

Reducing Childhood Poverty by Empowering Single Moms in Southeast Canton



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Master of Public Health Program

Background

The Cleveland Clinic Community Health Team and Mercy Hospital Canton applied for the Stark Community Foundation's Protecting Stark's Future planning grant, which supports the generation of ideas for collaborative, community-based solutions to reduce child poverty at the neighborhood level.

Population

Our population was single-mother households in Southeast Canton. Our respondents noted significant challenges, with high rates of food insecurity (n=58, 53.2% at risk; n=25, 22.9% at high risk), transportation issues (n=56, 51.4% at high risk), and financial strain (n=75, 68.8% at risk, n=20, 18.3% at high risk). Housing insecurity also emerged as a concern, with 16.5% (n=18) worried about future housing loss and 4.6% (n=5) currently without stable housing. Regarding follow-up needs, notable proportions indicated wanting assistance with employment (n= 30, 27.8% finding work, n= 17, 15.7% keeping work), education (n=30, 27.5% help with school or training), and daily living (n=35, 32.1% help with day-to-day activities).

Learning Objectives

By the end of the practicum, the goals were for me to (1) be able to analyze demographic and social needs data previously collected to identify priority areas for program development, and evaluate potential engagement strategies for single mothers in Southeast Canton; (2) design and produce at least two concise, one-page program proposals that align with the identified needs and the goals of a grant application, and (3) synthesize outreach outcomes into a clear report that communicates program impact and supports future funding requests.

Activities

During my practicum, my responsibilities included:

1. Reviewing the results of the initial survey of single mothers in Southeast Canton, including demographic data, reported needs, and resource requests
2. Identifying patterns and key priority areas for program focus
3. Researching best practices in community engagement for underserved populations
4. Assessing the strengths and limitations of current outreach efforts and proposing improvements
5. Drafting at least two concise, one-page program proposals tailored to the needs identified in the survey findings
6. Aligning proposals with grant application requirements and organizational mission
7. Incorporating stakeholder feedback
8. Gathering outcome data from calls to mothers requesting resource connections
9. Organizing findings into categories such as # of mothers screened, # of needs reported/identified, # of needs met
10. Writing a professional, data-driven outcome report summarizing engagement results and impact
11. Reflecting on how these outcomes can be used to strengthen the second grant application and future program planning.

Deliverables

1. Phased-priority maintaining and strengthening engagement strategy for Mercy Hospital Canton
2. Supporting Training And Employment Pathways (STEP): A workforce development program proposal for single mothers in the Southeast Canton area
3. Growing Understanding, Independence, And Direction Through Empowering Engagement (GUIDEE): An embedded community health worker program for single mothers in Southeast Canton

Lessons Learned

This project provided incredible insight into the development and implementation process of a population-based intervention — from conducting a community needs assessment, to the interpretation of results, to conducting a literature review, to program design.

Public Health Implications

Children who grow up experiencing childhood poverty are more likely to experience social and behavioral problems, negative health issues, and lower academic achievement. This is solely determined by total household income and the number of people in the family. With increased work in this area, a comprehensive child poverty reduction plan can be implemented that works to address immediate needs, increase familial earnings, and eventually, break cycles of poverty.

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Results

