

AGING WITH GRACE HOMELESS SHELTER FOR OLDER ADULTS: A GRANT PROPOSAL

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Abstract:

The Aging with Grace homeless shelter grant proposal project represents a critical intervention aimed at addressing the growing issue of homelessness among older adults in Los Angeles County. As the number of homeless seniors continues to rise, it becomes imperative to create a dedicated support system that tackles their unique difficulties. The intended agency for this project is Homeless Outreach Program Integrated Care System (HOPICS), a homeless outreach program located in Los Angeles County. This agency integrates essential services such as shelter, case management, medical assistance, and permanent housing placement, ensuring these vulnerable individuals receive comprehensive care. The primary objective of this grant proposal includes facilitating permanent housing for up to 1,000 older adults annually and improving access to essential health services within a structured timeline. By offering case management, mental health assessments, and medical care access, the shelter aims to provide not only immediate relief but also a pathway to stability and dignity for homeless older adults who have long been marginalized.

Introduction:

In Los Angeles County, where the median age is 37, one quarter of the population identified as homeless were at least 55 years of age (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority [LAHSA], 2020). According to the California Interagency Council on Homelessness (2023), individuals over the age of 50 have the highest rate of chronic homelessness (39.6%).

- Older adults are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of living on the streets, including health issues, lack of access to care, and the risk of victimization (Om et al., 2022; Tong et al., 2019).
- Older adults comprise the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population (Henderson et al., 2023).
- Some of the major factors contributing to the growing number of homeless older adults include a lack of services and support (Henderson et al., 2023) and a lack of affordable housing for seniors on a fixed income, which does not cover the increased costs of housing (Prunhuber, 2024).
- With rising costs for housing and a lack of affordable units, many older adults must decide whether to pay for housing or other necessities such as food and medical care (Fenelon & Mawhorter, 2020).

Targeted Population:

Older adults who are 65 and older living in Los Angeles County

- Residents can be single or married and stay in the shelter for 30 days until they are placed in permanent housing.

Potential Funder and Host Agency:

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) would be a great funder.

- This funder's mission aligns with the proposed project, and the funding is adequate. This funder is dedicated to addressing and ending homelessness in LA County.
- LAHSA provides access to shelters, housing and supportive services.

HOPICS is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing support and resources to individuals experiencing homelessness in the community.

- Direct services includes case management and housing placement
- HOPICs currently has 16 shelter beds designated for older adults and 150 in their other shelters.

Description of Proposed Project:

The proposed program will provide funding for shelter and services for older adults experiencing homelessness in LA County. The program will provide housing for at least 1,000 homeless adults 65 and older.

The goal is to create a safe and supportive environment for older adults and provide them with various age-appropriate services and activities.

This program will have a social work department consisting of a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), 2 master-level social workers, 3 Masters of Social Work (MSW) interns.

Social workers/interns can conduct assessments, plan treatment, and link residents to services/resources.

Description of Analysis:

Case Management: Intensive case management for homeless older adults is a crucial service that provides benefits (Ponka et al., 2020).

One of the primary benefits of case management for homeless older adults is providing comprehensive and individualized support. Individuals who receive case management are more likely to secure stable housing, access healthcare, and experience improved mental and physical health (Ponka et al. 2020)

Trauma Informed Care: Recognizes the impact of past trauma on an individual's current well-being and behavior. Hopper et al. (2010) found supporting the effectiveness of trauma-informed care for people experiencing homelessness. A trauma-informed approach to case management involves creating a safe and supportive environment for clients, building trust and rapport, and empowering individuals.

Cultural Sensitivity: Recognizes and respects the diversity of clients' backgrounds, beliefs, and values and tailor services to meet their unique needs and preferences (Stubbe, 2020). Homeless older adults come from different cultural backgrounds and have different practices related to health, housing, and social services. Cultural sensitivity is crucial in addressing these disparities and providing appropriate care and support.

Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: Homeless older adults to obtain permanent housing through the Aging with Grace homeless shelter.

Objective 1: Shelter residents will work closely with a case manager and receive supportive services to assist them with acquiring permanent housing within 45 days of admission.

Goal 2: Improve mental and medical health care access for older adults in the shelter.

Objective 2.: The Aging with Grace homeless shelter will assess shelter residents for mental health and medical services within 7 days of admission.

Outcomes:

- Residents will begin services, including on-site medical care, mental health counseling, and case management support. Staff will meet with residents weekly or as needed and provide housing placement services.
 - Eighty percent of shelter residents will obtain permanent housing.
- Residents will begin services, including on-site medical care, mental health counseling, and case management support.
 - One hundred percent of shelter residents will be assessed for services.

Summary of Budget:

The projected budget for this Homeless Shelter's first year is **\$817,057**

- Includes salary, pay, training for additional staff and volunteers, operating costs, essential equipment, office supplies, and evaluation.
 - Personnel (2 social workers, 1 PT LCSW) = \$113,420.
 - Direct Operating Costs (rent, kitchen, office supplies, equipment, phones, filing cabinets, Food) = \$137,000
 - Indirect Costs = \$68,460

Potential Impact of Proposed Project:

- Creating homeless shelters specifically for homeless older adults will maintain the NASW's (2023) emphasis on promoting social and economic justice and protecting the rights of those who are disadvantaged and powerless.
- Cultural competence is an important principle of the *Code of Ethics* and emphasizes the importance of understanding and respecting the cultural backgrounds and identities of clients.
- Advocating for the rights and well-being of homeless older adults is necessary to help ensure that they receive equitable service (NASW, 2023).

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