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ABSTRACT

During its 8-year history, the federal Adult Education for the Homeless Program (AEH) pioneered new methods of service to adults in need and benefited over 320,000 homeless adults and families. Despite an evaluation that documented program success, funding was rescinded from the 1995 federal budget and never reinstated. AEH programs developed the capability and capacity to improve the lives of homeless families and could be viewed as an important technique for welfare reform. Programs were highly successful in preparing learners for employment and training opportunities. In the process, AEH contributed direct economic benefits to employers and communities and social and financial benefits to homeless individuals and families. AEH programs proved useful in helping adults with disabilities overcome personal and societal obstacles to meet everyday challenges. AEH programs were developed to deal with homelessness in holistic ways, to help adults improve all aspects of their lives. Practitioners worked with homeless service delivery providers to provide AEH students access to homeless services. Loss of dedicated AEH funding caused significant harm to efforts to reach and serve homeless adults and families. Short- and long-term policy options were suggested for consideration by national and state policy makers. (Appendixes include 15 websites of relevance to educators and learners; the article, "Silencing Street Voices" by Sally S. Gabb; and "Learning to Hope" report by Darrel Drury and Judy Koloski.) (YLB)

Adult Education for the Homeless:

A Program in Jeopardy

June 1998

Division of Adult Education & Literacy
US Department of Education

CONTENTS

Executive Summary

During its eight year history the Federal Adult Education for the Homeless (AEH) Program pioneered new methods of service to *most in need* adults. Over 320,000 homeless adults and families benefited from this special program. A national evaluation of the AEH Program was conducted, and the program was judged a success. Despite its documented successes, program funding was rescinded from the 1995 federal budget, and has not been reinstated.

A Program in Jeopardy emphasizes the areas of Family Literacy, Employment, Service to Disabled Adults, and Life Management Skills....the most successful and needed components of the program. It also documents lessons learned from the eight years of experience serving homeless adults and their families, identifies resources for continued service, and provides ideas for possible future directions.

Findings of the report include:

Family Literacy
AEH programs developed the capability and capacity to improve the lives of homeless families. AEH can now be viewed as an important technique for *welfare reform*, helping to ensure that homelessness and poverty do not continue from generation to generation.

Employment
Programs were highly successful in preparing learners for employment and training opportunities. In the process, AEH contributed direct economic benefits to employers and communities, as well as social and financial benefits to homeless individuals and families.

Service to Disabled Adults
AEH programs proved useful in helping disabled adults overcome personal and societal obstacles in order to meet everyday life challenges and develop critical skills.

Life Management Skills
Many homeless persons carry the burden of broken lives: relationships, bodies, minds, communities. AEH programs were developed to deal with homelessness in holistic ways, to help adults improve all aspects of their lives. Practitioners worked with homeless service delivery providers to enhance their systems, and AEH students were able to access homeless services due to referrals and classroom instruction in survival skills.

The report draws ten major conclusions from state performance reports and other related documents:

1. Homelessness is a continuing, pervasive social and economic dilemma.

2. While much is known about homelessness, through research, surveys, data gathering, and documented experience, the public and political will to use this knowledge has been limited.

3. A total of 320,000 adults participated in the AEH Program over the eight years of its existence. In just the last three years, a dozen states served over 4000 homeless adults each.

4. AEH programs, given reasonable financial support, are capable of serving large numbers of adults in need of basic and life skills.

5. Traditional instructional materials typically do not address the specific needs of homeless individuals.

6. Programs that understand homelessness and plan activities to meet the needs of homeless individuals have greater impact than general Adult Education (AE) efforts.

7. Fully funded AEH programs have great potential for addressing changing social needs and conditions, including welfare reform mandates.

8. Services to homeless adults and families cost no more than services in the regular AE program...and are far less expensive than many other public training programs serving homeless persons. In fact, AEH virtually *pays for itself* in reduction of welfare costs and increased tax revenue.

9. Attempts to mainstream services to general AE learning center locations often negate the impact that AEH programs can achieve by providing instruction in shelters, transitional housing and other locations were homeless individuals and families receive services.

10. A review of Adult Education performance reports for Program Year 1996-97 provides evidence that, in all but ten states, AEH programs are in jeopardy. Programs have been vastly reduced or eliminated in states throughout the nation. Federal and State policy makers need to rethink current policies that rely on "mainstreaming" of educational services for homeless adults.

Nine short- and long- term AEH policy options for consideration by Federal and State officials:

In the short-term -

- Existing Even Start, Homeless Children and Youth, and Welfare Reform programs could give priority to providing basic and life skill education to homeless families.
- Current job training programs could provide increased outreach to homeless populations.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development could require that Continuum of Care programs give priority to provisions for basic and life skills services.
- Housing programs could increase their collaboration with adult education programs.
- The Department of Education could provide guidance to states for expanding coordination with homeless service providers.

In the long-term -

- Adult Education Act reauthorization provisions could require that states address service to homeless adults and families in their new State Plans.
- New workforce consolidation legislation could explicitly identify homeless persons as a priority for employment and training services.
- The McKinney Act could be fully funded and reauthorized, including provision for the AEH program.
- The decision to not fund AEH as a separate national program should be reconsidered, based on the evidence that, in 80% of states, AEH programs are no longer supported at meaningful levels.

A Short History of the AEH Program

During its eight year history the Adult Education for the Homeless Program pioneered new methods of service to "most in need" adults. Here are some of the major milestones along the way:

- **1986** National Coalition for the Homeless collaborates with ten other groups to draft a comprehensive relief bill, the Homeless Person's Survival Act, to guide and give substance to a federal role in ending homelessness

- **1987** Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act is signed into law, and the AEH Program is authorized and funded

- **1988** AEH projects begin in all states. A "proxy" funding formula of non-high school graduates is used because no accurate count of homeless adults in need of services is available. 18,000 homeless adults are served in the first program year

- **1989** Congress revises the program's delivery of Federal assistance by changing the grant process to a competitive discretionary system intended to increase accountability and quality. Thirty states are funded

- **1991** Department of Education funds Pelavin Associates, Inc. to conduct a national review of AEH programs

- **1992** AEH funding increases to an all-time high of $9.8 million. Fifty thousand homeless adults are served this year

- **1993 - 95** For the last three year funding cycle, 28 states receive grants. A record 160,000 adults are served during this period

- **1995** National evaluation findings are published by Pelavin: the AEH Program is judged a success. A total of over 320,000 homeless adults have been served. Despite these findings, funding is rescinded from the federal budget by the new Congress

- **1996** Last AEH project shuts down operations under McKinney funding.

About this report....

A Program in Jeopardy is a review of Adult Education for the Homeless program activities and accomplishments largely spoken through the voices and experiences of AEH leaders, directors, teachers and learners. It is not intended to be a detailed report of the AEH Program, though Appendix B does cover the essential findings of the 1995 national AEH review.

This report explores the areas of Family Literacy, Employment, Service to Disabled Adults, and Life Management Skills....these are among the most successful and needed components of any educational effort on behalf of America's homeless. Our primary database is the performance reports of AEH programs during 1993-95, the last sustained effort to serve homeless adult learners. We also document some lessons learned from the eight years of experience serving homeless adults and their families, identify resources for continued service, and provide ideas for possible future directions.

Finally, a recently published article (Appendix A) by a Rhode Island AEH practitioner offers a poignant reminder of what we've lost by *mainstreaming* programs that once gave direct service and hope to tens of thousands of homeless individuals and families each year.

Serving Homeless Families

The Challenge -

For many Americans, the word "homeless" evokes a snapshot of a transient individual. In fact, the picture of homelessness in America is increasingly a family portrait: Children and families make up the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. The Homes for the Homeless organization offers this profile of homeless families they serve in New York City:

- Over half of all homeless children never have lived in their own home.
- Over forty percent of these children have been homeless more than once.
- Most homeless mothers never completed high school or worked to support their family.
- Their children are three times more likely than non-homeless children to be placed in remedial education programs, and four times more likely to drop out of school.

