Success of Residents Exiting

Hope Again Transition Homes

Elyse Westin – TUL 675 Research Project/Thesis II – Summer 2016

Master of Arts in Transformational Urban Leadership – Azusa Pacific University

08

**Fall**

# Macintosh HD:Users:elysewestin:Desktop:HOPE+AGAIN+logo.jpgMacintosh HD:Users:elysewestin:Desktop:og_apu_logo.pngMacintosh HD:Users:elysewestin:Desktop:Screen Shot 2016-07-22 at 5.05.52 PM.pngAbstract

This study examines how elements in the Hope Again program affect success of residents in attaining a job and stable housing. Hope Again is a small faith-based, non-profit organization located in East Hollywood, California serving men and women experiencing homelessness. Their staff size of \_\_\_ serves one men’s and one women’s transitional house with up to \_\_\_ men and \_\_\_ women. The participants in this research are five previous and five current residents of the men’s and women’s transitional houses, as well as six Hope Again staff and two other organizations with transitional housing programs in the Los Angeles area. The qualitative methods of narrative analysis and grounded theory (one-on-one structured interviews) were used to conduct this research and analyze the data. The pastoral cycle was used to theologically conduct the research process and analysis of the data. The final results of the data concluded that many residents felt several elements of the program helped them in their search for a job, yet felt there could have been more assistance and preparation for attaining stable housing upon their exit *(include the themes found for residents & staff)*. Their responses were compared with similar research done in two Los Angeles organizations *showing…* These results are valuable for Hope Again staff as they seek to improve the transitional housing program and its effectives in preparing residents for attaining a job and stable housing. It has assisted them in evaluating which elements to keep, change, add or remove.

Main themes

Theories you’re dealing with

Application

Table of Contents

Abstract 2

Chapter 1: Research Focus 6

Introduction to Topic 6

Acknowledgements 6

Variables 6

Research Question 7

Community Relevance 8

Assumptions or Presuppositions 8

Population and Locations 8

Chapter 2: Literature Review 10

Introduction 10

Goals of Transitional Housing Programs & Defining “Success” 10

Successful Elements of Transitional Housing Programs 11

Unsuccessful Elements of Transitional Housing Programs 12

Variables 14

Tools for Program Evaluation & Ways to Improve the Program 15

Qualitative Methodology & How Data is Analyzed 16

Conclusion 17

Chapter 3: Methods 18

Theoretical Approach & Validity 18

Research Guide and Assistants 20

Ethical Considerations 20

Permissions 21

Outcomes and Outputs 22

Research Product (outputs) 22

Action Outcomes 22

Community Benefits (outcomes) 23

Use as a Vehicle for Fundraising 23

Chapter 4: Theological Framework 25

Action-Reflection Process: The Pastoral Cycle 25

Chapter 5: Findings & Data Description 30

Research Participants 30

Defining “Success” of Residents 30

Themes from Resident & Hope Again Staff Interviews 32

Themes from the San Fernando Valley Rescue Mission Interview 33

Measuring & Tracking Resident Success 34

Chapter 6: Data Analysis 35

Chapter 7: Conclusion 36

Appendix A 37

Program Review & Interview Questions 37

Bibliography 42

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Defining Success of Residents 10

Figure 2: Successful & Unsuccessful Program Elements 13

Figure 3: Data Collection Methods 17

Figure 4: Steps of the Pastoral Cycle 24

Figure 5: The Pastoral Cycle Process 25

Figure 6: Executive Director’s Definition of Success 29

Figure 7: Hope Again Staff’s Definition of Success 30

Figure 8: Comparison of Executive Director & Staff Definitions of Success……………………..30

Figure 9: Themes from Previous & Current Resident Program Reviews 31

Figure 10: Themes from Hope Again Staff Program Reviews 31

Figure 11: Similarities & Differences Between Resident & Staff Themes 32

Figure 12: Success as Defined by the SFVRM 32

# Chapter 1: Research Focus

## Introduction to Topic

Currently, Hope Again does not have a system of evaluating their programming and its effectiveness in preparing residents for their exit into the job and housing market. Therefore, evaluating the current program and the effectiveness of elements such as, the requirements of residents to adhere to the program schedule and required Hope Again appointments, is an important topic to investigate.

One thing we already know surrounding this topic is that previous residents have exited the transitional homes for various reasons and with various levels of success. Some have exited and:

* Moved into another organization’s transitional housing once their time is up at Hope Again
* Entered into a steady job and/or housing
* Been required to leave Hope Again due to drug or alcohol use

We also know that some residents exit Hope Again with a favorable attitude toward the organization and others with a bitter attitude. In order to learn more about the success of residents after they exit and whether they felt they were adequately prepared to do so, it is necessary and valuable to conduct program reviews with previous and current residents as part of the research process.

## Acknowledgements

A special thanks to my professor, Dr. Viv Grigg, for his relentless assistance and guidance through the entire research process. Next, I want to thank Ross Lokken, Executive Director of Hope Again, for his vision and input on this research project, and for allowing me the opportunity to research the current transitional housing program. To Ilene Slater at Hope Again who made numerous phone calls and initiated many conversations with residents making the connection between the resident and myself possible for an interview to take place.

I’d also like to thank the previous residents, current residents, and Hope Again staff for allowing me the privilege of interviewing them and gathering their valuable experiences and insight into the Hope Again program. Lastly, I am grateful for the time and input through an interview with the San Fernando Valley Rescue Mission (SFVRM) and PATH about their transitional housing programs. Each of these people and others made this research project possible.

