Women Experiencing Homelessness in Higher Education: Two Innovative Initiatives

Wednesday, March 18, 1-2:15pm EST
HAVE A QUESTION?
This webinar is for you. Enter your questions in the questions pane and click ‘Send’.

RECORDING & HANDOUTS
An archive of this webinar and all materials will be posted here.

If you’ve signed up for this webinar, you will receive a link to the recording in an email after the webinar is over.
HELLO!

I am Jillian Sitjar
Program Manager, Higher Education
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COVID-19 and Homelessness: Strategies for Schools and Early Learning Programs
https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/covid19-and-homelessness/

Survey: What Does Your School, School District, or Program Need to Help Homeless Children & Youth?
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9VHYF6H

Stay tuned: COVID-19 and Homelessness in Higher Education
SchoolHouse Connection works to **overcome homelessness through education**. We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

- **Website**
- Federal and state policy advocacy
- Q&A from our inbox
- Webinars and implementation tools
- Youth leadership and scholarships
Participants from this webinar will learn:

1. The **distinct challenges and needs** that women experiencing homelessness face in obtaining postsecondary education.

2. Initiatives at **Our Friends Place**, a transitional living and outreach program in Dallas, Texas, that helps support young women experiencing homelessness pursue and maintain their educational goals.

3. **Services and resources** that are available for single mothers at **Misericordia University in Dallas, Pennsylvania**.
### WHY HIGHER EDUCATION

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Jobs</strong></th>
<th><strong>Beyond High School</strong></th>
<th><strong>Afford Housing</strong></th>
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<td>Over 95% of jobs created since 2010 have gone to college-educated workers.</td>
<td>By 2020, 65% of all jobs will require education beyond high school.</td>
<td>Postsecondary education is necessary for a job that pays enough to afford housing and avoid homelessness.</td>
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<th><strong>Cost</strong></th>
<th><strong>Health &amp; Well-Being</strong></th>
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<td>The cost of attending college has skyrocketed over the last several decades with federal pell grants not keeping pace.</td>
<td>High school and college graduation are linked to other important indicators of health and well-being.</td>
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16% university students
17% community college students

16% of four-year students and 17% of two-year college students respondents replied they experienced homelessness within the last year (Hope Center)
Pregnancy and parenthood are common among youth experiencing homelessness

13-17
44%

18-25
10%

FEMALES
are pregnant or a parent

13-17
3%

18-25
18%

MALES
have a pregnant partner or are a parent

(Source: VoYC Brief Youth Survey)
More than one in five college students—or 22 percent of all undergraduates—are parents,

Of the 3.8 million students who are raising children while in college, roughly 2.7 million (or 70 percent) are mothers.
OFP
Programming
Overview
Our Friends Place (OFP) is a Dallas-area non-profit that has transitional living and outreach programs dedicated to helping young women break the generational cycles of abuse, neglect, poverty and homelessness through empowering self-reliance and independence.
Our Friends Place Overview

- Our programs provide young women who have experienced abuse, neglect, poverty, and homelessness an opportunity to feel supported in a secure environment where they can learn the skills they need for self-sufficiency.

- For over 30 years, OFP has served young women in the Dallas area. First as a group home for young women in foster care, then as a TLC, and, now, with TLCs and an outreach program.

1992 - OFP opened its first Transitional Living Center (TLC) which was also the first of its kind in the North Texas Region.

2015 - OFP opened its second TLC.

2017 - started an outreach program called SOAR to Success to connect with young women at-risk of homelessness to help them build skills and connect with resources to prevent homelessness.
Demographics Served in 2019

Ages Served

- 12-17 years old
- 18-24 years old
- 25+ years old

Race/Ethnicity

- Hispanic/Latinx
- Other
- Asian American
- Black/African American
- White

80% Female
Transitional Living Centers

• Women 18-24 years old
  • Young adults

• At-risk of entering/remaining in the cycle(s) of...
  • Abuse
  • Neglect
  • Poverty
  • Homelessness

• Not Pregnant or Parenting

• Willing and able to work and complete educational programming
  • Education looks different for each young woman

Service Delivery

• Case Management
• Life Skill Groups
• Review Process and Transitions
TLC: Life Skills

Focus on skills around:

