

PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT: BRIEF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT ON ATTITUDES

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Objectives

In this workshop we will:

- Discuss a community engagement project where undergraduate students interacted with homeless clients in a health and wellness clinic.
- Describe training needs of student volunteers related to interacting with homeless clients.
- Examine the impact of participation in Project Homeless connect on the attitudes of student volunteers towards homelessness before and after the event.

Background

- 2018 Point in Time Count
 - *Annual count of all the people in a community who are experiencing homelessness*
 - *Determine how many are single, families, veterans, youth...*
 - *Where they live?*
 - Shelters (Emergency)
 - Transitional housing
 - Doubled up
 - Street
 - Car
 - Abandoned building



Why Do the Point-in-Time Counts?

- The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses information from the local point-in-time counts in the congressionally-mandated Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (AHAR)
 - *This report is meant to inform Congress about the number of people experiencing homelessness in the U.S. and the effectiveness of HUD's programs and policies in decreasing those numbers.*
- On the local level, point-in-time counts help communities plan services and programs to appropriately address local needs, measure progress in decreasing homelessness, and identify strengths and gaps in a community's current homelessness assistance system.

Project Homeless Connect

- Mobile Project Homeless Connect is designed to provide needed services to the homeless of Mobile and Baldwin Counties.
- Began in 2014 - One stop shop for homeless clients Mobile & Baldwin Counties
- Housing, employment, state ID, voter registration, legal assistance, food stamps, clothing, food, and more!
- 6th year USA College of Nursing provides Health and Wellness Clinic
- Interdisciplinary teams of students - history and physical exam with referrals
- Navigators to guide/advocate for homeless client



the homeless coalition
Serving Mobile and Baldwin
Counties in Alabama

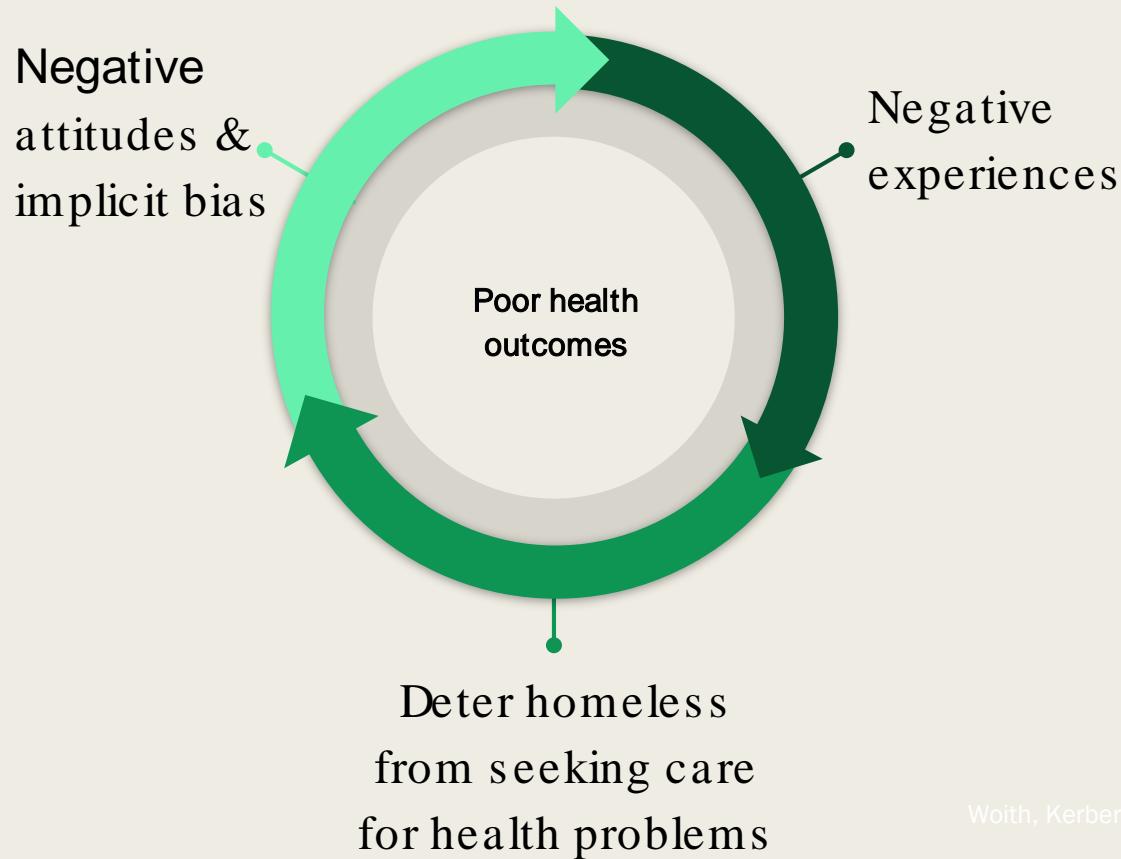


Community Organizations in Clinic

- AIDS Alabama South
- Auburn University Harrison School of Pharmacy
- USA Health/Mitchell Cancer Institute
- Mobile Public Health Department
- Franklin Primary Health (Health/Dental)
- USA Student-Run Free Clinic
- Women's Health
- WIC
- Alta Pointe
- The Journey Detox & Recovery
- USA Family Medicine
- Lions Club
- Lifeguard Ambulance Service



Why Is Student Exposure Important?





