PROJECT

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December 1997

HISTORY:

In addressing the need for housing within the city of Camden, there are at least two agencies providing transitional housing. One of these agencies is the Aids Coalition of South Jersey (A.C.S.J.) which has one house for five men with HIV. The second agency is the Volunteers of America (VOA) who presently only provide transitional housing for sixteen (16) men.

Demographics show that there are more than 4,300 homeless persons in the city, with nearly half of them single adults. In Camden County where the population has remained relatively stable over the past five years, the number of persons who are homeless continues to grow. Therefore, it is clear that there is a need for more transitional housing to help this population. Transitional housing will provide the much-needed services for this population. The statistics from 1995 and 1996 Respond's P.A.T.H. Day Center for homeless men show that their level of service (LOS) is nearly 70% over contractual requirements. Since it's opening seven (7) years ago, the P.A.T.H. Day Center has served a total of 2,280 unduplicated homeless adult males. To date, this figure represents 2,045 inactive files and a current active caseload totaling 235 unduplicated clients.

Furthermore, the population of street homeless persons who do not qualify for other programs, or who refuse to access other programs are utilizing the emergency shelter in overwhelming numbers. The population of homeless men is not a popular population to serve. This contributes to the limited resources available to them. A classmate, Lisa Martin, shared the following

statement, "Darrell, I want to commend you on working with (what I consider) a neglected group of people needing service. Often I hear from people in poverty that so many services are available to women and children (who are in much need) but there are others that we tend to forget (such as the men you are proposing to help). Our society tends to think men should be able to care for themselves. Great job!!" Lisa is correct! The mindset of society does not demonstrate the same compassion for a homeless adult male as for a mother and her children.

More than 90% of these individuals who come to the day center and night shelter have substance abuse problems. Many are mentally ill, dually diagnosed or have been chronically homeless. For those who qualify, a transitional housing program will provide the much-needed supportive services for a specified period of approximately one-year. This would allow the client the time to find and possibly maintain employment, start a savings account and finally move to a level of independent living, thereby becoming able to care for themselves as society expects.

PROJECT GOALS:

My intentions were to initiate an arrangement with State Street Housing Corporation, who owns at least seventy (70) residential properties. My request was to allow the use of one (1) house for a demonstration project. This project would accept four (4) men who must be employed, therefore capable of paying a minimal rent of $180.00 per month. The men would meet three (3) times a week

for case management, group counseling and follow up on their employment progress for three months.

After three months of intense case management and group meetings, the men will be trained to handle and oversee other transitional houses for a period of nine (9) months. The process could take eighteen months to two years to open the first transitional house. If all goes well, the second part of the arrangement with the Director of State Street Housing would be to acquire use of a second house. One of the trained tenants would oversee the second house; The second house would target municipal welfare clients. The primary focus for this population would be to first obtain employment, start a savings account and achieve unsubsidized independent living. The long-term goal would be to develop a total of ten (10) transitional homes within the next five years. It is possible that with ten (10) transitional homes the target population may expand to include services to single women and families.

Methods:

I set out to access the feasibility of developing a pilot project and securing short term funding until which time the project could generate enough revenue to become independent. A group of three to five individuals representing community residents, service providers, and current, or past consumers were identified to serve in an advisory capacity. The task of this core group was to assist in identifying, securing and opening the first transitional house to provide residence for three single adult males. My expected inputs, outputs and implementation timeline were as follows:

Expected Outputs:

A. Develop a mechanism and schedule to report and gain support and affiliation between Respond, Inc. and State Street Housing Corporation.

B. Group will complete a feasibility study by developing a survey, which targets the current homeless population.

C. Initiate strategy to generate and obtain initial start up capital and seed money.

D. Recruit other entities to provide supportive services to the program participants.

E. Develop a program proposal/business plan outlining, operations, staffing, program, budget, evaluations, etc.

Expected Inputs:

1. Individuals who are willing to participate in the planning and development of the project.
2. Conducting surveys and formulating a summary of results.
3. People to participate in negotiations for securing use of facilities from State Street Housing.
4. Information and data collection on regulations for project operations with acquired facilities, (i.e. zoning approval, certificates of occupancy, Inspections, etc.)
5. Participation on local Homeless Network Planning Committee to gain support from other service providers.
6. Development of curriculum and project proposal for project operations.