This organization also projects that, while the homeless family population increased substantially between 1981 and 1995, even more dramatic growth may lie ahead. In New York City alone, cuts in AFDC and housing subsidies could potentially force from 30,000 to one hundred thousand families out of their homes.

In a recent publication distributed by the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH), Homelessness in America, Marybeth Shinn and Beth Weitzman estimate that, nationally, 40 percent of people who become homeless do so as members of families. And the National Alliance to End Homelessness found that families with children represent about 35% of the 2 million homeless each year. By any count, families are the fastest growing subgroup among the homeless.

Recent evidence indicates that homelessness is increasing and that demand for services is greater than available resources. In 1996, the U.S. Conference of Mayors' survey of 29 cities found that an average of 24% of requests for shelter by homeless families were denied. In addition, 71% of the cities surveyed registered an increase in demand for shelter, and every city expected requests for emergency shelter to increase next year.

Also, according to the U.S. Department of Education, the number of homeless children and youth has more than doubled since 1987. The Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program receives limited funding and many states are serving only a small portion of their homeless children population. (NCH Study of the Children and Youth program)

The AEH Response:

"When Lena, an abused mother of three small children, arrived at the shelter she was not interested in any help, not even talking about her children or her future. Over time she became very interested in math, a subject which has always caused her problems in school. Her progress was outstanding. She enjoyed reading, so trips were made to the local library for books for Lena and her children. Lena wanted to be a good parent so she began to include her children in all that she was doing. She read to them, taught them how to make crafts she learned to make, become involved in their school work and after-school activities. She read books on parenting and attended a parenting workshop. Each hurdle she mastered gave Lena more and more confidence. Her next goal was to make a home for herself and her children. With help from the AEH project, she found a home and moved from the shelter...but continued to participate in the shelter's GED class. Five months later, Lena has a diploma and a full-time job, and is developing skills in computer use. The homeless program has enabled Lena to find her inner strength and potential, as well as to be a motivator to everyone she meets."
(North Carolina AEH program)

"Since the majority of my homeless clients are single parents, we discuss what they go through being single parents and then we compile a plan of action. Plans include being consistent and organizing one's time so that they can give individualized attention to their children." (Pennsylvania AEH teacher)

A review of the 1993-95 state AEH performance reports provides evidence of program practices that have been successful in meeting the challenges faced by homeless families. Here are a few examples:

Vermont
In this innovative program, 350 parents improved skills such as gaining child custody, use of constructive discipline, and undertaking joint projects with their children.

Kansas
This project gave priority to serving homeless families. Among their many successes were, in the final year:

- 100% of families demonstrated development or improvement of parenting skills
- 92% demonstrated positive interaction between the child and adult
- 92% of families acquired a greater understanding of their child's growth and development
- 77% are more involved in school-sponsored activities such as conferences and field trips.

Colorado
A "Family Morning" program was developed to assist homeless parents to be involved with the children's education and to provide skills training and ideas to help parents fulfill the role of "first and most important teacher" for their children.

Wisconsin
During the last project period, this state served 2800 adults. Over 1100 (42%) received Family Literacy services.

Kentucky
Among the life skills improved by participants were Consumer Education, Budgeting, Shopping, Parenting, and Prenatal skills.

California
The Salvation Army Transitional Living Center in Whittier provided transitional housing for 30 homeless families for a maximum period of six months. An assessment and action plan was prepared for each family. ESL reading, math, and business skills classes were conducted on site, with individualized materials and computer software providing for specific student needs.

Summary

As illustrated by the above practices, AEH programs have developed the capability and capacity to improve the lives of homeless families. AEH can now be viewed as an important component of "welfare reform"....helping to ensure that homelessness and poverty do not continue from generation to generation in this country.

The Employment Connection

The Challenge -

The National Governors Association, in their Policy Statement on "Implementation of Welfare Reform" indicates that while "...Governors are committed to a 'work first' approach that will quickly move recipients into employment....Employers have indicated that they are willing to hire welfare recipients if they are 'job ready' - that is, if they are literate, have good communications skills, and understand the requirements of the workplace." Actually, working people make up 30% of the homeless population. They earn money, but not enough to maintain housing.

In its paper: "Employing the Formerly Homeless", the Corporation for Supportive Housing notes that "work is of central importance - not just because of the potential for higher income than entitlements offer and the options earned income allows, but as a basic buttressing of self-esteem and other important dimensions of psychological well-being that undergird the ability to function independently."

And a 1994 national evaluation of the U.S. Department of Labor's Job Training for the Homeless Demonstration Program found that barriers to employment experienced by homeless people include lack of education or competitive work skills.

The AEH Response:

"When Jo Ann came to the Hope In Action shelter, she was homeless and without a job. As a 43 year-old displaced homemaker and school drop-out, she lacked the job skills needed to support herself. Her educational goal was to learn to count money back to customers so she could get a job as a cashier. Adult Education tested Jo Ann and found that she lacked basic math skills. Starting at a beginning level, she completed lessons in basic math. Reaching her goal now became easier. She gained enough confidence to apply for work at Wal-Mart. Jo Ann was hired and is now living in her own apartment in Hope." (Arkansas AEH Program)

"Mike, age 60, had been homeless for three years before he entered a Jacksonville homeless program. Seven months after enrolling in AEH classes at this facility, he obtained his GED. Because of his effort in this class, the local AEH program hired him to recruit other homeless adults into classes. Eight months after receiving his GED he earned a certified nursing assistant certificate, graduating at the top of his class." (Florida AEH Program)

The 1993 - 95 AEH state reports provide evidence of the results of programs giving priority to employability skills instruction:

Kentucky
Work-based skills such as Career Planning, Job Application, Want Ads, Resumes, Interviewing, and Keeping a Job were among the Life Skills emphasized in the Kentucky AEH curriculum.

New York
Over 1100 homeless adults obtained employment or advanced in their jobs by participating in these AEH programs.

Florida
For the 1995-96 program year, 11 times more participants in Florida's AEH program obtained employment, compared with the general adult education population. Also, the rate of homeless adults entering other education or training programs was five times that of general AE participants. This state also developed a curriculum to encourage AEH students to enroll in vocational education programs.

Vermont
In this program, a large proportion of learners (42%) improved their employment status as demonstrated by securing a job, improved job search skills, securing job skills training, or by exploring career options.

North Carolina
Over 2300 homeless adults (30%) got a job or a better job, while 626 entered another training program. Over 2800 referrals were made to other agencies for employment assistance.

Nebraska
Twenty-two percent of AEH learners (486) gained employment. Forty-eight were removed from public assistance, saving tax payers an estimated $250,000.

Texas
During the last three year grant, over 1700 participants became employed.

Ohio
Over three years, 485 AEH participants were removed from public assistance, representing a public saving of $2.5 million. That's $1 million more than the total cost of the grant.

West Virginia
In "economic impact" terms, this grant spent $739,000 and provided $2.2 million in total savings to the state economy through wage taxes, reduced welfare payments, etc.

Maryland
Over 1200 adults received employment assistance via assessment services, motivational and pre-job training, and job placement. Eighty-six were removed from public assistance, representing $500,000. in public revenue savings.

Summary

AEH programs were highly successful in preparing learners for employment and training opportunities. In the process, AEH contributed direct economic benefits to employers and communities, as well as social and financial benefits to homeless individuals and their families.

Serving Disabled Adults

The Challenge -

An estimated one-third of homeless adults are mentally ill and one-third suffer from substance abuse. Besides being homeless, these adults have additional difficulty in obtaining training or employment, managing a family, and dealing with everyday life.