## Variables

Some of the factors affecting a resident’s successful exit into the job and housing market could be:

1. Material taught in the classes does not match the skills residents feel they need in order to grow and successfully exit. (classes currently taught are: relationships, anger management, life skills, Bible study [2 per week], and church service [2 per week])
2. The methods used in facilitating the classes are not effective. As I had the opportunity to live and work as the house manager in the women’s house, a resident shared with me there was a class she would write in her journal during because she felt it was a waste of time (personal communication, February 2016.).
3. Time spent individually with residents in weekly appointments each with the therapist, case worker, and chaplain might need to be rethought to be more equipping in job skills and housing. As R. Lokken has expressed, Hope Again does not currently have a way of evaluating their programming (personal communication, February 2016). Therefore, this is an important element of the program to consider.
4. Motivation to move forward, learn, and improve could be a factor affecting the success of residents upon exit. According to Yarosz (2003), “the participants’ own attitudes and behaviors had differential impact on their success in the program and the perceived failure of others” (50).
5. Personal grief, stress, anxiety, etc. could be a factor in the resident’s ability to move forward. This could also affect the amount of time the individual needs to remain living in the transitional home in order to heal, receive counsel and guidance, and equipping in job or life skills. The research of Richardson and Landsman (1996) showed some of the staff responses about major barriers to a participant’s success include: psychological/psychiatric problems, lack of supportive services in the community, and lack of social skills (p. 15). This could all be contributing to the resident’s ability to move forward.
6. The house manager and other staff’s attitude, work ethics, or expectations for living in the transitional home affect the resident’s motivation, stress-level, or focus. The staff plays an important role in the resident’s success as shown in the research by Yarosz (2003). Residents commented on the support, helpfulness, and availability of the staff overall as well as the staff counselors being cheerful, open to listening to their problems, informative, and helpful. (p. 52-54).
7. The resident’s spiritual response to circumstances. One of the Hope Again staff has observed this as a factor in residents over the years (D. Wilson, personal communication, March 2016).

## Research Question

The main question I am seeking to answer is: How do elements in the Hope Again program affect success of residents in attaining a job and stable housing? This question includes an evaluation of the program elements offered by Hope Again to transitional housing residents. The two items to be explored are resident success in a stable job and housing situation once they have exited from the program.

## Community Relevance

The evaluation and study of this topic is timely and relevant to Hope Again needs as they do not fully know whether the residents are successful upon exit and how their program is a factor in this success or lack thereof. Therefore, the results of this research will better equip Hope Again leadership and staff in considering, developing, and implementing necessary changes to the program. As they implement these changes, they can know that what they are providing is more effective in preparing residents to succeed in attaining a job and stable housing.

## Assumptions or Presuppositions

Some assumptions going into this research are:

* The responses of residents and staff will vary.
  + I think some will evaluate the program as fantastic with some suggestions for improvements
  + Others will greatly dislike it and feel restrained by the program requirements and rules.
  + I expect some of the staff to have a positive outlook on the program and feel confident in its effectiveness, while others are questioning whether what they’re doing is truly helping.
* This research is important because God calls us to serve and help the poor.
  + Hope Again’s mission is to serve God in this way. However, if they do not know how effective their program is, then they may be falling short of what they desire to do.
  + I think some residents and staff will express their connection with Hope Again as one of God’s doing and how it is furthering their capacity to serve Him.

## Population and Locations

In order to gather information to answer the research question, I will set up and conduct program reviews with previous residents, current residents, Hope Again staff, and local organizations similar to Hope Again. I will discuss the program with five previous residents, five current residents, six Hope Again staff, and two local organizations.

In order to contact the previous and current residents, Hope Again staff will assist me in retrieving their contact information, as well as make the initial contact and invitation to participate in the study. Then, I will contact the residents who are interested in participating and set up the program reviews. In setting up program reviews with the Hope Again staff, I will make contact inviting them to participate in the study, and if they choose to participate, I will set up the program review.

I will plan to meet the residents and Hope Again staff at either a coffee shop or in the Hope Again office, wherever they are more comfortable. The program reviews will focus on the participant’s perspectives and evaluation of the program and how effective it is in preparing residents to exit into the job and housing market. I will also ask what elements for success they perceive should be included or changed in the program that would better equip them.

Another group I will interview to further knowledge in the area of transitional housing programs is two or three organizations with transitional housing and a similar focus and mission as Hope Again. These interviews will focus on learning about their programming for residents and the principles used to create and evaluate the effectiveness of what is offered. I would also like to learn how they evaluate whether residents are successful after exit.

***Insert map?***

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## Introduction

In evaluating transitional housing programs for their effectiveness in preparing residents for success in the job and housing market, multiple studies have been conducted surrounding this topic. Transitional housing is not a new concept and some studies question its effectiveness in ending homelessness or prolonging it. Studies have been conducted interviewing residents as to their perspectives of the program and its elements in preparing them for a job and permanent housing situation. This is important to study because if a program is failing to prepare participants in successfully maintaining a job and permanent housing situation, they may reenter homelessness.

The topics covered in this literature review include: the goals of transitional housing, how various studies and programs define “success,” some successful and unsuccessful elements of programs, the different variables affecting resident success upon program exit, perspectives on the importance of program evaluation and improvement, and use of the methodology in studies similar to the one I will conduct.

## Goals of Transitional Housing Programs & Defining “Success”

One of the main goals as outlined in the report by Elgin Community Coll., Ill. is “job training and placement of the homeless followed by permanent housing” (1992, p. 4). Transitional housing also offers an “alternative to emergency shelters for those in need of long-term housing and services to better transition into being independent members of the community” (McFarland, 2011, p. 14-15).

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (2012) states that one of the main goals of transitional housing programs is to move people into permanent housing more quickly. Similarly, The Urban Institute and The Center for What Works (2006) uses this goal as a way of defining success of participants. According to their definition, when a client graduates the program, this means they “complete the shelter program that assists them in moving to stable housing” and long-term housing needs are met by way of a “rental house or apartment, public housing, Section 8 housing, Shelter Plus Care housing, home ownership, moving in with family or friends within 24 months of program entry” (p. 3 & 4).

According to the study of single homeless mothers conducted by Yarosz, success is defined as evaluators using “traditional outcome measures, such as the women finding permanent housing and permanent jobs, achieving their GEDs, pursuing various adult education program options, and expressing satisfaction with the program” (2003, p. 47).