Implementation Plan:

DATES	TASKS	RESPONSIBILITY
December 1996	Presentation of intent to CEO State Street Housing Corporation. Presentation of intent to Respond, Inc. CEO.	CED person.
January 1997	Presentation of intent to State Street Housing Corporation Board of Directors. Presentation of intent to Respond, Inc. Board of Directors. Presentation of intent to Homeless Network Planning Committee. Core group identified and first meeting held.	CED person CED person/Core group
February 1997	Core group meets to develop survey and method of distribution	CED person/Core group
March 1997	Surveys distributed and collected.	CED person/Core group/HNPC (Homeless Network Planning Committee)
April 1997	Core group analysis data and develop program based on outcome.	CED person/Core group

DATES	TASKS	RESPONSIBILITY
May 1997	Recruit other entities and begin identifying funding resources.	CED person./Core group
June 1997	Identify possible housing locations	CED person/Core group
July 1997	Visit potential sites.	CED person/Core group
August 1997	Identify and secure location, begin approval process necessary to utilize location for project. Proposal preparation.	CED person/Core group
September 1997	Identify and target possible funding sources.	CED person/Core group
October 1997	Submit proposals for funding	CED person/Core group
November 1997	Review progress for identify target date for opening of first house.	CED person/Core group
December 1997	Publicize anticipated opening	CED person/Core group

8

RESULTS:

December 1996 through January 1997 started with some obstacles. However by February 1997 I was back on track with the implementation timeline.

As of February 1997, the core group and myself had met and were in the process of developing a survey. We reviewed similar surveys used by other housing programs, and sought feedback from Ms. Debra Polk, the Assistant Business Administrator at the City of Camden, Bureau of Grants Management and Community Development. After meeting with Ms. Polk, the core group members and I began to strategically plan a process which would best result in getting approval from the City Zoning board. I learned that proactive planning which allows you to foresee possible obstacles could benefit in the progression of my project and avoid delays by the Zoning Board.

In March 1997 we selected from two (2) survey formats. Surveys were distributed to clients. While moving through the process, it was brought to my attention that we should have made some of the surveys in Spanish. I agreed, and identified someone who could translate them.

Early in April 1997, I awaited the return of the translated surveys in order to distribute them. I welcomed the opportunity to reach a larger number of homeless men. As this project continued to progress I became excited about the utilization of one house as a pilot site. The house provided a residence for four formerly homeless men who had gained employment and would soon start training to assist in the management of future transitional housing.

During the month of May, I joined with other organizations in a collaborative effort to apply for 1997 HUD funding. After attending several pre-planning meetings with these organizations, we identified service priorities and a lead agency. However, on May 13, 1997, I attended a technical assistance pre-bid meeting in Trenton, New Jersey. Once presented with all the information and sharing it with the board of directors, a decision was made not to apply for these funds at this time. This decision was based on the following:

1. HUD's priority for 1997 funding was to be given to previously funded programs that were in need of refunding. There were currently three (3) large programs that fit these criteria (Veteran's Haven, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital and Volunteers of America).
2. There was a required 100% match of funds to apply.
3. Restrictions of 25% on operation cost for the first year and 50% on the second and third years.

On May 14, 1997, we announced our withdrawal from the Consortium to apply for the 1997 HUD funds. However, the board did assure me that we would continue to look for other funding sources to support our transitional housing program. Also during the month of May, the second property which was identified was found to be too costly to rehabilitate.

The experiences during the month of May were most beneficial in decision-making skills. I was able to identify a possible resource, plan as part of a consortium, analyze possibilities and ultimately decide that this resource did not adequately serve my interest.

By June, four (4) houses were identified and set aside for the transitional housing project. In light of the decision not to apply for funding from HUD an aggressive approach to explore other funding sources became urgent. A proposal was forwarded to the W.W. Smith Charitable Trust at CoreStates Bank. I met with the President of the Board of Directors, Dr. Sayers. We worked on a draft application to be submitted to other potential funders. I unsuccessfully sought out an agency suggested to me by the project advisor.