The AEH Response:
"At the time Pierre became known at our agency, he was alcoholic, homeless, and very angry at the world. Pierre had been on the streets since he was 13 years old. He did not graduate from high school and was in jail at the age of 16. Pierre was given a variety of drug and other services, referred to an AEH program and enrolled. Today, he has a job that he has held for three years. He has his own apartment, a truck, and a current driver's license. He is drug-free and has not had a drink for over three years. He plans to go to college." Utah AEH Program

Many AEH programs over the years served disabled homeless persons. The Pelavin Review found that in 1995 one-third of AEH sites were providing services to substance abusers and one-in-twelve programs served the mentally ill. Here are three examples from the last round of AEH projects:

North Carolina
In this state, most programs were provided in homeless shelters and were targeted to "high risk" adults who were temporarily homeless because of a life crisis, victims of mental illness or substance abuse, or long-term homeless for a year or more.

Washington
This state program emphasized services to alcohol and drug users. Over 500 clients maintained sobriety during their enrollment, while 1900 participated in Life Management and Affective Skills programs.

Mississippi
Over 500 participants completed AEH-sponsored Drug Rehabilitation or Independent Living programs.

Summary
AEH programs proved useful in helping disabled adults overcome personal and societal obstacles in order to meet everyday life challenges and develop critical skills.

Life Management Skills for Homeless Adults and Families

The Challenge -

The Pelavin Review found that all state AEH administrators recognize improvement in Life Skills as a principle program objective. In addition, most name self-esteem development, pre-employment training, and English as a second language as important program goals. One third also identified independent living/housing acquisition as essential. Also, case management is an essential element of a successful program, according to most reports. Case managers served as confidence builders and advocates. They also provide the critical follow up necessary for clients' success in programs. Finally, they played an especially vital role in assisting clients as they make their way through the often bureaucratic maze of support service networks.

"There is widespread acknowledgment in the literature that shelters which focus on particular subgroups within the homeless population must have instructional programs designed to meet the needs of the target population, whether they be single men or women, single parents with children, families, limited English proficient populations, or some other sub-population." (Pelavin Report)

The AEH Response:

"In fourteen months I studied and got my driver's license. I got a job. I learned how to manage and save money. I got me a new trailer...a place of my own. I got my life together! Thanks to my friend, my teacher, my bosses, and me."
Shirley: a 55 year old Nevada woman

"St. Francis House is a 15-bed shelter serving recovering male substance abusers. Men are frequently referred from the county jail. Fred was referred to the shelter with the provision that after his program was completed he would return to the jail to complete his sentence. During his stay he improved his reading and math skills, worked on a resume, and found employment. His parole officer, impressed with his progress, allowed him to return home rather than to go back to jail. He has continued to work, regain his driver's license, and now owns a car." Maine AEH Program

Program reports document the extent to which AEH efforts addressed the multitude needs and wants of homeless individuals. And several states report that many AEH students found stable housing while enrolled in our programs:

Massachusetts
Almost 2000 AEH students were referred to social service agencies, while over 800 have moved to more permanent housing.

Maryland
Over 1400 learners took advantage of counseling that was offered. Over 850 obtained housing while attending AEH classes.

Florida
In Miami, a "Street Survival Guide" for the homeless was made available at agencies and schools throughout the city. Personnel performing outreach activities distributed these guides to the homeless, including hurricane victims.

Vermont
Two-thirds of participants improved their self-management skills as demonstrated by such things as sobriety, cleanliness, staying drug free, positive handling of stress and anger, increased self esteem, and life planning activities.

Connecticut
Computer assisted instruction provided opportunities for students to obtain interactive, individualized, self-paced instruction in numerous skills and subject areas. The variety of software programs available enabled teachers to tailor instruction to meet the students' needs.

Arizona
One of the AEH sub-grants, Native Americans for Community Action, Inc., projected service to 525 homeless, but served almost 1000 (85% over their proposal).

Wyoming
Central Wyoming College established a new Adult Basic Education center on the Wind River Reservation, specifically to serve the homeless Native American population.

Texas

When students were given the opportunity to evaluate the program, 445 participants responded. Ninety-one percent said that teachers were well-informed about their subjects, 88% said that they received individual help, and 75% got more than they expected out of the classes. A majority of students plan to take other classes.

Summary

Many homeless persons carry the burden of broken lives: relationships, bodies, minds, communities. AEH programs were developed to deal with homelessness in holistic ways, to help adults and families improve all aspects of their lives. They worked with homeless services delivery providers to enhance their systems, and AEH students were able to access homeless services due to referrals and classroom instruction in survival skills. This too is the meaning of *lifelong learning*.

Observations and Conclusions from the Eight Year Experience

Observation 1 - A recent search of Internet websites using the indicator *homeless* found **46, 581** sites. Included are a wide range of topics - from *voting* to *housing*, *education* to *unemployment*.

Conclusion - Obviously, homelessness is a continuing, pervasive social and economic dilemma. While much is known about homelessness, through research, surveys, data gathering, and documented experience, the public and political will to use this knowledge has been limited.

Observation 2 - A total of **320,000** homeless adults participated in the AEH Program over the eight years of its existence. In the last three years, a dozen states served **over 4000** homeless adults each:

Texas 16,875	Florida 15,670	New York 13,011	Alabama 11,039
California 10,703	Ohio 9,642	N. Carolina 7,837	Utah 7,672
Arkansas 5,985	Indiana 4,849	Washington 4,495	Arizona 4,450

Conclusion - AEH programs, given reasonable support, are capable of serving large numbers of adults in need of basic and life skills.

Observation 3 - By 1995, the AEH program was meeting the growing demand for services each year, with no apparent decline in the quality of services provided. But....any further expansion of services may be impractical, if not impossible, given current program funding structures. (Pelavin Report)

Conclusion - There is no substitute for dedicated program funding.

Observation 4 a - The California AEH Program addressed the unique needs of the homeless population by establishing model standards in the areas of program delivery, curriculum selection, instructional methods and evaluation.

Observation 4 b - For the 1995-96 project year, participants in Florida's AEH program obtained employment at 11 times the rate of the general adult education population. And the rate of homeless adults entering other education or training programs was five times that of the general adult education participants.

Observation 4 c - Developing or improving "world of work" competencies for the homeless population is especially important - these competencies include both job seeking and job keeping skills. (Rhode Island report)

Observation 4 d - Instructional activities or experiences that allow people to re-establish their personal sense of self-esteem/self-confidence along with lifelong skills (handling stress, time management, goals setting, personal communications) must be written into an educational program. (Rhode Island report)

Observation 4 e - The delivery of basic skills instruction to homeless adults was accomplished through the development of alternative curricula, various staff development activities, and through the integration of a family literacy component. Traditional instructional materials typically do not address the specific needs of homeless individuals. (Wisconsin report)

Conclusion - Programs that understand homelessness and plan activities to meet the needs of homeless individuals have greater impact than general AE efforts.

Observation 5 a - Evaluations of the AEH program and job training programs for homeless people reveal that if national education and training initiatives are to serve effectively America's homeless population, they must specifically target their outreach and enrollment efforts to homeless individuals. Education and training services for homeless individuals are also especially critical in light of welfare-to-work efforts. (NCH Study of the Children and Youth Program)

Observation 5 b - While New York State will continue to serve homeless adults to the best of its ability, there is no doubt the loss of targeted federal funding has seriously hampered these efforts. The reduction of program capacity is particularly disturbing amid projections that rapidly changing social policies will result in a dramatic increase in the ranks of homeless adults and families.

Conclusion - Fully funded AEH programs have great potential for addressing changing social needs and conditions.

Observation 6 - The Federal investment for AEH during its eight years of funding (Fiscal Years 1987 - 94) totaled **$67 million**. The number served in the final grant period was 160,000. Another 160,000 were served from 1988 to 1992. A total of 320,000 homeless adult learners were served during the history of the AEH program. The average cost per AEH student equaled $210, while the average cost per general adult education student is $300.

Conclusion - Even averaging-in some (modest) amount of state and local supplementary funds, it is easy to see that service to homeless adults and families costs no more than serving adults in the regular AE program....and is far less expensive than many other public training programs serving homeless persons. As evidenced in other sections of this report, AEH virtually *pays for itself* in reduced welfare costs and increased revenues, generated from employment and sales taxes.