In another study conducted in Iowa evaluating families in transitional housing programs, Richardson and Landsman defined participant success in terms of housing: “At the time of departure from the program, at least 86 percent had secured housing. Sixty-six percent secured their own housing, 16 percent moved in with relatives, and 4 percent moved into other living arrangements (e.g. residential treatment program)” (1996, p. 20). In their follow-up of 51 program participants about six months after leaving transitional housing, “Long-term housing stability was achieved for at least 65 percent of these former participants; 33 families reported residing in the ‘same (or better) housing as at last contact,’” and “time in the program and successful completion also correlated significantly with housing stability at follow-up” (p. 21).

Finding permanent jobs

Achieving their GED

Expressing satisfaction with the program

Finding permanent or long-term housing (residing in the same or better residence after 6 months of exiting transitional housing)

**Defining Success of Residents**

Pursuing adult education program options

Securing housing of their own, with relatives, or other

#### Figure 1: Defining Success of Residents

## Successful Elements of Transitional Housing Programs

The Doorway to Hope program researched by Yarosz is defined as “a model program from participants’ perspectives” (2003, abstract). Some of the elements that made this program effective were those implemented from principles of adult education (p. 56-57). Other major factors that contributed toward participant success were resources provided by the community. The elements affecting resident success were:

1. “The participants were supportive and helpful to one another.”
2. “Overall the staff was supportive and helpful.”
3. “The overwhelming majority of the participants experienced the paraprofessional counseling staff members (FSCs) as being cheerful and upbeat with a sense of humor, open to listening to their problems, informative, and willing to help. Both were ‘strong’ women who were role models with whom the participants could identify.”
4. “The program director was available, supportive, and helpful to the participants.”
5. The psychologist, although he was there on a part-time basis primarily for staff training and development, was supportive and a good listener.” (p. 52-54).

Richardson and Landsman recorded that some of the program elements leading to the success of residents were: substance abuse counseling, recreational services, length of time in the program, and attending adult support groups (1996, vi). These elements were also in conjunction with the positive relationship built between the case manager and participant and “a discharge plan which includes accompanying clients through the process of obtaining residency, and engagement, are characteristics of effective interventions” (p. 19).

Hagen’s study of homeless women records that some of the needed elements in the program to further success of residents would be the development of services such as: “housing alternatives, training and employment services, health services, and mental health services” (1990, p. 9). Also, another crucial component, as mentioned above in the research of Richardson and Landsman, is the role and relationship of the case manager with the resident. Kaufman writes (as cited in Hagen, 1990), that the case manager is “someone who can ‘mobilize the resources necessary to assist a person out of the crisis and on the road to stabilization’ as well as a provider of mental health services” (p. 10).

The Urban Institute and Burt found in their research of homeless families that transitional housing programs “appear to help the families who use them to achieve some important goals, such as maintaining stable housing and treating substance abuse” (2010, p. iii). They also found that longer stays in the transitional homes gave the families time to develop skills that assist them in maintaining employment (p. iii). Although this research is focused on homeless families, the principles could also apply to single homeless men and women.

## Unsuccessful Elements of Transitional Housing Programs

Yarosz recorded some of the more difficult aspects of the program that residents identified:

1. “Many had trouble with program boundaries represented by the rules.”
2. “Although one participant was moving toward independence and responsibility for problem solving, she did not realize that these were goals of the program.”
3. “Two participants did not like the way their [paraprofessional counseling staff members] helped them.”
4. “Although participants had difficulties with their [paraprofessional counseling staff members], they did feel free to go to the other staff for help” (2003, p. 54-55).

In regards to reasons for program failure, one of the reasons Richardson and Landsman writes is, “For the 136 cases for which termination summaries were completed, participants who were not rated as successfully completing the program…[spent] a shorter period of time in the transitional housing program which reduces the opportunity to receive the benefits of services such as support groups” (1996, p. 19). Some of the top areas residents felt they made “little or no progress” while in the program included: housekeeping, housing assistance, education, budgeting, self-esteem (p. 24).

Cunningham, Gillespie, and Anderson discuss how often programs screen potential clients for motivation, administer drug tests, and want to gain an understanding of the individual’s willingness to engage with program services prior to accepting them into the program (2015, p. 5). They state that even after screening out these people, “the evidence on transitional housing shows weak results” because participants exit the program before they have permanent housing and/or a job (p. 5).

A result showing ineffectiveness in programs is “about one-third of transitional housing participants leave for something other than permanent housing” (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2012). This portion of participants exit back into homelessness, another shelter, or simply “disappear.”

#### Figure 2: Successful & Unsuccessful Program Elements

## Variables

The analysis of the data by Yarosz “revealed that the participants’ own attitudes and behaviors had differential impact on their success in the program and the perceived failure of others” (2003, p. 50). If a resident’s attitude was toward the importance and value of hard work, then they would be more successful upon their exit. Whereas, if a resident struggles with drugs or has a negative outlook on the rules of the program, they would have a more challenging experience succeeding.

Two other variables affecting residents’ success were community resources and difficulties encountered with the program. The basic attitudes and behaviors that contributed to a resident’s success were:

1. “A willingness to work hard to accept responsibility for oneself and one’s children.”
2. “A recognition on the part of the participants that they had control over both the daily decisions and the important life choices that they had to make.”
3. “A willingness to sacrifice short-term rewards for longer-term goal achievement” (Yarosz, p. 50-51).

Other attitudes and behaviors that led to failure in the program were:

1. “Unresolved drug or alcohol addiction or abuse.”
2. “Failing to take seriously the boundaries represented by the rules” (Yarosz, p. 51).