- Building Resources
- Employment
- Education
- Financial Literacy
- Social-Emotional Health
- Safe, Affordable Housing
- Goal Setting/Future Planning

Delivery

- Table Topic for soft skills
  - Communication, self-care, wants vs. needs.
- Skills Lesson for hard skills
  - Budgeting, mental health, maintaining employment.
SOAR to Success

Building...
- Strengths
- Opportunities
- Allies
- Resiliency

...to prevent homelessness

Focus on skills around:
- Building Resources
- Employment
- Education
- Financial Literacy
- Social-Emotional Health
- Safe, Affordable Housing
- Goal Setting/Future Planning
SOAR: Discovery

**Delivery**
- One-off or series of life skills lessons
- Work with partner agency to determine needed topics

**Who?**
- Young women ages 12-24
- At risk of homelessness, abuse, neglect, or living in poverty
SOAR: Workshops

**Delivery**
- On-going small group life skills education and mentoring.
- During school days, after school, or partner agency’s availability

**Who?**
- Youth ages 12-24, Adults 24+
- Adult allies:
  - Parents, staff, or mentors who impact the lives of youth or adults in SOAR to Success
SOAR: Taking Flight

**Delivery**
- Eight sessions, 2-3 hours each.
- Activity-based, group work designed by OFP.
  - Layer skills and tools to create stable, secure future.
- Space away from chaos to focus on building stable foundation.
- On-site in office or at partner agency.

**Who?**
- Young women age 18+
- Struggling with stability
Partners

• Counseling services
• Other Agencies/Organizations
• Community Colleges
• Mentoring Programs
• High Schools
• After School Programs
• Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance Continuum of Care
• Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS)
Successes: Transitional Living Center

A Few 2019 Graduates:

• While still working on her associate’s degree, one resident moved into her own apartment, took on a management role at her job, and is still in that same apartment.

• Another resident, moved into her own apartment after completing her associate’s degree and has built a successful photography business.

• Another resident moved into an apartment with a roommate and is still in that apartment, putting money into her savings, and was excited to start taking classes at a community college again in January!

Assessment results from 2019:

• 86% increased their savings – average amount in savings accounts, 2019: $340.

• 94% enrolled and attended educational or vocational courses.

• 100% were actively employed at least part-time.
Successes: SOAR to Success

450% growth since 2017

Quotes/Stories from Participants

• “The time management exercise helped me to realize that I’m tardy to everything...I got a planner to better schedule myself.”

• “At the beginning of the group, I was afraid to fail. I had a lot of pressure on me from others. Now, I know I can use that fear of failing as my motivator.”

• “Before this group, I didn’t think I would graduate High School and I did. I didn’t think I could talk to my manager and I did. I didn’t think I would ever get to go to college and I’m going to. I didn’t think I could do all that. I don’t feel like I have that barrier anymore.”

Assessment results from 2019

• 100% of students participating in SOAR: Discovery stayed in school throughout the duration of the program and showed an increased in more than one skill needed to prevent homelessness.

• 73% of young women who started SOAR: Taking Flight completed the intensive program.

• 80% of youth and adult allies in a SOAR: Workshops class reported an increase in their knowledge and skills of the topic presented.
Challenges

• Time (SOAR to Success)—intense growth in a short period of time
• Space (TLC)—we can only serve 18 young women in our housing at a time but we often have a much higher demand.
• Not Enough Affordable Services
  • Mental Health
  • Basic Needs
  • Health Care
  • Affordable Housing
THE RUTH MATTHEWS BOURGER

Women with Children

PROGRAM

Presented by Program Director Katherine Pohlidal M.Ed., M.B.A., LPC, CADC
Our mission is to empower single mothers through educational achievement and personal growth...and to ultimately depart from Misericordia University a college graduate, ready to make an impact as a valiant woman, Mulier Fortis.
OUR History

Sister Jean Messaros
Featured on Today

Watch video
TWO Generations

Utilizing a two-generational model for holistic success
Student Profile

- First-generation college student
- Mother of up to three children
- At poverty level or brink of poverty (has grown up in poverty or working poor)
- Utilizes subsidies to make ends meet (SNAP, WIC, TANF, ELRC)
- Zero Expected Family Contribution (EFC) to attend college
STUDENT Requirements