Observation 7 - We concluded that those individuals that entered the literacy program with a goal of entering job training programs were more likely to make gains in the literacy class. (Rhode Island AEH provider)

Conclusion - Focused efforts and expectations enhance motivation.

Observation 8 - Large numbers of disabled homeless persons have been enrolled in AEH programs.

Conclusion - AEH programs have demonstrated a special capability to provide useful educational and life services to disabled homeless adults.

Observation 9 a - According to the Volunteers of America Program in New York City, "Education efforts have the greatest chance of success if they take place where people get 24-hour help."

Observation 9 b - In Vermont, over one half of the AEH programs have been absorbed back into the ABE network. But outreach is now less intense. Many of the curriculums and staff have been saved, but the very successful Life Skill Workshops are being offered by only half of the Vermont ABE Centers.

Conclusion - Mainstreaming services to general AE learning center locations often negates the impact that AEH programs can achieve by instruction in shelters, transitional housing and other locations were homeless individuals and families receive services.

Observation 10 - A review of Adult Education performance reports for Program Year 1996-97 provides evidence that, in all but ten states, AEH programs are in jeopardy. Programs have been vastly reduced or even totally eliminated in states throughout the nation. The average of service in the 28 AEH-funded states was just one-fourth of the effort in the previous year. In the other states, an average total of only 50 adults were served in AEH programs.

Conclusion - Federal and State policy makers need to rethink current policies that rely on *mainstreaming* of educational services for homeless adults.

Statements by AEH Leaders

For a year after AEH funding ended, most local providers hired their AEH personnel with regular adult education funds and continued to serve the homeless. Although this arrangement still exists in some programs, many of the AEH personnel have changed jobs.

Aside from the direct benefits to homeless students, the next greatest benefit of the AEH program in Arkansas was the creativity and open-mindedness of the AEH personnel. Some of the best training and curricula development came from the AEH program, enabling AEH personnel to meet the diverse needs of the homeless. In Arkansas, having the homeless program brought an awareness of the need for ongoing, year-round education for adults.

- Camille Lide, Former Arkansas AEH Director

The Washington State AEH program was a profound success. In the first month of its operation, we all had doubts about whether homeless adults would come for educational services. Almost immediately we found that they would come. We also found out they had emergent needs and if we couldn't help them get the knowledge, skills or resources they needed to get off the streets, they'd have to move on. They were a tough audience, but their "no-jokes" attitude taught us to insist on quality, and especially practical, useful, to-the-point lessons.

They'd tell us that homelessness was like a "twister", and our classes were like eyes of the storm where they could figure out what they needed to do next. Some of the time they got new information about problem-solving or planning, but more often they got to relearn strategies that they had lost touch with because of the trauma of homelessness. And, most importantly, our classes were places where they were treated like human beings again, where there was human contact, respect, compassion, trust, encouragement. If you've never been systematically denigrated, made to feel worthless and powerless, then it's hard to understand what an engine self-esteem is. Self-esteem washes the clothes, cuts the grass, flattens the tummy, asks for a pay-raise, and is behind every other positive thing we do. Beyond all the survival skills we taught, we helped people recapture their self-esteem and that made a difference.

Most of our AEH programs have been able to continue their services, since the rescission of the AEH program, but all the local programs' efforts are more modest and are very tenuous. Few of the AEH programs have been continued with Adult Education Act

funds. Most cobble minimal funding and staff together from Federal programs like AmeriCorps, foundations and charities. We have not been able to continue the state office leadership and coordination that was an important element of the AEH program. Homelessness is growing in this state during a period of business expansion and job creation. If our welfare reform plan isn't executed flawlessly, we may have even greater growth of homelessness.

- Michael Tate, Former Washington AEH Director

A national homeless adult education program is needed now more than ever. There is no sign that homelessness is decreasing, and ample evidence that it persists and is worsening across the nation. Moreover, the implementation of welfare reform adds an urgency to adult education initiatives. Without the tools needed to achieve "self-sufficiency" and employment - the stated goals of welfare reform - homeless persons are more likely to remain homeless or at risk of future homelessness.

As revealed by this report and other national evaluations of education and job training programs, targeted outreach efforts are necessary to effectively serve persons in homeless situations. Homeless people face many barriers to accessing mainstream education and job training programs, including lack of transportation, lack of day care, and disabling conditions. The McKinney Adult Education for the Homeless Program was authorized precisely because educational services were not available or accessible to this population: prior to the establishment of the AEH program, only one state provided educational services for homeless adults through a state-administered program. Now that the national adult education program has been defunded, few states have been able to provide the same quality and quantity of education services to homeless adults. Simply put, there is no substitute for dedicated funding to meet the special needs of persons experiencing homelessness.

The McKinney AEH program was a vital component of this nation's struggle against homelessness. As this report and others clearly demonstrate, the AEH program represented a cost-effective and resourceful investment in the future of hundreds of thousands of families and individuals. The loss of this program to a political climate that is long on rhetoric and short on reality has had and will continue to have damaging impacts on the efforts of homeless persons to regain stability. We must work to create the public and political will to invest in the future of America's most disadvantaged citizens.

- Barbara Duffield, Director of Education
National Coalition for the Homeless

Policy Options

As documented in this report, AEH practitioners indicate that services and access have been radically reduced since the elimination of the National AEH Program. The loss of dedicated AEH funding has significantly harmed efforts to reach and serve homeless adults and families. Below are short- and long-term policy options for consideration by national and state policy makers.

1. Serving the needs of Homeless Families

Short-term options -

- Existing Even Start programs could give priority to enrolling homeless parents and children, involving AEH practitioners in the development and implementation of special services.

- Education for Homeless Children and Youth programs could increase outreach to and collaboration with adult education programs to provide education and/or job training to parents of homeless children.

- Welfare Reform efforts must avoid forcing families into low-paying, low-skilled, and temporary jobs that increase vulnerability to homelessness. Rather, these initiatives could include access to a range of appropriate educational services so that families have opportunities for lasting self-sufficiency.

Long-term option -

- AEA reauthorization provisions could give priority to serving homeless adults and families by including such service in performance level requirements and in state plan criteria addressing strategies for service to special populations.

2. Serving homeless individual's employability needs

Short-term option -

- A 1994 JTPA evaluation estimates that only one percent of homeless adults receive job training services. Current JTPA programs could provide increased outreach to homeless populations.

Long-term option -

- New consolidation legislation could explicitly identify homeless persons as a priority for employment and training, and could acknowledge and address the barriers that homeless persons face in accessing mainstream employment programs.

3. Serving the basic and life skill needs of homeless adults, with special attention to disabled persons

Short-term options -

- *Continuum of Care* strategies could provide for basic adult education services, including life management skills, with HUD designating these services explicitly in their grant application process.

- Transitional and permanent supportive housing programs could collaborate with existing adult education programs to incorporate basic and life management services.

- Section 342 c. (4) of the Adult Education Act requires States to "describe (in their State Plan) the means by which the delivery of adult education services will be significantly expanded through coordination (with)....organizations providing assistance to the homeless." This existing provision could be given priority by establishing policy guidance to States.

Long-term option -

- The McKinney Act could be fully funded and reauthorized. Many providers believe that the extent and nature of the barriers faced by homeless persons in accessing education services can best be addressed through a targeted national program, as evidenced by the eight years of AEH experience. A national program would more effectively serve persons in homeless situations and help ensure appropriate transition into mainstream programs.

A final note....

Our review of State Adult Education Performance Reports indicates the extent to which programs for homeless adults were funded by mainstream programs during Program Year 1996-97, the first year after AEH funding ended. The findings are discouraging: 80% of States make no meaningful attempt to support AEH programs.