After asking staff what some of the major barriers were to a participant’s success, the research of Richardson and Landsman showed their responses to be the following areas:

* Poor motivation
* Lack of social skills
* Psychological/psychiatric problems
* Lack of “school” skills
* Chemical dependency
* History of sexual abuse
* Lack of affordable housing
* Lack of employment opportunities & low salaries
* Lack of supportive services in the community (1996, p. 15)

## Tools for Program Evaluation & Ways to Improve the Program

Elgin Community Coll., Ill. importantly assesses the evaluation approach: “Evaluation of program effort is a cornerstone of the program’s success; effective evaluation gives merit to the staff’s efforts and can provide new and more beneficial direction. Successful evaluation results give credence to program design” (1992, p. 6). In addition to this, it is important to use this evaluation of the program, results, services, and staff to “improve outcome measures” when necessary (p. 6).

If organizations implement a way of monitoring the desired outcomes of their programs, this “enables organizations to track progress in achieving the program’s mission” and “with this information, program managers can…improve their services” (The Urban Institute and The Center for What Works, 2006, p. 1). It is important to consider ways the program and services can be improved as McDivitt (2012) shared in a presentation titled, “Retooling Your Transitional Housing Program,” that rates of return to homelessness within 12 months after gaining permanent housing are: 15% return to shelters, 7% to transitional housing, and 9% to rapid re-housing.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (2012) shared that some ways to improve transitional housing programs is to shorten the length of stay, which would be moving the program more towards a Rapid Re-Housing model as well as increase the capacity of the program as more people can be served. Also, moving towards a voluntary services model, deciding whether the target population is high barrier or low barrier participants, and changing the number of units per person could positively impact program success.

## Qualitative Methodology & How Data is Analyzed

McFarland’s research methodology for evaluating the transitional housing program for youth in Michigan uses qualitative methods and one-on-one interviews seeking perspectives on the success of the program from previous and current clients (2011, abstract). The interviews consisted of six open-ended questions and served as the primary data collection method in evaluating the program’s effectiveness in preparing clients for permanent, stable housing (p. 23). McFarland’s reasoning for using qualitative methods was “because of the difficulty in collecting quality quantitative data” (p. 23-24).

Another key part in McFarland’s methods was researchers went to the youth transition home, talked with staff, and met current program participants in order to gain necessary background information prior to conducting the interviews. By doing this, they were able to see how the home operated and what the youth were required to do in the program (2011, p. 24).

In both McFarland’s and Yarosz’s methods, they used the responses from the interview questions with participants to form themes or categories. Yarosz referred to this as the “cross-classification method” (2003, 50). These interviews as well as those of Richardson and Landsman each contained open-ended questions (1996, p. 28).

The intent and use of the data McFarland collected is for the organization “to adjust its services to better meet the needs of clients, as designated in the interviews” (2011, p. 25). The analysis of the data was conducted using an interpretative qualitative approach. McFarland writes: “This approach allowed the researcher to determine what [the organization’s] participants thought about the program and what changes participants believe should be made. Similar responses to questions seen more than once were considered a theme” (p. 26).

In another study, Elgin Community Coll., Ill. conducted evaluations of the program by receiving responses from staff, area agencies, and the participants. He asked them to participate in an evaluation of the program services, outcomes, and staff (1992, p. 6). Although the data collection contained a survey with quantitative methods, his use of qualitative methods is similar to what was used in the Hope Again research. The qualitative questions portion asked participants “to qualitatively assess the program- what services should be added, expanded, deleted, changed” (p. 7).

## Conclusion

It is important to gain literature about the perspectives, data, and conclusions of previous research studies to give a framework for the research project at hand. Gathering the perspectives and experiences of current and previous participants in transitional housing programs can provide valuable insight into how the program can be improved in order to more effectively prepare residents in attaining a job and stable housing. This can be done using qualitative research methods. If the goal and measure of success for transitional housing programs is to assist residents in preparing for independent living and exiting with a stable job and housing, then it is vital to know the successful and unsuccessful elements offered in the program.

Gaining perspectives and evaluation of the program elements from previous and current residents, staff, and other organizations that have transitional housing programs serves as beneficial data in assessing the program as a whole. Participant responses can also be reviewed against the existing literature to assist in validating which aspects of the Hope Again program need improvement. Using the above research and methods of previous research studies can help to affirm the data and point the Hope Again staff in the right direction of what would be most logical and beneficial to change, add, remove, or improve first.

# Chapter 3: Methods

#### Figure 3: Data Collection Methods

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Category | Participants | Specifics | Goals |
| Program Reviews | 5 previous residents  (2 men & 3 women)  5 current residents  (3 men & 2 women)  6 Hope Again staff | Structured one-on-one interview; 30-45 minutes; note-taking of responses during interview of responses | To learn what major elements are & are not effectively preparing residents for job & housing market; perspectives on what is needed for successful preparation; theological goal of caring for the poor through action (James 2:15-17) |
| Interviews | San Fernando Valley Rescue Mission (SFVRM)  PATH | Structured one-on-one interview; 30-45 minutes; note-taking during interview of responses | To learn what their key methods are in evaluating programming & measuring success of residents after exit; receive materials/literature related to the field; theological goal of working together to assist those in need (Ecc. 4:12 & Luke 5:17-26) |
| Literature Review | Articles, reports, research studies, etc. | 25-30 articles, reports, research studies, etc. about transitional homes, research methodology, & theology | To learn what previous research found about the evaluation of transitional home programs, their processes & methodology, & theology |

**\***See Appendix A for program review and interview questions.

## Theoretical Approach & Validity

The theoretical basis for using the above data collection methods is based on the phenomenology approach, which is under the umbrella of interpretivism. Some important aspects of phenomenology according to Gray are:

* “Current understandings have to be ‘bracketed’ to the best of our ability to allow phenomena to ‘speak for themselves,’ unadultered by our preconceptions.”
* “The results will be new meaning, fuller meaning or renewed meaning.”
* “The key is gaining the subjective experience of the subject.”
* “Value is ascribed not only to the interpretations of researchers, but also to the subjects of the research themselves.”
* It doesn’t impose “an external logic on a phenomenon” but uses an “inductive approach [that] seeks to find the internal logic of the subject” (2014, p. 24)

The practical research aspects of the phenomenology approach include:

* Studying individuals
* Small number of participants (usually between 5 and 15)
* Using in-depth, unstructured interviews
* The reliability being based on confirmation by participants (Gray, 2014, p. 25).