- Must be full-time, single student mother (12 credits or more)
- Work minimum of 10 hours per week
- Maintain good academic standing with the university and WWC program
- Adhere to WWC Community Living Contract and Civility Code
- Maintain all subsidy requirements including documentation and audits
- Must have primary physical custody of child(ren) with documentation
- Complete criminal background check and Pennsylvania Child Abuse Clearance
- Must have a car and driver’s license (the program will assist if needed)
- Responsible for tuition (scholarships will be awarded to help)
- 10 community service hours per year
FINANCIAL AID

Each student mother is reviewed for eligibility for loans, grants and scholarships through the Office of Financial Aid.
INTEGRATED SYSTEMS

Collaboration is essential between the university, public programs, funding sources, and community relationships.

INTEGRATED SYSTEMS SUPPORTING A TWO GENERATIONAL MODEL IN HIGHER EDUCATION
The Ruth Matthews Bourger Women With Children Program at Misericordia University

MISERICORDIA UNIVERSITY:
- Free Housing from the WWC Program
- Free Books and Academic Supplies
- WWC Staff Support
- Academic and Career Support
- Scholarship and Financial Aid
- Federal Work Study

FUNDING:
- Corporate Grants
- Private Foundations
- Brenda Byrnes Bourger Trust
- Private Donors
- Annual Fundraising Initiatives
- State Grant Funding

PUBLIC SOCIAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS
- County Assistance Office
- Health Insurance
- SNAP/Food Stamp Program
- Subsidized Child Care
- Head Start Program
- WIC
- C.O. Winberg Food Pantry
- Community Mental Health Providers
- Priority Placement for Subsidized Child Care

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS
- Civic Groups
- WWC Advisory Board
- Student Organizations
- Student and Community Volunteers
- Local School Districts & 4-Star Day Care

OVERVIEW | HOW IT WORKS | INTEGRATED SYSTEMS | SUPPORT SYSTEMS | OUTCOMES
MISERICORDIA University

- Misericordia University waives the admission free for WWC Candidates
- Free housing, books and school supplies
- WWC staff support
- Scholarships and financial aid
- Emergency Funds for immediate needs (medications, clothing, toiletries)
- House and program meetings, individual meetings, and Facebook group
- Wi-Fi, computer loan program, on-site printers and study areas
- AKC Certified pet therapy dog for emotional support of families
- Children's libraries in each home and dedicated play areas
- On-site washers/dryers
- Access to all on-campus amenities and activities (gym, pool, cultural events)
- Student Success Center (on-campus tutoring and academic support)
- Career Services
PUBLIC Programs

- Head Start program
- County Assistance Office (health insurance & SNAP benefits)
- Subsidized childcare (priority placement)
- WIC (food, education, and support for women, infants and children)
- CEO/Weinberg Food Bank
- Community mental health providers
FUNDING Sources

- Corporate grants
- Private foundations
- Brenda Blythe Bourger Trust
- Private donors
- Annual fundraising initiatives
- State grant funding
COMMUNITY Relationships

- Civic groups
- WWC advisory board
- Service organizations
- Student and community volunteers
- Local school districts and 4-star daycare
SUPPORT Systems
Fostering mental, physical and emotional wellness
WELL-BEING Highlights

WELLNESS  PROTECTION  SKILLS
CHILD PROGRAM Highlights

CARE

ENRICHMENT

FACILITIES
PROGRAM Outcomes

A review of demonstrated student successes
THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!

Sister Jean Messaros, M.S.
Vice-President

Katherine Pohlidal
M.Ed., M.B.A., LPC, CADC
Program Director

Sandy Johnson, M.S.
Coordinator

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Resources

- Tip Sheets for Helping Homeless Youth Succeed in College
  - Including a parenting one!
- Higher Education Webinars
- The Hope Center Report - College and University Basic Needs Insecurity
- Chapin Hall - Missed Opportunities: Pregnant and Parenting Youth Experiences of Homelessness
- Aspen Institute & IWPR - Parents in College by the Numbers
- COVID-19 and Homelessness: Strategies for Schools and Early Learning Programs
  - Survey and upcoming resource about COVID-19 and homelessness in higher education
Questions
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