Therefore, the decision to not fund Adult Education for the Homeless as a separate program should be immediately reconsidered in order to determine how unmet basic and life skill needs of homeless persons can best be addressed. Whatever the system of service delivery ultimately chosen, the experiences of adult educators in serving homeless individuals and families, as outlined in this report, can prove invaluable in guiding national and state policy.

Bibliography of AEH Resources

Homelessness in America (1996) is a compilation of articles covering history, causes, dimensions and responses to homelessness in the USA. Especially useful for AEH planners: articles on McKinney history and expectations, homeless families, the economy and its impact on employment, and policies that could make a difference. Available from NCH: (202) 775-1322

Learning to Hope: A Study of the Adult Education for the Homeless Program (1995) is the only national study to focus specifically on the AEH Program. It includes information on the structure of the program, kinds of services, participants, program outcomes and suggestions for program improvement. Available free from the Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) Clearinghouse: FAX (202) 205-8973 - Phone: (202) 205-9996

Education for Homeless Adults: Strategies for Implementation is a three volume set of guidebooks for developing and improving your AEH program. Includes: "Vol. I - Strategies", "Vol. II - More Resources and Lessons", and "Vol. III - Family Literacy and More Lessons". Available free from the DAEL Clearinghouse.

Materials for Serving Homeless Adult Learners (1994) describes materials for instruction, outreach and program management. Available free from the DAEL Clearinghouse.

Internet Resources for Adult Educators (May, 1997) is a publication listing and describing addresses of web sites and list serves that adult educators may find useful. Available free from the DAEL Clearinghouse.

Websites of Relevance to Homeless Educators and Learners

- **http://nch.ari.net** National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH)

- **www.otan.dni.us/cdlp/homeless/** California Adult Homeless Education

- **www.hudrivctr.org** New York's "Strategies for Implementation".

- **http://hugse1.harvard.edu/~ncsall/** National Center for the Study of Adult Literacy and Learning (NCSALL)

- **www.cal.org/NCLE** National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)

- **http://coe.ohio-state.edu/cete/ericacve** ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Career Vocational Education

- **www.casas.org** Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)

- **www.ttrc.doleta.gov/** Training Technology Resource Center

- **www.opendoor.com/hfh** Homes for the Homeless

- **www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/fl/menu.html** Family Literacy Center

- **www.otan.dni.us/webfarm/alt/home.html** Adult Literacy & Technology Network

- **www.ed.gov** U.S. Department of Education

- **www.senate.gov/** United States Senate

- **www.house.gov/** U.S. House of Representatives

- **http://tenb.mta.ca/sau/aed/** Adult Education Resources

APPENDIX A

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Silencing Street Voices

The Demise of Federal Funding for Adult Education for the Homeless

Sally S. Gabb

Broken bottles, dead end streets,
Darkened alleys, tired feet
a child screams
no place to call your own.....
...Life on the streets has no meaning
Just a long definition."

By Linda, age 17, street youth
published in 'Street Voices'
Travelers Aid Society L.I.F.E. Learning Center

It had once been the tool department of a downtown department store. For six years now, the room has served as the site of a unique kind of educational opportunity for homeless men, women and youth — those with few resources to build on, few avenues of hope. Five days a week, evenings, and some Saturdays, Travelers Aid Society of Rhode Island opened the L.I.F.E. Learning Center to people with no address and little direction.

At the end of June this year, the lights went out in the L.I.F.E. Center for homeless adults and youth, the chairs and tables sat empty. On a classroom bookshelf sat the last issue of 'Street Voices', once the dynamic publication written by the homeless learners at Travelers Aid. The Learning Center hours and services have been drastically reduced due to lack of funds, the victim of the congressional slashing of social programs.

After seven years of operation, serving over 200 learners a year during the last five years with a wide variety of educational and training services, the L.I.F.E. Learning Center could now provide only limited volunteer tutoring. In cutting out all direct federal funding for Adult Education for the Homeless this year, Congress struck a blow to a unique program of adult basic educational services. Adult Education for the Homeless programs across the country enabled thousands of adults and youth once deemed 'hopeless' to gain educational skills, confidence, and a second chance.

Homeless education projects like the L.I.F.E. Learning Center at Travelers Aid have also demonstrated the potential for growth in the field when educators are given both support and flexibility in reaching out to the most challenging audiences for lifelong learning. The AEH programs created a wide spectrum of innovative educational projects to reclaim the most marginal adults and restore them to both quality of life and social productivity.

The Adult Education for the Homeless efforts represent the commitment of adult educators to the concept of educational opportunity and lifelong learning for

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all Americans, no matter how far down on their luck. With the awakening of social consciousness about homelessness during the 1980's, and the resulting legislation, the McKinney Act of 1988, a new chapter opened in social programming and in adult education as a support structure for re-engagement with the community and the economy.

Homeless in America: A Brief History

By 1986, national attention was finally focused on what had been a decade of growing need for emergency shelter for people without family, community, or resources. The causes of the crisis in shelter have been well documented: (1) loss of entry-level industrial employment and economic recession for the industrial working class; (2) growing incidence of substance abuse, and inadequate detox and treatment facilities, causing many with alcohol problems to become 'street people'; (3) the closing of the large residential mental health institutions, supposedly 'relocating' many with mental illness into community housing, but actually creating another population of people lost to the streets.

The comprehensive federal Stuart B. McKinney Act of 1987 represented a massive national attack on homelessness; the legislation included rationale, strategy, and funding to meet the crisis head on. The authors of the McKinney Act had finally heard the desperate voices of such activists as Mitch, whose hunger strike gained national attention to the plight of men and women who have become homeless, lacking social support systems or resources to maintain a residence. A small part of the McKinney Act funding (allocating a mere $75,000 to Rhode Island in the first year), was tacked on to stimulate creation of adult education programs specifically designed to serve those now identified as 'the homeless'. Over the eight year period, only about $65 million, (far less than the cost of one space missile) was allocated for AEH programs across the country.

By 1994, programs in thirty states reported serving more than 150,000 learners at more than 200 funded sites. In addition, the funding stimulated collaborations and networking that connected once aimless adults to other kinds of education, training, and support services.

The stated purpose of the AEH funding was to "... enable each (state) agency to implement a program of literacy training and basic skills remediation for adult homeless individuals..."

A 1989 national study reported that close to half of shelter residents lack a twelfth grade education. This intensely deprived adult audience brought to the community of adult educators tremendous challenges and ongoing learning experiences.

All providers, including homeless adult education programs, must compete for pieces of a shrinking "pie", and hard data, employment related outcomes, are becoming a key factor.

From Stranded Travelers to Stranded Lives

Travelers Aid Society of Rhode Island began making the transition in 1986 from a small agency serving stranded travelers, to a comprehensive multi-services center providing holistic services to people who are homeless and in transition or crisis. The board and new executive director, Marion Avarista, rewrote the mission to embrace the philosophy of providing "a hand up, not a hand out" to people in crisis seeking "personal and economic self sufficiency." Travelers Aid was one of four agencies receiving AEH grants in the first years of funding.

As Rhode Island State Director of Adult Education, Robert Mason was able initially to fund Travelers Aid and four other sites in the state. All sites maintained programs during the seven-year period. Four, in Providence, Newport, Woonsocket and Cranston, were shelter based. Travelers Aid, while not a shelter, is a twenty-four-hour crisis intervention and case management center that provided advantages for the program as a whole.

The Travelers Aid L.I.F.E. Center: Maslow Suggests a Long Shot for Learning

When Travelers Aid Society of Rhode Island opened the first L.I.F.E. Learning Class in 1989, it seemed to many a gamble with long odds. Why would people who are homeless, without permanent shelter and resources, be interested in going to school? Critics quoted psychologist Arthur Maslow, who theorized that human beings dealing with questions of physical survival (on the hierarchy of needs) will seldom pursue more abstract cognitive kinds of goals such as education. The L.I.F.E. Learning Center experience counters such theories.