Although this research study will consist of structured interviews and approximately 28 total participants, the phenomenology approach gives the study a solid framework to be based on. This also helps in the validity of the data as the study seeks to record the subjective experiences of the participants and not impose external logic on the results but seek to uncover the internal logic of participant responses through an inductive approach. As the data is mostly left to “speak for itself” without the influence of the researcher’s preconceptions, this greatly assists in discovering a new or renewed meaning of the Hope Again program through the results.

The validity is also established through the use of the qualitative methods of narrative analysis and grounded theory in order to conduct the research and analyze the data. The triangulation between previous and current residents, Hope Again staff, and existing literature helps as the research data will show similarities and differences between participant responses and those in the literature. The literature also helps to frame and confirm the structure of this research as similar studies have used similar methods in conducting research and analyzing the data.

Some things that could affect the validity of the results are any extremely bitter responses from participants or any staff responses tainted in an effort to cover their lack of performance in their job. As the data is analyzed and Hope Again leadership uses the results to consider what adjustments need to made to the program, the bitter results of residents will either need to be taken into consideration or removed from the program evaluation and improvement process as an exception to the overall tone of the results. As far as staff attempting to “cover their tracks” in lack of job performance and thus their responses and the results being affected due to this, a separate staff evaluation may need to be considered and created by the Hope Again leadership.

Lastly, the size of this research project has been done on a smaller scale with only ten previous residents, ten current residents, five Hope Again staff, and two similar organizations with transitional housing programs. Hope Again itself is a small organization with about ten staff members serving a women’s transitional house that holds up to eight women and a men’s house that can hold up to fourteen men. Perhaps the results of this research project would not be consistent in comparison with program evaluations of larger organizations. Also, since this research project contains a small number of participants, it may not give all the possible feedback that a larger pool of participants would.

## Research Guide and Assistants

Dr. Viv Grigg (professor and research project supervisor) and Ross Lokken (executive director of Hope Again) will both operate as my project guides. Ross and I worked together in the development of program review questions and research processes, and Dr. Grigg reviewed the questions and research process to assure it is done in an ethical manner. All program reviews and interviews will be conducted in English as all the interviewees speak English.

## Ethical Considerations

In order to protect the rights of the interviewees and minimize risk of stress or harm by participating in the research, I will take the following actions:

* Keep resident and Hope Again staff names anonymous to maintain confidentiality
* Meet off Hope Again property if they so desire
* During the program review or interview, buy or bring the interviewee a cup of coffee, other beverage, or snack
* Participation in the research is completely voluntary
* Before beginning the program review or interview, receive verbal consent from the interviewee using the verbal consent script
* To minimize stress and harm by their participation, questions will not revolve around the resident’s personal struggles, reasons for being homeless or jobless, family or friend relationships, or anything else evoking deep personal experience and negative or hurtful emotions. Instead, questions will revolve around resident’s perspectives and evaluation of the programming and how effective it was in preparing them to exit into the job and housing market, as well as what elements for success they perceive should be included or changed in the program that would better equip them.

## Permissions

I have obtained permission to conduct this research from my professor and research project supervisor at Azusa Pacific University (APU), Dr. Viv Grigg. I also received permission from the executive director of Hope Again, Ross Lokken, who has approved each step of the research process and methods for collecting data. Since the results of this research will function only as an evaluative tool and resource for implementing necessary changes in the Hope Again program, the results will not be published and only be used within the organization. Due to this, approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at APU was not required. However, I have followed all the regulations and ethical standards in protecting human subjects in research set by the IRB (Dr. Grigg- you mentioned to “attach IRB as an appendix.” What exactly do I need to attach?).

## Outcomes and Outputs

### Research Product (outputs)

The product that will result from the research is two-fold:

1. It serves as an unpublished Masters degree final research project, and
2. It is a report and analysis of data for Hope Again leadership as they consider what changes need to be made to programming to better equip residents for success in the job and housing market. The final product for Hope Again will be a detailed but easy-to-read and analyze report that will provide the information they need to make better-informed decisions about the program and preparing residents for their exit.

This decision-making process will begin with a presentation of the data and analysis of the research to Hope Again leadership. These leadership staff will likely include the executive director, case manager/supervisor of others, and the chaplain. Perhaps the Hope Again board could even be present. I will present using the report specifically developed for Hope Again and walk the staff through each item in the report. The estimated target date for this presentation is a date between July 11th-15th, 2016. Once this presentation has taken place, the Hope Again staff and board can begin to brainstorm the next action steps needed towards program improvement.

### Action Outcomes

The results of this study will be used for evaluating and improving elements of the Hope Again program. It can increase the effectiveness and quality of what the program offers in preparing residents for a stable job and housing once they exit. The results will mobilize the staff to take the appropriate steps in creating an action plan of what they will improve, change, remove, or add and how they will do it. It will serve as a basis for this action plan. As one of the outcomes of this research, Hope Again staff can also create a process for ongoing evaluation of the program to track whether the changes they implement are effective.

Because Ross Lokken, the executive director of Hope Again, requested this research as a step towards knowing whether what they’re offering is truly helping residents or not, the results will be invaluable in the hands of the staff. Since this is already a direction they are willing and desiring to go, this research will assist in equipping them to take knowledgeable and informed steps towards creating a more effective program. A key aspect in this research is that it will contain perspectives of previous and current residents. This will provide valuable input as the staff considers what is needed to best equip residents for jobs and housing. They can develop the program to fit the requested and perceived needs of the residents themselves.

