

Bridging the Gaps



Homelessness has no Place

Student Interns:

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Academic Preceptor:

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Community Preceptor:

Brendan Scully, MSW, DePaul USA

COMMUNITY PARTNER

Depaul USA, Philadelphia, opened in April 2009 and manages six programs, including a social enterprise that provides employment for previously housing-insecure individuals, transitional housing for young adults exiting the foster care system, long-term housing for disabled individuals, supportive housing for college students, and a live-in, six-month recovery program. Depaul provides extensive services including housing, financial assistance, case management, and employment assistance. The organization strives to cultivate support networks for residents so that they can meet their individual goals of quality of life and stability. <https://depaulusa.org/programs/philadelphia/>

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT



- A January 2022 Point-in-Time (PIT) count, which seeks to estimate to estimate homelessness on a single night found that **582,462 people, or approximately 18 out of every 10,000 people**, were experiencing homelessness across the United States.
- Over 80% of people served through Philadelphia's compendium of programs in 2022 were people of color.
- The average length of stay in an Emergency Shelter (ES), Safe Haven (SH) or Transitional Housing (TH) was 143 days, down from 170 in 2020.
- Philadelphia decreased the number of unsheltered persons by 27% from 2018 to 2022 with an overall 22% decrease in the number of homeless persons (sheltered and unsheltered) for the same period.
- Source: [OHS FY2022 Data Snapshot](#)



TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

The Bridging the Gaps student interns worked at three sites run by Depaul USA, Philadelphia: Depaul House, St. Raymond's, and St. Joseph's. Depaul House focuses on men in recovery; St. Raymond's provides long-term housing to individuals who were previously unhoused; and St. Joseph's provides housing for college students experiencing housing insecurity. The interns surveyed the needs of each location separately before scheduling programs. The interns provided 1:1 assistance with résumé-building and job-seeking skills for residents in the Depaul House recovery program. They helped residents at St. Raymond's apply for housing and disability services, led conversations about smoking cessation and general health, and assisted with scheduling medical appointments. Additionally, they encouraged residents at to join in gardening (both sites) and landscaping the front courtyard (St. Raymond's). At St. Joseph's, the interns focused on practical life skills, such as mapping out educational goals and milestones and career planning. The interns also supported Depaul House administration with planning their fall fundraiser and research to support a new medical respite program proposal.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Depaul House

One of our most tangible accomplishments was assisting five residents with resume creation, job applications, and onboarding paperwork. Several of the men were successfully hired, achieving a major milestone on their road to re-entering society! Another highlight of each week was unloading and sorting through the weekly food delivery from Philabundance, which also became a time to engage with DePaul house neighbors, staff, and residents in a more lighthearted and fun way.

St. Raymond's

Because residents popped in and out of St. Ray's according to their own schedule, we treated every interaction as an opportunity to listen intentionally and learn. Between conversations with residents and shadowing the day-to-day work of the program director, we gained an in-depth understanding of homeless services in Philadelphia and the intersection between substance use, mental and physical disability, and homelessness. We also assisted with minor building maintenance, including a community garden area and landscaping.

St. Joseph's

Many students were on summer vacation, so we focused our support on one student as he applied to post-graduation jobs. We also set up a new computer room for the residents, so students can complete assignments at home rather than stay late at school!

REFLECTIONS

Brianna Cattelino: "This internship has provided a no-frills look at the intersection of homelessness, mental health, substance use and recovery. It seems almost obvious to say, but throughout the summer I have seen how there really is no one path to homelessness or addiction. Additionally, there are innumerable aspects of our society that make those experiences harder to work through. Navigating social services, affordable housing, managing healthcare, etc. feels like an uphill battle most of the time. In getting to know residents at each of the houses, I have also begun to think about my role as a medical provider in a new light, especially when taking care of individuals experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity, or in recovery. I have seen how difficult continuity of care can be for these populations and witnessed the confusion that can arise while trying to interpret medical instructions. I think this is one of the most valuable insights from this summer, and I hope to use this knowledge to make me a more aware, intentional and considerate physician in the future."

Colin Moran: "This experience will benefit me professionally in many different ways. At the most basic level I now have a better understanding of the logistics of homeless services and how to navigate the infrastructure of available resources. While this undoubtedly will be very helpful knowledge to have in the future, I feel that my time spent getting to know the residents of these great communities will be where the real benefits lie. Building trust with the residents and hearing their stories has grown my sense of empathy and I look forward to continuing to work with similar populations in the future."