The first Travelers Aid adult education 'class', held in a tiny bus station office, consisted of a crew of twelve street youth corralled by the TAS youth outreach workers. In the first year, through three location changes, the Center served close to eighty youth and adult students. By 1992, the number had reached the annual 200 mark maintained over the life of the program.

Rhode Island was far from alone in establishing successful AEH programs. When more than 100 program representatives gathered for a conference in Saratoga Springs, New York, at the end of the first year, it became clear that the AEH funding met a need, and encouraged innovation in three areas:

1) **Location**: Some AEH classes like the TAS Learning Center were housed in central downtown locations, close to buses and other services centers. Many programs were

shelter based. All sought non-traditional sites accessible to homeless adults and youth. The Travelers Aid experience, and that of most AEH programs around the country, affirm that if creative, non-threatening learning programs are built, adult learners will come despite transition and crisis. At night shelters, some highly innovative programs have been established, reporting positive results in recruitment and attendance.

2) **Flexibility**: since the program was aimed at 'most difficult to serve' learners, the federal Department of Education required only a minimum of structural constraints, and loose quantitative outcomes. Programs represented at the Saratoga conference reported creative methods for compiling data about 'students'; some attending only one night; others becoming 'regulars', both in the shelters and in the classes. Teachers and tutors reported meeting in hallways and staircases at many shelter sites. Travelers Aid was fortunate that by the middle of year two the "Learning Center" was a well lighted classroom in a newly renovated building. But it was the non-traditional, un-school-like aspects that attracted and kept the street people coming.

3) **Curriculum development**: in order to reach and retain this challenging audience, programs began by exploring unique and non-traditional learning design for this-as-yet-undefined audience. As the 1995 study by Pelavin Associates reported, most programs, like the Travelers Aid center, have provided one-on-one or individualized instruction, as the audience is so varied and constantly changing. Nevertheless, numerous innovative social and collaborative learning designs have been developed.

The Travelers Aid Center found a curriculum written by Patti McLaughlin, developed through collaboration between the AEH programs and the ABLE Network of Washington State, to be especially effective. The New England Literacy Theater from Maine provided a model for improvisational drama and role playing to promote learning among students and to advertise the plight of homeless learners. At annual conferences supported by the federal funding each year, practitioners gathered to share experiences, curriculum ideas, and advocacy efforts. These conferences were a dynamic forum of adult educators, with effects reaching far beyond the programs for adults who had become homeless.

Homeless education projects like the L.I.F.E. Learning Center have also demonstrated the potential for growth in the field when educators are given both support and flexibility in reaching out to the most challenging audiences for lifelong learning.

Voices: a Chorus of Hope and Possibility

In addition, numerous publications resulted from homeless and shelter education programs, including Travelers Aid's 'Street Voices'. The promotion of the 'voice' through publications is not new to adult education, but the quality and intensity of the writing has seldom been surpassed, and the publications stand as a testimony to the grim realities of the homeless experience in cities across the country, as well as the talents and potential of those served by the AEH programs.

Along with positive outcomes, however, the TAS experience also reflects the primary problems of the AEH programs, which, in the end, contributed to the ease with which the U.S. Congress slashed away their support.

1) **Retention**: Approximately 25 perce of Travelers Aid L.I.F.E. learners remained the learning center for twelve weeks or mc — a full quarter of learning. More than 60 percent of those enrolled 'dropped out' after attending classes one to four weeks, although many would return after a mont six months or a year. And for many, attendance was sporadic, even while officially enrolled. The Travelers Aid open entry/ open exit system enabled TAS clients to move in and out of the center as their lives changed or crisis occurred. Dozens of students with sporadic attendance finally succeeded in getting GED certificates, moving into job training, or attaining employment after several years of instability and crisis. But overall long-term outcomes were difficult to capture.

2) **Outcomes - academic**: Most programs like Travelers Aid were able to report little hard data, although short-term outcomes were many and exciting. The Travelers Aid L.I.F.E. Center awarded more than fifty GED certificates in seven years, thrilling staff and learners, but reflecting a success rate with GED students of only about 5 percent of the total enrollment. (Many passed one, two, or three of the subtests while enrolled as TAS, but either dropped out or moved to other programs to complete.) This local data was consistent with findings of the Pelavin study.

In order to make the atmosphere as non-threatening as possible, the Learning Center required only limited informal assessment of new students, using an instrument designed by staff. The transient nature of the population made efforts at post-testing futile. While Travelers Aid maintained a successful 'portfolio' folder system that provided evidence of progress in academic skills for many students, results were difficult to quantify.

2) **Outcomes - life and survival skills**: Through a wide variety of creative curricular ventures, the learners participated in life and survival skills units designed for one-day delivery, applied to various learning

styles, and providing hands on contextualized activities as part of the learning process. 'Getting nutritious meals at soup kitchens', 'budgeting for the no-income existence', 'housing: rights and responsibilities when you own the key', and 'social skills for the shelters' were among favorite topics.

Travelers Aid also secured complementary funding for several programs that responded to life skills needs of specific groups:

- **The OASIS project for runaway youth** (Occupations and Success in Sight), funded for two years by state funds: a special class for homeless young people.
- **Women on the Move**: a 'rap group' format for women in shelters, organizing self-esteem-oriented activities as well as pre-employment instruction.
- **The Go For It group**: motivational workshops to help Travelers Aid clients face fears about education, training, or any program leading to employment and independence. Because of the constant reshuffling of monies available for adult education services, these special projects, while providing important support, could not be maintained.

3) **Outcomes - transition to work**: Since the first year of the AEH funded education center at Travelers Aid, the agency has sought funds to provide transition to work, pre-employment training, and specific job skills training for participants. As with academic statistics, quantitative data about transition to training and employment from the L.I.F.E. Center is limited. For several years, TAS has been able to secure support for small pre-employment and training projects through the Jobs Partnership Training Act and other public job training funding sources. In earlier years, TAS provided Certified Nursing Assistant training in collaboration with health agencies and nursing home facilities, graduating close to forty students, and placing more than 60 percent of those in jobs.

More recently, JTPA 'pre-employment' funds supported programs that combined academic review with work readiness and work internships. While job placement has been attained for at least half of the graduates of these programs, only ten to twelve slots were available in each cycle, and stringent enrollment requirements meant that many L.I.F.E. center learners, the actual 'homeless' staying in shelters, could not qualify for the programs. The AEH flexibility provided a bridge for such homeless learners.

The Face of Homelessness: Categories of Crisis

The Pelavin study estimated that 49,665 homeless adults were served by the AEH program in 1992. This represents a 47 percent increase over the number enrolled in 1991, although the federal funding remained at the same level. ($9.8 million) The Pelavin Report stated, "...clearly the AEH Program has developed into a major delivery system for providing educational services to America's Homeless."

It was the non-traditional, un-school-like aspects that attracted and kept the street people coming.

In the general population at Travelers Aid and in the Learning Center, staff began to recognize and categorize the kinds of crisis leaving people without shelter, and the kinds of support needed. As the Pelavin study verified, about one-third of those people who become homeless have mental health problems, and another third struggle with chronic substance abuse. More than half, according to the Interagency Council on Homelessness, have served time in prison. In addition, more than half lack a high school diploma.

The Indication of Program Quality: Specialized Staff and Teamwork

Travelers Aid Society, like other AEH pilot centers, recruited staff for the learning center whose vision withstands these realities, whose creative energy was sparked by the special needs of the audience. As noted by executive director Avarista, the "success stories" cherished at Travelers Aid (and other homeless education programs across the country) can usually be attributed to the sensitive work of such staff, who met the challenges of their learners with compassion and creativity. In addition, however, the case management system at Travelers Aid provides a necessary safety net of support. A high percentage of learners were able to stay in classes, or return following crisis, through holistic support from the case management team, including social workers, health workers, and sometimes legal support.

