



FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS: LEARNING COLLABORATIVE



Taking a Team Approach: Outreach and Engagement

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Speakers



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Today we'll discuss:

- The definition of outreach and engagement
- Best practices for working with diverse cultural groups, families, and other unique populations
- Strategies for creating effective outreach teams

What is Outreach and Engagement?



Outreach and Engagement

“Outreach and Engagement seeks to build a **relationship of trust and care** with those who present with unusual challenges and are most difficult to serve. The process can take days, weeks, months, and even years. The worker must be present in a variety of ways with the individual. In brief moments and over long hours, on an unpredictable schedule, as the person is ready. While this model has a certain simplicity and elegance, it is an abstraction from the many earthly, involved steps which lead from the street to stability.”

– Craig Rennebohm, National Healthcare for the Homeless Council

Typology of Unsheltered Homelessness

Typology	First Time/Newly Used	Transitionally Unsheltered	Entrenched in an Unsheltered Situation
Common Types of Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coffee shops/overnight businesses or restaurants Waiting rooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hospital Jail Doubled up Overnight drop-ins Various, rotating indoor locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encampments Abandoned building
Street Outreach Engagement Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral Temporary resources Knowledge Transfer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be medium or longer-term Tracking and staying engaged Navigating housing needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually longer-term Addressing immediate needs and housing needs Offering alternatives to encampment closure
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of knowledge of available resources Can be emotionally overwhelmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-finding Navigating other systems Seemingly connected, but no central lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can resist services for various reasons Health, mental health, and substance use support needs
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversion Reconnection Leverage motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-system engagement and case conferences Follow up and re-engagement Mobile access for Coordinated Entry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support immediate needs Support navigating health care Mobile access for Coordinated Entry
General Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly motivated to exit homelessness or at least unsheltered situation Connection to housed people Has or can access resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know how to meet immediate needs Resourceful Adaptability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survival Emotional protection Resilient

What We Know About Outreach and Engagement

- Outreach is an **interactive** process between outreach workers and clients.
- It is the job of the outreach workers to **meet people where they are** (literally, judgmentally, metaphorically).
- Outreach and engagement is designed to **treat the whole person.**



What We Know About Outreach and Engagement (cont.)

- **Respect** for the client is critical.
- **Relationship-building** is of utmost importance.
- **Meeting basic needs** is an important component of outreach.



What we know about Outreach and Engagement

- **Outreach programs should be designed to serve people who have difficulty accessing services.** People who are homeless and experiencing mental illness or substance use easily fall through the cracks because they may be harder to engage in services. The goal of outreach is to reach people who would otherwise not be reached.
- **The end goal is to integrate people into the community.** Outreach can invite people into an empowering community. Many outreach efforts teach life skills, job training, and help those they serve learn to function independently.



Race and Homelessness are Inextricably Linked

UNEVEN ODDS, UNEQUAL OUTCOMES.

Overall, Black people are **5 times more likely to experience homelessness** than White people.

Native Americans are **4 times more likely** than White people.



<https://community.solutions/race-and-homelessness-are-inextricably-linked-heres-what-were-doing-about-it/>

Outreach: Cultural Considerations

Cultural and Linguistic Competence

Unfortunately, clients from diverse racial and ethnic groups can feel more estranged and disconnected from supports when outreach teams fail to understand cultural differences

Culturally and linguistically appropriate services are respectful of and responsive to the beliefs, practices, and needs of diverse people. When outreaching, try and recognize the particular cultural needs of the individual.

Programs should include cultural, linguistic, and treatment needs. Accommodations should ensure cultural and linguistically competent services.

Use culturally and linguistically appropriate screening tools, and tools/approaches that accommodate disabilities, languages, and religious beliefs when appropriate.

Outreaching Indigenous People

- Historic institutions with which many Indigenous people experiencing homelessness interact, including social services, justice, health care, and child welfare, there is a lack of understanding of Indigenous culture, the effects of historic and ongoing colonialism, and intergenerational trauma.
- These systems often end up putting up barriers to people trying to heal and can be re-traumatizing. Outreach workers and service organizations need to be better informed about Indigenous people.
- Trust needs to be built. Many Indigenous people face barriers in accessing social services due to personal perceptions that they will not be prioritized or helped. Cultivate a culturally safe approach, social services should understand Indigenous lived experiences of trauma/colonial violence, to increase compassion for the Indigenous community.