### Community Benefits (outcomes)

This study will benefit Hope Again and the residents they serve currently and in the future as they will be able to use the data and results to better develop a program that effectively equips and prepares residents for the job and housing market upon their exit. The study also benefits:

1. The research participants as residents’ voices and perspectives are heard and valued
2. Other organizations as they have the opportunity to share their knowledge and resources
3. Hope Again staff as they evaluate their perspectives on the elements of the program with the desire to improve it for residents

The previous residents, current residents, and Hope Again staff who participated in the study will be provided with a summary of the results so they have the opportunity to see their contribution to the research. This summary will include charts illustrating the results as well as some quotes and stories shared by the participants. It could also include decisions Hope Again leadership is planning to make in the program in an effort to receive residents’ immediate feedback.

With the results of the research, the organization hopes to learn more about how or how not the current program is preparing residents for success in attaining a job and stable housing. Once the research project is finished and the results have been analyzed, it will be a tool that will help Hope Again leadership and staff to create a program that better prepares the residents for their exit into the job and housing market.

The Hope Again staff will be able to look at several elements of the program and make better-informed decisions on what needs to be changed, added, or removed. Since this research project was collaboratively designed with Ross Lokken, the executive director of Hope Again, he is looking forward to the outcome of the research and how it will help in implementing elements that will improve care of the residents.

### Use as a Vehicle for Fundraising

The purpose of this research study is to assist Hope Again staff in knowing which elements are effective in preparing residents for stable jobs and housing after their exit. It’s purpose is to hear the perspectives of previous and current residents and current staff which program elements they identify as strong and weak, as well as their suggestions as to how it can be improved. This will assist myself (the researcher) and the staff in knowing which elements of the program to improve, remove, add, or change.

Considering the purpose of this study, it is not a fundraising proposal nor does it foresee moving in that direction. However, it could be possible that some of the elements needing improvement or to be added would require more funds in order for it to happen. If this is the case, we can use the data from the research to justify the need for funds in order for the program to increase its effectiveness. Hope Again leadership can bring this data to their existing church partnerships and individual donors to request their financial support.







# Chapter 4: Theological Framework

## Action-Reflection Process: The Pastoral Cycle

**The Pastoral Cycle**

#### Figure 4: Steps of the Pastoral Cycle

The research project fits within the action-reflection framework through the use of the Pastoral Cycle. This approach helps with the evaluative purpose of the project, and will assist in analyzing the data and how the Hope Again staff can take action in improving the program. “The Pastoral Cycle” states the pastoral cycle “is a way of engaging ourselves in a program of commitment, action and transformation as followers of Christ in the world. It is a way of helping us to link faith, action and politics within our daily lives” (n.d., p. 1).

The following chart lays out the process of the pastoral cycle according to “The Pastoral Cycle”:

#### Figure 5: The Pastoral Cycle Process

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Steps | Questions to Ask | Reasoning for Step |
| Experience | * What do I know of this issue? * What have I experienced of this? * Who are affected most by this & how? * How has the issue arisen? | * To realize what experiences & knowledge you & others have * To build on those experiences |
| Analysis | * Why is this happening? * Who gains from this situation? * Who loses out? * Why does this situation continue? | * To understand the role we play in the structures * To understand links between our lives & those who we are serving * Need thorough analysis to form basis of work & to identify instances where we might be unconsciously participating in the oppression |
| Theological (Faith) Reflection | * What particular insight/view does our faith, church teaching, scriptures, etc. give us on this issue? | * Discerning what our faith says about the realities we’re facing * Reflect on scripture, especially through the eyes of the poor & marginalized * Wise to remember that God’s place is in everything we do |
| Action | * What needs to be done to resolve this situation? * What can I/we do? * How will your action change those involved? * How can you tell if it is successful? | * Decide on what you will do/are able to do * Be careful not to take on too much * The objectives set should take into account the resources, talents, & time available |
| Celebration | *(none for this step)* | * Celebrating achievements is vital & could also be opportunity to recruit new people to join the concern * Strengthens group’s sense of unity & community * Doesn’t have to be only of success but could be need to grieve * Good to spend some time in prayer but doesn’t just have to be ‘holy’ time * Record this time in some way so can look back on it in the leaner moments |
| Evaluate | * What went well? * What didn’t? * What lessons have you learned for the next time? * Have you made anyone else aware of the issue? * What do you hope to achieve in the future? * What might you do differently next time? | * Are the same people struggling to do everything? * Have you been able to get more people involved? (Personal invitations may encourage people to do something on a one-time basis, then they may be interested to get involved more) * Although it doesn’t come natural, it is the most important part of process * Helps people to know each other & work together * Worth the effort in the long term |
| New Experience | * What do I know of this issue? * What have I experienced of this? * Who are affected most by this and how? | * After the evaluation, the group now has a new amount of experience to build on * Does the group want to continue on the same issue or move onto something else? * How does the group feel about the way it’s working? * What is the next step? |

In conducting this research while maintaining a Biblical perspective of the topic, the Pastoral Cycle approach can help develop a framework for this process.

The Pastoral Cycle consists of the following steps:

* *Experience: What is happening now, what needs to be changed?*
* *Analysis: Why are things the way they are, and who controls them?*
* *Reflection: What does God/the Bible have to say about this?*
* *Action: What are we going to do to make things different?*
* *Celebration: What have we achieved, and what still needs to be done?*(New Way of Being Church, 2007).

Using these questions to analyze the research process and how the staff will use the final data will help to ensure it is based not only on the collected data but also on Biblical foundations. The questions on experience, analysis, and reflection can be answered before beginning the research. The action and celebration sections will be answered once the data is collected, analyzed, and the staff begins to envision and formulate an action plan of how they will improve elements of the program based on the research results.