Service Learning Approach

- A service learning approach is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates community service with academic instruction, in ways that enhances both student learning and the common good of the community.
- The project consisted of a service component where interprofessional students either:
 - provided health education for the homeless client, or
 - navigated the homeless client through all of the services offered

Why Student Exposure is Important?

- Exposure to different cultures, socioeconomic status, and health disparities better equips future healthcare providers with the knowledge, understanding, and sensitivity to lessen barriers and disparities to healthcare for vulnerable populations (Loewenson & Hunt, 2011).



Preparation for the Experience

- Co-Curricular – as students registered, they were provided with a packet of information to review
- Brief Training – on the day of the event, student groups were led on a walkthrough of the event with special focus on flow and services available

January 25, 2019

- 258 Students (University of South Alabama, Bishop State Community College)
 - Roles: *Navigators or Assessment Teams*
- 3 Residents - USA College of Medicine
- 20 Faculty/Staff Coordinators
- 356 clients total that came to the event
- 145 clients seen at the Health & Wellness clinic



The Study

- IRB approval was received
- Purpose: Assess attitudes of student volunteers pre and post participation as volunteers in health and wellness clinic serving homeless clients
- Methods: Attitudes Towards the Homeless Questionnaire (ATH) pre and post
- Measure: Demographics, 20 questions on attitudes towards the homeless (Likert scale), qualitative questions

Findings

- 105 students completed survey prior to event
- Age: 19 - 67 years of age



Demographics

	n=105	n=(100 %)
Gender		
	Male 15	15 (14)
Race/Ethnicity		
Caucasian	75	75 (71.4%)
African-American	18	18 (17.1%)
Asian	7	7 (6.7%)
Other	5	5 (4.8%)

Procedure/Analysis

- 67 completed post-survey
 - *27 were able to be matched to pre-survey for data analysis*
- Paired Samples t-test
 - *Significant increase in **positive attitudes** towards the homeless between pre and posttest, $t (26) = -2.22, p = .04$*



Item-Level Positive Responses

- Negatively worded questions that people *disagreed with*:

Question 7. Nearly all homeless people are drug addicts.
 $t (26) = -2.53, p = .02$

Question 14. Homelessness is a self-inflicted state.
 $t (26) = -3.02, p = .01$

- Positively worded questions that people *agreed with*:

Question 20. The government should spend more money on providing housing. $t (26) = 2.55, p = .02$

Question 25. The government should spend more money for care of the homeless. $t (26) = 2.79, p = .01$



Qualitative Responses

What did you learn about homelessness from this clinical experience?

"I volunteer at the student run free clinic, many of our clients have problems with drug abuse. Sometimes we blanket judge people because of perceptions, so it was interesting for me to meet so many clients and the majority of them deny using alcohol or drugs at all. That made me feel different about the homeless population."

"I learned that I had bias, I wasn't even really aware of what degree until I had the opportunity to help with this event. Homeless people are not just a bunch of drug addicts looking for a handout. These people were so sweet and grateful to be receiving help. It was a very humbling experience, and I am so grateful to have gotten the chance to participate in the event."

"Homeless individuals are still humans with unique circumstances and require respect, compassion, and love like everyone else."

"Some individuals were once living normal lives just as we are and some life-changing event caused them to lose everything. Very humbling experience"

Qualitative continued

Do you think it is important for students to have experience working with the homeless prior to graduation?

“Yes, it is important to be exposed to a diverse group of patients/clients so you can provide optimal care for each individual you encounter, it is essential for growth and learning.”

“Yes, absolutely. It opened my eyes to things I wouldn’t have seen otherwise. The people I got to work with were SO sweet and appreciative. They deserve care as much as anyone else.”

“Yes, it will change any negative feelings you have toward the homeless.”



Significance to Practice

- The service-learning approach had a positive effect on students' attitudes towards the homeless.
- To prepare a practice ready workforce, faculty need to expose students to the economic, behavioral, social, and environmental determinants of health that are best learned through meaningful community engagement service-learning programs within a positive, supportive, and rewarding environment.

Future Areas of Exploration/Questions

- Psych – trauma/PTSD
- Any ideas from audience?

References

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