Harsher Realities for Adults Who Become Homeless: Not a Kinder Gentler Time

In the early 1980's, when attention first focused on the plight of homeless adults in Rhode Island, people whose lives are crafted to maintain carefully protected prosperity were incredulous that such a population exists. When the Travelers Aid Learning Center first opened, many were at first amazed that any homeless people would seek education, and later at the hidden talents, skills, and potential demonstrated in the classes. While federal funds were supporting the program, the general public, educators, and politicians praised the efforts and pledged support.

With the end of federal funding, however, education for homeless adult programs are scrambling in every state. The news from Washington and around the country makes clear that not just AEH programs are threatened: austerity is taking its toll on all adult education funding. In Rhode Island, where each year adult educators struggle to gain minimum state support dollars, programs targeting homeless adults are competing this year with general adult

education service providers. All providers. including homeless adult education programs. must compete for pieces of a shrinking "pie". and hard data. employment related outcomes are becoming a key factor.

"These programs targeted a group of individuals who don't find their way into the general adult education population in a very intense way," says Robert Mason. RI State Department of Education adult education director. "One of the strengths of a program like Travelers Aid has been the capability of integration with other services. placing the homeless person on a continuum of care. increasing the potential for success. The question is: are the outcomes significant enough? Are there enough dollars available? These are the hard choices that have to be made."

"Should 'number of students going to work' be the measure of success in this program? Are homeless men and women better off pan handling than writing poetry?" asks Ralph Fortune. a former instructor with the TAS Learning Center.

Travelers Aid clients gather daily on the street in front of the multi-services center. or wait for a shelter referral. sign in for a clinic appointment. Many see the dark classroom space and still ask "when is the learning center opening again? When can we start school?"

Some of those asking about the center are "chronic" TAS homeless clients. the men. women. and youth who embrace the harsh lifestyle of the streets that has become familiar. even comfortable. in some strange manner. Many of these men and women have at some time joined the Learning Center. attempted to set goals. worked on writing, or reading, or even applied math.

Executive director Avarista reflected recently about the L.I.F.E. Center. its history, and current changes due to funding and public sentiment. "There's no doubt that our center has provided a unique service to adults who otherwise would never enter a classroom. At the graduation each year. as students received awards and diplomas. I could see real benefits in the program. The rescission of federal dollars will make it very difficult to maintain the level of service we've been able to provide. and the loss is a great one."

At the time of this writing, there is some potential for a reopened learning center. if a grant to the state Department Education Adult Education division is approved. The agency has also applied for additional JTPA pre-employment program monies. again able to serve only a limited number. But both Marion Avarista and program director Michele LaCroix emphasize that the "open entry" spirit of the learning center will stay the same in many ways. if flexible funding is attained.

On a mid summer's day. a man of about forty. with a pronounced limp and rumpled clothing moves towards the Travelers Aid office.

"What? The Learning Center is closed? No more 'Street Voices'? Well, I go to the library now anyway. But I've got plenty more poems when you start it up again. I still have plenty to say...and I won't be going anywhere."

Later. a young woman well dressed in office attire hails a former staff member. "I'm still struggling, but I got the GED with you, finished the community college, and I've held a job for three years. You guys plucked me from the street. I'm out of work and looking, but I'll never be what I was back then — sixteen. pregnant, no place to go. You ought to keep that Learning Center open. People need it. You might not see results right away. Look at me — it took six years. But it made a real difference for this teenage homeless runaway."

APPENDIX B

LEARNING TO HOPE:
A Study of the Adult Education for the Homeless Program

1995

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite America's immense wealth, hundreds of thousands of its inhabitants cannot afford even the barest essentials of life, and millions more live on the edge of economic despair. The most visible of America's underclass are the homeless, living on the nation's streets, in emergency shelters, and in other forms of temporary housing.

This report examines the Adult Education for the Homeless (AEH) Program, one of the many programs authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 designed to address the longer term needs of the homeless. The purpose of the AEH program, according to authorizing legislation, is to "enable each (state) agency to implement a program of literacy training and basic skills remediation for adult homeless individuals. . . ." (Public Law 100-77, Title VII, Sec. 702).

Employing data derived from program files, focus groups conducted with state project administrators, site visits to nine local programs in three states, surveys of 32 state projects, 230 local programs, 588 service delivery sites and 2,943 program participants, and an assessment of the literacy skills of a representative sample of new enrollees at 30 local programs, this report provides a comprehensive review of the AEH program in its fifth year of operation. The study examines the program's organization and structure, the nature and accessibility of the services it provides, the characteristics of those who utilize these services, and various outcomes associated with participation in the program.

Program Outcomes

AEH clients are making progress, but still function at a fairly low level.

- Four in 5 participants accomplished one or more personal goals, 3 in 5 moved up from Level I (limited basic skills competent or functioning at grades 0-8 equivalent) to Level II (competent, but not proficient, or functioning at grades 9-12 equivalent) or within level, 1 in 5 was admitted to another educational program, 1 in 20 received a GED, and approximately 1 in 50 received an adult secondary education diploma. Among clients enrolling in English as a second language programs, a majority moved up one or more ESL levels.

- In the case of clients participating in GED instructional programs (for whom test score data are available), average scores increased significantly — by about five points — in each of the five GED subject areas.

- On average, clients received training in 8.6 life skills and exhibited "some" to "much" progress in most areas.

- Two in 5 participants obtained or improved their employment, and about 1 in 10 got off welfare, registered to vote for the first time, and/or obtained a driver's license.

Some program characteristics and instructional practices appear particularly effective.

- Learners tend to receive more hours of instruction and are more likely to show academic improvement in programs with lower student/staff ratios.

- Individual instruction is a powerful instructional strategy, and shows consistent, strong relationships with academic improvement.

- Small group instruction is more effective in residential sites that require participation as a condition of residence than at other types of sites. We speculate that compulsory sites have more regular attendance, enabling teachers to develop and implement lesson plans appropriate for group instruction.

- Clients enrolled in more academically oriented programs (ABE, ASE, or GED) tend to receive more hours of instruction and have a greater probability of showing improvement.

- Clients enrolled in programs with fewer students per staff member tend to remain longer show more improvement.

- Despite instructor's expectations to the contrary, clients at residential sites performed no better than clients at non-residential sites; and

- Also confounding instructors expectations, clients at compulsory sites received no more hours of instruction than clients at non-compulsory sites, and fared no worse academically.

Organization and Structure of the AEH Program

The establishment of the Adult Education for the Homeless (AEH) program provided educational services where none were available before.

- Prior to the establishment of the Adult Education for the Homeless (AEH) Program, in 1987, only one state provided educational services for homeless adults through a program administered at the state level. Locally, most programs funded through AEH had either not existed or had not provided educational services specifically targeting the homeless.

- Over the past five years, the AEH program has expanded services significantly. In its first year of operation, the program served only 18,000 homeless adults nationwide. However, by 1992, AEH provided services to nearly 50,000 clients, or approximately 1 in every 10 homeless adults in the United States. These figures are all the more impressive when one considers that AEH appropriations have increased by only 42 percent during the same five-year interval.

- In 1992, the AEH program funded projects in 35 states in support of some 282 local programs. In turn, local AEH programs administered the delivery of services at some 776 service delivery sites — e.g., emergency shelters, transitional housing, drug rehabilitation centers, community colleges, libraries, and other locations. During the program year, each local program served an average of 180 clients and each site served an average of 70.

Most funding for AEH projects comes from AEH funds, though many projects have leveraged substantial funding from other sources.

- In 1992, state projects received some $9.8 million in AEH funds to support educational programs for homeless adults at the local level. Grants ranged in size from $101,239 to $600,000, averaging approximately $285,176. Some states supplemented Federal grant money with funds from other sources.

- About one in three AEH projects were recipients of supplementary Adult Education Act funds (averaging $208,634) and another 1 in 10 projects received supplementary state funds (averaging $179,200). Other sources of non-AEH funding included JTPA, JOBS, and Even Start.

