDP governance.
Local Government Agency	City of San Juan Bautista	CoC policy/program decision maker; support and participate in YHDP governance.
Local Education Agency or State Education Agency	National Center for Youth Law	Have Liaisons in Schools; Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness; provide services.
Local Education Agency or State Education Agency	Monterey County Office of Education	CoC policy/program decision maker; support and participate in YHDP governance; serve as advisors to the YAB; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness.
Local Education Agency or State Education Agency	San Benito County Office of Education	Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness.

Public Housing Authority	Housing Authority of the County of Monterey	CoC policy/program decision maker; support and participate in YHDP governance; provide HCVouchers.
WIOA Boards and Employment Agencies	Equus Workforce Solutions	Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness; serves youth through a youth specific job program.
WIOA Boards and Employment Agencies	CSWD (SBC)	Participate in the planning and implementation of the Coordinated Community Plan to end youth homelessness; provide program support as system-involved youth provider; participate in needs analysis and community planning process.
Juvenile and Adult Corrections	Monterey County Probation	Participate in the planning and implementation of the Coordinated Community Plan to end youth homelessness; provide program support as system-involved youth provider; participate in needs analysis and community planning process.
Juvenile and Adult Corrections	San Benito County Probation	Participate in the planning and implementation of the Coordinated Community Plan to end youth homelessness; provide program support as system-involved youth provider; participate in needs analysis and community planning process.
Juvenile and Adult Corrections	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation	Participate in the planning and implementation of the Coordinated Community Plan to end youth homelessness; provide program support as system-involved youth provider; participate in needs analysis and community planning process.
Private Funded Organization - contracted by Juvenile and Adult Corrections	Geo Group	Participate in the planning and implementation of the Coordinated Community Plan to end youth homelessness; provide program support as system-involved youth provider; participate in needs analysis and community planning process.

Non Profit Youth Organization	Youth Alliance	youth service provider; support and participate in YHDP governance; serve as advisors to the YAB; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness,
Non Profit Youth Organization	Epicenter	youth service provider; support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness.
Non Profit Youth Organization	Rancho Cielo	Support and participate in our Youth System and Meetings.
Affordable Housing Providers	CHISPA Housing	Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness; CoC policy/program decision maker.
Local and State Law Enforcement	Monterey PD	Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness.
Local and State Law Enforcement	Salinas PD	Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness
Faith-Based Institutions	Salvation Army	Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness.
Faith-Based Institutions	Victory Mission	Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness; CoC policy/program decision maker.
Early Childhood Development and Child Care Providers	First 5 Monterey	Participated in the 100 Day Challenge to end youth homelessness; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness.

Early Childhood Development and Child Care Providers	First 5 San Benito	Participated in the 100 Day Challenge to end youth homelessness; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness.
Institutions of Higher Education	Monterey Peninsula College	Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness.
Institutions of Higher Education	California State University, Monterey Bay	Support and participate in YHDP governance; serve as advisors to the YAB; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness; provide outreach in Monterey County.
Institutions of Higher Education	Hartnell College	Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness.
Local Advocacy, Research, and Philanthropic Organizations	Student Housing Coalition	Advocate for student housing; Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness.
Local Advocacy, Research, and Philanthropic Organizations	Community Foundation of Monterey County	Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness; CoC policy/program decision maker.
Local Advocacy, Research, and Philanthropic Organizations	California Rural Legal Assistance	Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness; CoC policy/program decision maker.
Local	Monterey Bay	Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the

Advocacy, Research, and Philanthropic Organizations	Economic Partnership	planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness; CoC policy/program decision maker; serve as advisor to the YAB.
Local Advocacy, Research, and Philanthropic Organizations	Monterey Peninsula Foundation	Support and participate in YHDP governance; participate in the planning and preparation of the community plan to end youth homelessness; CoC policy/program decision maker.

Source: (CHSP, 2022)

Appendix B- Assessment Method Survey

Scoring:

Response scale: 1 (Poor) - 2 (Unsatisfactory) - 3 (Satisfactory) - 4 (Good) - 5 (Very Good)

1. To what extent was personal/professional experience incorporated into the multiple CCP presentation?
2. How effective was the delivery of the presentation of researched information and professional experience evaluation?
3. How well was the presented information organized?
4. How much of a contribution was the professional experience evaluation to the CCP process?
5. To what extent did this Capstone Project impact CHSP?

Appendix C - Assessment Survey Results

Response scale: 1 (Poor) - 2 (Unsatisfactory) - 3 (Satisfactory) - 4 (Good) - 5 (Very Good)

1. To what extent was personal/professional experience incorporated into the multiple CCP presentation? **Score: 4**

The professional experience was found to be successfully integrated into the research, findings, and recommendations.

2. How effective was the delivery of the presentation of researched information and professional experience evaluation? **Score: 3.5**

The project was presented in a manner which allowed the respondents to gain insight into the findings.

3. How well was the presented information organized? **Score:3.5**

The consistent workflow produced an organized presentation of information.

4. How much of a contribution was the professional experience evaluation to the CCP process? **Score: 4**

The professional experience provided a great deal of insight and perspective and will be used in part to implement the Youth Homeless Demonstration Program.

5. To what extent did this Capstone Project impact CHSP? **Score: 2**

Although there were challenges in aligning the timeframes of the project and the Coordinated Community Plan development, the information obtained was helpful in moving the Coalition forward.

Total Score: 20

Final score Scale: 1-5 (poor); 6-10 (unsatisfactory); 11 – 15 (Satisfactory); 15 – 20 (Good); 21 – 25 (Outstanding)