

2019 CSAC Challenge Awards

El Dorado County Sheriff's Office Homeless Outreach Global Approach Initiative

Overview

Developed a mobile field force that provides a variety of in-field services to the county's homeless population through a mobile outreach trailer.

Challenge

- Increasing homeless population
- Perform needs assessment of the county's homeless population
- Rural county, resources spread out
- Limited resources within the county (including housing and otherwise)
- Identifying the various stakeholders, both public and private, that can provide services within the county
- Developing a system in which all stakeholders commit resources to cultivate a mobile field force capable of delivering all of the county's dedicated resources into the impacted areas where our homeless reside

Solution

Recognizing the need for a team of individuals dedicated to working directly with the homeless population, where they reside. These efforts focus on determining individualized service offerings and lasting solutions to end the cycle of homelessness.

In collaboration with El Dorado County agencies and private institutions a mobile field force was implemented allowing us to provide in-field services to the homeless population via Homeless Outreach Team's (HOT) mobile outreach trailer.

Innovation

We have identified an opportunity within our county's homeless population to interact on an individual level while overcoming the law enforcement barrier between homeless and law enforcement officers.

Prior to implementation of the HOT, we spent several months researching other California county's outreach models. The information gathered from this research was evaluated and the applicable successes were considered when developing our own outreach program. With all of this considered, we took a very candid look at our own county's homeless population and recognized a unique opportunity to act as a mediator/advocate in connecting those in need with appropriate services. In conjunction with proactive outreach, we utilize enforcement efforts when necessary to gain compliance.

The most significant challenge we faced was that our limited resources, being a three person unit, did not always allow us the ability to facilitate the increasing need for transportation to and from various services and/or programs. We also found that this obligation of time was detrimental to our commitment of maintaining personal contact in the field.

It was determined that a more global approach should be developed in order for us to connect our homeless population with the multitude of services necessary to end the cycle of homelessness. HOT decided that the most appropriate solution would be to develop a system that delivered all of the involved service providers directly to our homeless population; effectively alleviating the need for the homeless to come to them. Those services that we determined critical include, but are not limited to, Behavioral Health – Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, local hospital (Marshall Medical), Public Health, County Parks and Trails, Community Health and other private entities and community volunteer groups.

HOT made the decision to build a mobile outreach trailer that would provide all of the modern conveniences of an office environment, thus allowing the various service providers to work remotely in the field.

Examples of such services would be; substance abuse assessments, mental health assessments, benefits enrollment and various medical services. In addition to county resources offered, the trailer also allows the opportunity for private or non-profit groups to participate in providing support to the homeless via clothing, food and other donations.

Results

Overall, we have seen a 73% reduction in the population of homeless who worked with or are known to HOT. Based on these percentages and our commitment to personal contact in the field, CAL FIRE has experienced an 80% reduction in wildland fires related to homeless/transients since HOT's inception in 2017. Additionally CAL-FIRE is recommending HOT's outreach model throughout neighboring counties due to its success.

Other impacted services, such as ER, EMS, law enforcement and private business owners have seen a significant reduction in transient related issues. Through HOT's efforts with the homeless population, the Sheriff's Office has experienced a significant reduction in transient related calls for service.

In addition to our efforts associated with transient activity, we've identified a subsequent issue that poses a significant environmental risk to the community and wildlife. As we experienced success in impacting the cycle of homelessness, the accumulation of trash, human waste, drug paraphernalia and debris became a hazard. Working as a united front, many public and private entities came together to address this issue and restore the impacted areas.

Replicability

- Research and identify relevant data related to transient activity to establish a baseline for future comparison and analysis
- Establish a data collection system that targets any and all outreach related activities
- Assess homeless population to determine initial priorities in impacted areas throughout the county
- Develop personal contact and presence within the homeless community
- Determine available services and stakeholders within your jurisdiction who may dedicate resources to your agency's efforts
- Collaborate with these invested parties to develop a circumstance and operations plan to prioritize and schedule services accordingly

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