Connecting w/ Indigenous People

- **Build Strong Relationships with Indigenous Service Providers.**
- **Identify Indigenous-led and culture-based one-on-one counselling and support.**
- **Identify Indigenous led Healing circles**



The following principles should guide the work with indigenous people:

1. **Strengths-Based:** Acknowledging the inherent strengths of individuals, families, and communities.
2. **Trauma-Informed:** Use trauma-informed practices to engage.
3. **Culture:** Implementing and understanding of cultural practices as a basis of understanding.
4. **Intersectionality:** Recognizing that the experience of every individual is unique.
5. **Indigenous Leadership and Inclusion:** Prioritizing the engagement and employment of Indigenous individuals, families, communities, and organizations into homeless outreach.
6. **Environmental Acknowledgement:** Honoring the land that we all come from and treating it with great respect.
7. **Collaboration:** Affirming the role of the indigenous community in the development, implementation, and evaluation of all programs and activities.

[Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan](#)

Outreach: LGBTQ+ Identity Considerations

Ask about pronouns (she/her, they/them, he/him):
How does someone want to be identified?

What are the local organizations that serve LGBTQ+ populations?

Are the shelters in the area safe for a person who is transgender?

Is your outreach team trained to support individuals who identify as LGBTQ+?

Trust: Outreach teams must attempt to view whole individuals from a non-judgmental stance.

Outreaching TAY

Mobile Outreach Teams are often a first point of contact with unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness and are especially effective at engaging youth who are hiding.

- **Assertive Outreach:** Assertive outreach teams go to the places where youth keep themselves hidden, such as parks, cars, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, parking lots, and public storage lockers. To find youth, outreach teams draw on informal community contacts such as baristas, public librarians, and sanitation workers.
- **Build Trust:** Regularity, predictability, and follow-through are critical to program success.
- **Trauma-Informed Care:** Workers are trained to provide trauma-informed care with an emphasis on meeting youth where they are.
- **Experience with LGBTQ+ Youth:** Given the prevalence of homelessness among LGBTQ+ youth, culturally competent staff and coordination with organizations serving the LGBTQ+ community is important.
- **Meet Basic Needs:** Teams carry supplies to meet basic needs — clothing, food, water, hygiene items — and offer a hotline for youth to call for help or emergencies.

<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Ending-Youth-Homelessness-Promising-Program-Models.pdf>

Bridge Housing Outreach and Engagement

- » **Coordinated:** Building on existing efforts in your community
- » **Person-Centered:** Providing choice and support for individual needs
- » **Collaborative:** Identifying opportunities for ending and preventing homelessness





How will you conduct outreach for BHBH?

Potential Partners/Gatekeepers?

Potential Places?

Add into the Chat – potential partners and places for outreach

Outreach Resources and Partners



- » Homeless outreach service providers
- » Behavioral health providers (are they asking about homelessness?)
- » Law enforcement officers
- » Re-entry coordinators
- » Health providers – emergency rooms, FQHCs, homeless outreach teams
- » Teachers and other school personnel
- » Veteran Services
- » Faith communities
- » Benefits specialists (benefits enrollment, data collection, regional center, DCFS, older adult services, etc.)

Partners: Thinking outside the box



Collaboration with non-traditional partners and places

- Social Security Office
- Libraries
- Jails
- Postal workers
- Food banks
- Business Associations
- Parks and Recreation
- Post office



Breakout – 10 mins

- » What does success mean in outreach and engagement?
- » What may be some resources and challenges of conducting bridge housing outreach and engagement in your community?



Success

Success for BHBH
Outreach -



Challenges

Let's talk through some potential challenges...



Opportunities

...and opportunities

Additional Considerations for Successful Outreach



- Meeting immediate needs while working on housing solutions (e.g., clothing, food, and medical care)
- Flexibility and creativity are essential – especially to reach people who do not wish to engage or struggle to engage
- It is important to involve people with lived experience expertise

Reminders for Successful Outreach and Engagement in BHBH

- Recognition of cultural characteristics, individual circumstances, and unique needs is key.
- Efforts should be coordinated, collaborative, and leverage existing systems designed to reach people experiencing homelessness.
- Providers should prepare to be flexible and creative to enhance partnerships with others in the community and to reach those that have been traditionally difficult to reach.



Resources

- » Health Outreach Partners: [National Outreach Guidelines for Underserved Populations](#)
- » SAMHSA: [Expanding Access to and Use of Behavioral Health Services for People Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- » Homeless and Housing Resource Center: [Trauma-Informed Outreach and Engagement Learning Community](#)
- » Additional resources available in our [BHBH Resource Library](#)

Questions and Discussion