- In 1992, local AEH programs received state grants ranging from $300 to $300,000 (in one instance), averaging some $31,327. In addition, approximately 44 percent of local programs received supplementary funds from non-AEH sources, averaging $30,069. Many programs also benefited from in-kind support, especially in the form of volunteer services and donations of space and materials.

State project administrators support local programs in their efforts to provide educational services in several ways.

- All states provide technical assistance and monitor the development of local programs. In addition, the majority of states support staff development at the local level, develop and disseminate curricula, and conduct local program evaluations.

- Three in five states seek additional state-level funding and one in five seek additional local-level funding.

- All states coordinate services with various other Federal programs, including the Adult Education Program, Homeless Children and Youth, JTPA, JOBS, Even Start, and Head Start.

- In 1992, state-level administrative costs accounted for some 13 percent of total expenditures.

At both the state and local levels, administrators face a variety of challenges in building successful programs.

- Uncertainty regarding Federal funding ranks first among the concerns of state project administrators — nearly 9 in 10 cited this as one of the three most important challenges that they face. Inadequacy of funding and delays in funding were also cited as major concerns at the state level.

- State project administrators also expressed a desire for increased technical assistance, especially in the areas of curriculum and assessment.

- At the local level, the most critical challenges are those relating to the specific nature of homeless clients — e.g., their transiency, low self-esteem, lack of commitment, etc.

Accessibility of Services

The AEH program, which provides services in communities of every size, offer services in both residential and non-residential settings.

- The vast majority of service delivery sites (about 71 percent) are "residential" sites — i.e., locations where homeless people seek temporary shelter. The remainder are "non-residential" sites, such as adult learning centers, community centers, school classrooms, etc.

- More than one-third of residential sites impose no specific maximum stay limitations, about two in five residential sites permit longer than normal stays for residents participating in the AEH program, and the vast majority allow clients to continue in the AEH program after discontinuing residence. (Unfortunately, in one-half of the sites that permit continued participation, less than 10 percent of clients avail themselves of this opportunity.)

- Administrators of programs serving both residential and non-residential sites rated residential settings more effective than non-residential settings by nearly a two-to-one margin, although both types of sites were perceived to have specific advantages.

Nearly all local programs have implemented aggressive outreach strategies to help attract homeless participants, who often lack the self confidence to seek educational opportunities spontaneously.

- Key outreach strategies include interagency referrals, personal contacts, and other methods.

- Approximately three-fifths of service delivery sites also use incentives to reward clients for participating in the AEH program, such as certificates of achievement, gifts of clothing, or other personal effects.

- About one-third of residential sites link the provision of shelter to participation in the AEH program. Overall, about one-third of clients participate on a compulsory basis.

- About 65 percent of those who administer programs that provide services at both compulsory and non-compulsory sites express the opinion that required participation results in greater duration and intensity of instruction. Yet, more than one-third of these same administrators perceive clients enrolled on a compulsory basis to be less motivated than those who participate voluntarily, and only one in four associate compulsory participation with *greater* client motivation.

Programs offer a wide array of support services to help meet the broad needs of clients.

- About three-quarters of the clients participating in the AEH program receive 3 or more support services, and more than 10 percent receive 10 or more such services.

- Case management services, as well as the essentials of food, shelter, and clothing, are provided by about 9 in 10 local programs. Among these, the most utilized is case management, reflecting its central role in the support services network.

- Also widely available — though utilized by only one-tenth to two-fifths of participants — are substance abuse counseling, mental health counseling, health care, child care, transportation, legal assistance, and various support services aimed at enhancing clients' chances of becoming gainfully employed.

Program Participants

AEH clients differ from the homeless population at large.

- In terms of sex and family status, the two groups differ markedly. Only 55 percent of AEH participants are male, as compared with 81 percent of all homeless adults, and, while the vast majority of homeless (82%) are unattached adults, AEH participants include substantial proportions of single parents (25%) and two-adult families with dependent children (10.6%).

- About 86 percent of AEH clients were unemployed at enrollment (compared with 94 percent in the larger homeless population) and, on average, they had been without steady work for 13 months (compared with four years in the homeless population at large).

- The average AEH participant had been homeless for just seven months at enrollment, while, in the greater homeless population, the average duration of homelessness is more than three years.

- About one-third of all sites provide services to recovering substance abusers, another one in 10 serve victims of abuse, and approximately eight percent serve the mentally ill. While data collected for this study do not permit precise estimates of the proportion of AEH clients with problems of drug abuse, domestic violence, or mental illness, it is possible to gain some sense of the proportion of program participants

with personal problems of this nature by examining the distribution of sites targeting these groups.

Clients served typically function at a low educational level.

- Approximately 17 percent of AEH participants have eight years of education or less, 75 percent have between 9 and 12 years of education, and roughly 8 percent have 13 or more years of education. (Although AEH participants have somewhat less formal education than those in the greater homeless population — about one-fifth of whom have 13 or more years of education — this is almost certainly a function of AEH eligibility requirements.)

- AEH clients are approximately evenly divided between the two achievement levels — about 45 percent at Level I (eighth grade or less) and 55 percent at Level II (ninth through twelfth grade).

- A majority of participants exhibit proficiencies at the TALS Levels 1 and 2 (these levels are different than the levels mentioned above. TALS developers suggest that skills evident at these levels place severe restrictions on an individual's ability to participate fully in the labor force).

- Nearly one in five participants exhibit proficiencies at TALS Level 4. Individuals scoring at this level demonstrate proficiencies in coping with the kinds of complex literacy tasks that are increasingly common in the workplace and, thus, would appear to represent an untapped resource for the U.S. economy.

- When the range of TALS scores for clients enrolled in the AEH program is compared with those for representative samples of Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) eligible applicants and Employment Service/Unemployment Insurance (ES/UI) participants, the three distributions are strikingly similar. This is consistent with the view that homelessness is not simply a function of poor literacy skills, but involves other variables as well, including personal problems of addiction, mental illness, and abuse, as well as the lack of adequate social supports.

Educational Services

The AEH program's limited resources and the high rate of mobility among homeless individuals pose formidable challenges to the program's ability to meet the educational needs of its clients.

- The average local program spends just $291 in AEH funds to provide services to each of its clients, and, in some areas, where demand is greatest, program expenditures average as little as $7 per client.

- While almost one-third of program participants receive more than 40 hours of instruction, nearly two-fifths receive *10 hours or less.*

The AEH program emphasizes instructional programs that integrate basic skills with life skills training and other programs specifically designed to meet the affective needs of homeless clients.

- Life skills training programs are most widely available — at four in five sites — followed closely by programs in adult basic education, GED preparation, self-esteem development, and employability skills. In addition, about one in four sites provide instruction in English as a second language and adult secondary education.

- Demand for life skills training programs — as indicated by enrollments — is nearly twice that for any other instructional area, and demand for programs addressing the affective needs of clients ranks second. Somewhat fewer clients participate in programs in adult basic education, employability skills, and GED, and fewer still receive instruction in adult secondary education and English as a second language.

At most AEH service delivery sites, a broad range of instructional approaches and strategies is employed.

- Individualized instruction is the most widely utilized instructional approach — employed at 9 in 10 sites — and, also rated the most effective. (Small group instruction is employed by nearly as many sites, but less highly rated in terms of effectiveness.)

- Workbook-based instruction is the most widely utilized strategy of instruction — employed at nearly 9 in 10 sites — and, also rated the most effective. Cooperative learning ranks second in both prevalence and perceived effectiveness.

Because of the AEH program's emphasis on individualized and small group instruction, instructional materials are often customized to meet the needs of individual learners or groups of learners.

- Although, on average, state projects allocate less than 1 percent of budget to curriculum development costs, two-thirds have developed curricula designed for use with homeless adults.

- Most states have focused attention on the development of instructional materials for families and single women with children, while fewer have developed curricula for victims of spousal abuse, single men, substance abusers, and other groups.

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