By July, my activities still were reflected as indicated in my timeline. The Core Group, the Director of State Street Housing Corporation, his Construction consultant and myself visited the four houses that were identified for the transitional housing project. With the assistance of the Construction Consultant, we found out that these properties may not require as much rehabilitation as previously expected. Shortly after our visit to these potential sites, the Director of State Street housing Corporation, the President and Vice President of their Board of Directors, the Coordinator of the FDP/GA (Family Development Program for General Assistance) met with Mr. Michael M. Bloom, who is the President of DAVCON, Inc. DAVCON, Inc. is a General Contractor and Construction Service? We discussed the possibility of having his company rehabilitate the four (4) properties. Mr. Bloom expressed an interest to take a closer look at working with the general assistance population for housing, because of the types of funding opportunities he felt might be available for this specific population. Each individual at the meeting had the opportunity to share

with Mr. Bloom how we could support the housing program if his company decided to take on this project.

The Core Group Members continued in their efforts to explore funding possibilities.

In September, I had the opportunity to meet with the city's newly elected Mayor, Milton Milon regarding another initiative. During this meeting I took the opportunity to share my project intentions. The Mayor appeared to be interested. I realized that this was an opportunity to network and to lay the groundwork for future endeavors.

By October 1997 I had finally received the information package I requested from LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation), an agency my project advisor had suggested might be helpful. I requested this package to get a better understanding of the eligibility criteria to access any type of assistance that may be available from this organization.

Furthermore, I continued communication with the City of Camden's Coordinator of Federal and State Aid, Ms. Deborah P. Polk, who also forwarded me information regarding a Federal Funding Seminar. Other contacts included following up with the State Street Housing Corporation's Director, Mr.Clarence Bagwell, who responded in writing of his organization's intent. Mr. Bagwell has expressed continued commitment to this project, however has concerns which have contributed to delays in the progression of this project. He has extended his agreement to provide five (5) properties for the Transitional Housing Project.

Although my timeline indicates the announcement of a target date for the opening of a pilot project in November 1997, this announcement has been delayed due to insufficient availability of funds. None-the-less the commitments are holding firm and the core group continues to explore possible funding alternatives.

Furthermore, the first transitional house continues to operate with 4 residents who were formally homeless. These four men are currently employed and are still potential candidates for residential managers for the future sites.

ANALYSIS/CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Overall I do feel that my project is successful. The enthusiasm experienced in the initial stages has continued to hold the interest and support of all the Core group members. The current success of the one transitional house, which provides a residence for the four men proves the potential of the other houses once, rehabilitated and occupied. The mindset of society to this population has not changed drastically, however the mindset of those who come into contact of the four men who have now become successfully employed and are contributing to society has changed. This under served population must first be given the chance to access resources and supports that will assist them in their plight to become productive members of society.

Although I do not consider myself to be politically savvy, I have learned the importance of identifying the key leaders, and politically connected individuals to gain support. The community and the politicians may not find homeless men to be a heartthrob of a charitable contribution, yet the politicians do enjoy the publicity received when there are no deaths in the city due to the local government funds which support the emergency shelters. Public events, such as "picnic in the park," for the homeless and "job fairs" for recipients of municipal welfare have gained local recognition to this population and the local government for their contribution to these events. I will continue to be aware of the political climate as well as the issues on the forefront within the community as the Core Group and myself complete this project. The contacts that I have

made over the past seventeen months, and the networking possibilities continue to provide opportunities for further implementation.

My next steps will be to continue to follow up on funding possibilities, continue to build supports, and resources, build upon suggestions from other classmates, follow my original timeline, evaluate each outcome carefully and expand my resources to make this project a reality.

My recommendation to someone undertaking a similar project would be:

- Develop a desired timeline, yet be realistic in planning.
- Realize that delays are not necessarily denials.
- Network and build necessary supports.
- Collect lots of data that documents facts and statistics.
- Be prepared to develop different strategies, just in case "Plan A" does not prove successful.
- Expect to work hard, and sometimes alone.
- Be willing to negotiate.
- Don't Give Up!