The following are responses to the first three categories of the Pastoral Cycle:

* **Experience:** Currently the program offers assistance with jobs and housing, as well as character and spiritual development through weekly classes and meetings with a case manager, chaplain, and therapist. Residents are required to comply with rules, such as completing house chores, adhering to curfew, attending classes and meetings, attending church on Sunday, and abstaining from drugs and alcohol.
* **Analysis:** Things could be the way they are because resident needs are not being served in a way that best equips them, or the focus in classes and meetings is not on topics assisting in a forward move with jobs and housing.

The people controlling this are both the staff and the residents. The staff decides what will be taught and what rules will be established. The residents choose whether they will comply with the rules and how much effort they will put into applying what they are taught. However, even if a resident is putting forth great effort to apply what is being taught, are they being taught and equipped in the most helpful areas?

* **Reflection:** In order to follow the Scripture verse 2 Timothy 2:15 NIV, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth,” the staff needs to be knowledgeable and confident in what God has commissioned them to do in their role at Hope Again with residents. If they know their role is “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8b NIV), then they will be motivated to have more compassion and patience with residents and to “not become weary in doing what is good” (Galatians 6:9a NIV).

In response to developing the program to be most helpful in setting up residents for success in the job and housing market, this adheres to God’s caution that we are to take careful action in caring for those in need. James 2:15-17 NIV says, “Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” The staff can be the third cord together with the resident and Christ as said in Ecclesiastes 4:12 NIV: “Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.“

# Chapter 5: Findings & Data Description

In this chapter of the study the raw data from the research will be presented using the research question as a framework for identifying themes. In the next chapter the data and themes that emerged will be analyzed in relationship to how it can provide valuable insight into the evaluation and improvement of the Hope Again transitional housing program. The next chapter will also describe each of the themes and figures in greater detail.

## Research Participants

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| # of Previous Hope Again Transitional Home Residents Interviewed | # of Current  Hope Again Transitional Home Residents Interviewed | # of Hope Again Staff Interviewed | # of Other Organizations with Transitional Housing Programs Interviewed |
| 2 men  3 women | 3 men  2 women | 6 staff | 2 organizations |

## Defining “Success” of Residents

The following is a layout of which qualities define the “success” of residents as written by Executive Director of Hope Again, Ross Lokken.

#### Figure 6: Executive Director’s Definition of Success

The next chart outlines the responses of the Hope Again staff who were interviewed and their perspectives on how the “success” of residents is defined.

#### Figure 7: Hope Again Staff’s Definition of Success

Comparing what is thought to be the definition of success between the executive director and the staff, here are some of the similarities and differences.

Figure 8: Comparison of Executive Director & Staff Definitions of Success

**Hope Again Staff’s Definition**

**Executive Director’s Definition**

## Themes from Resident & Hope Again Staff Interviews

Some of the common themes or responses expressed during the program reviews with previous and current residents were:

#### Figure 9: Themes from Previous & Current Resident Program Reviews

Some of the common themes or responses expressed during the program reviews with Hope Again staff were:

#### Figure 10: Themes from Hope Again Staff Program Reviews

A comparison of the themes between the residents and staff concerning the Hope Again transitional housing program is as displayed below:

Difference

Resident-on-Resident Relationships

Difference

Case Management

Following Rules & Expectations

Difference

Difference

Resident Attitude

#### Figure 11: Similarities & Differences Between Resident & Staff Themes

## Themes from the San Fernando Valley Rescue Mission Interview

In an interview about the transitional housing program at the San Fernando Valley Rescue Mission (SFVRM) located in Northridge, “success” is defined as follows:

**5 Outcomes for Success**

#### Figure 12: Success as Defined by the SFVRM

### Measuring & Tracking Resident Success

Every resident is assigned a case manager whom they meet with once per week. During this time, they make goals aligned with the above “5 Outcomes for Success,” or they may focus on only some of the five outcomes if needed. Then, there is a sequence of “phases” that contain markers with various requirements for each month.

The case manager also assesses if the resident is a fit for the program, addresses any problems during their stay, and gives extensions if needed. One of the more challenging aspects to measure and track is the resident’s spiritual growth.

Some key ways resident success is measured is through the following requirements:

* Program is 3-5 months
* It is focused on employment, housing, and growth
* After 30 days, resident must have a job & maintain it
* Look at heart of resident (ex. If mad at God, that’s okay. Desire is for residents to express honestly what is going on rather than saying all the right words)
* Growth (openness & high accountability are important)
* When residents leave, staff track stable housing, transitional housing, & jobs
  + Staff stay in touch after residents exit but don’t keep statistics of housing & job stability

# Chapter 6: Data Analysis

# Chapter 7: Conclusion

# Appendix A

## Program Review & Interview Questions

**Previous Resident Program Review**

**Research Project TItle:** Success of Residents Exiting Hope Again Transition Homes

**Research Question:** How do elements in the Hope Again program affect success of residents in attaining a job and stable housing?

This study is designed to research how elements in the Hope Again transitional housing program affect success of residents in attaining a job and stable housing. The results of this study will be used for evaluating and improving elements of the Hope Again program. It can increase the effectiveness and quality of what the program offers in preparing residents for a stable job and housing. The results will mobilize the staff to take the appropriate steps in creating an action plan of what they will improve, change, remove, or add and how they will do it

Your participation in this study will give valuable knowledge and perspective into the program and how it can be changed and improved in order to better equip and prepare residents in attaining a job and stable housing.

**Interview Questions:**

1. How long has it been since you moved out of the Hope Again transition home? How long did you live there?
2. How many months or years have you been working where you presently are? How many months or years have you been living where you currently are?
3. Which element(s) of the program equipped and prepared you the most for moving out into a job and stable housing? Why?
4. What element(s) were missing from the program that you expected to be part of it in helping you prepare for a job and stable housing?
5. In your perspective, what do residents need in order to succeed in a job and stable housing?
6. What elements do you perceive should be included or changed in the program that would better equip residents for success in a job and stable housing?
7. Are there any stories you’d like to share about how the program helped you?

**Current Resident Program Review**

**Research Project TItle:** Success of Residents Exiting Hope Again Transition Homes

**Research Question:** How do elements in the Hope Again program affect success of residents in attaining a job and stable housing?

This study is designed to research how elements in the Hope Again transitional housing program affect success of residents in attaining a job and stable housing. The results of this study will be used for evaluating and improving elements of the Hope Again program. It can increase the effectiveness and quality of what the program offers in preparing residents for a stable job and housing. The results will mobilize the staff to take the appropriate steps in creating an action plan of what they will improve, change, remove, or add and how they will do it

Your participation in this study will give valuable knowledge and perspective into the program and how it can be changed and improved in order to better equip and prepare residents in attaining a job and stable housing.

**Interview Questions:**

1. How long have you lived in the Hope Again transition home?
2. Which element(s) of the program are equipping and preparing you the most for moving out into a job and stable housing? Why?
3. What element(s) are missing from the program that you expected to be part of it in helping you prepare for a job and stable housing?
4. In your perspective, what do residents need in order to succeed in a job and stable housing?
5. What elements do you perceive should be included or changed in the program that would better equip residents for success in a job and stable housing?
6. Are there any stories you’d like to share about how the program has helped you?

**Hope Again Staff Program Review**

**Research Project TItle:** Success of Residents Exiting Hope Again Transition Homes

**Research Question:** How do elements in the Hope Again program affect success of residents in attaining a job and stable housing?

This study is designed to research how elements in the Hope Again transitional housing program affect success of residents in attaining a job and stable housing. The results of this study will be used for evaluating and improving elements of the Hope Again program. It can increase the effectiveness and quality of what the program offers in preparing residents for a stable job and housing. The results will mobilize the staff to take the appropriate steps in creating an action plan of what they will improve, change, remove, or add and how they will do it

Your participation in this study will give valuable knowledge and perspective into the program and how it can be changed and improved in order to better equip and prepare residents in attaining a job and stable housing.

**Interview Questions:**

1. What elements in the program do you think are most important in equipping residents for success in a job and stable housing once they exit? Why?
2. Are their any elements in the program that you think are less important or not needed? Why?
3. What are the indicators of whether a resident is headed toward success before they exit? After they exit?
4. In your perspective, what do residents need in order to succeed in a job and stable housing?
5. What elements do you perceive should be included or changed in the program that would better equip residents for success in a job and stable housing?
6. Are there any stories you’d like to share about how the program has helped a resident?

**Local Organization Interview**

**Research Project TItle:** Success of Residents Exiting Hope Again Transition Homes

**Research Question:** How do elements in the Hope Again program affect success of residents in attaining a job and stable housing?

This study is designed to research how elements in the Hope Again transitional housing program affect success of residents in attaining a job and stable housing. The results of this study will be used for evaluating and improving elements of the Hope Again program. It can increase the effectiveness and quality of what the program offers in preparing residents for a stable job and housing. The results will mobilize the staff to take the appropriate steps in creating an action plan of what they will improve, change, remove, or add and how they will do it

Your participation in this study will give valuable knowledge and perspective into the program and how it can be changed and improved in order to better equip and prepare residents in attaining a job and stable housing.

**Interview Questions:**

1. How do you define “success” of residents in the area of jobs and stable housing?
2. What are the indicators used to measure this success before residents exit? After they exit?
3. What are principles in your program that should never or rarely change that prepare residents for success in a job and stable housing? Why?
4. Are there any elements in the program you think are less important? Why?
5. In your experience, what do residents need in order to succeed in a job and stable housing?
6. Are there any stories you’d like to share about your experience with the program or how it has helped a resident?

# Bibliography

Slimbach, R. Real world research

Cunningham, M., Gillespie, S., & Anderson, J. (2015). *Rapid re-housing: What the research says*. Urban Institute, 5-6.

Elgin Community Coll., Ill. (1992). *Job training for the homeless demonstration program: U. S. department of labor-- Employment and training administration. Final evaluation report.* Elgin Community Coll., Ill.

Gray, D. E. (2014). *Doing research in the real world.* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA:

SAGE Publications Inc.

Hagen, J. L. (1990). Designing services for homeless women. *Journal of Health & Social Policy, 1:3*, 1-16. doi:10.1300/J045v01n03\_01

Kaufman, N. K. (1984). Homelessness: A comprehensive policy approach. *Urban and Social Change Review, 17*, 23.

McDivitt, K. M. (2012). *Retooling your transitional housing program* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from http://www.endhomelessness.org/page/-/files/4635\_file\_3.7\_Retooling\_Your\_Transitional\_Housing\_Program\_Kay\_Moshier\_McDivitt.pdf

McFarland, M. C. (2011). *Crossroads: An evaluation of a transitional housing program for youth*. Kansas State University: Manhattan, KS.

National Alliance to End Homelessness. (Producer). (2012). 14.02 Retooling

transitional housing. Video retrieved from

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9D1vMFUCF0

New Way of Being Church. (2007). *The pastoral cycle*. Retrieved from

http://www.newway.org.uk/datasheets/pastoral\_cycle.php

Richardson, B. B., & Landsman, M. J. (1996). *Community response to homelessness: Evaluation of the HACAP transitional housing program. Final report.* National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice: Iowa City, IA.

*The Pastoral Cycle- or ‘See, Judge, Act*.’. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.southwarkjandp.co.uk/resources\_files/The%20Pastoral%20Cycle.pdf

The Urban Institute and The Center for What Works. (2006). Candidate outcome indicators: Transitional housing programs. Retrieved from <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/transitional_housing.pdf>

Urban Institute & Burt, M. R. (2010). *Life after transitional housing for homeless families*. Planmatics, Inc. Retrieved from http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/1001375-Life-After-Transitional-Housing-for-Homeless-Families.PDF

Yarosz, D. J. (2003). Doorway to hope: Past participant perspectives on an exemplary transitional housing program for the homeless. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning, 12*, 47-58.