



Presenter: Devanie Vera

Session & Time: Poster_I / 11:00 to 12:00pm

Room: Guzman Lecture Hall

Discipline: Biology

Faculty Mentor: Micheala George

Digital Portfolio URL:

Title: Key informant interviews reveal recommendations to improve homelessness in Marin County, CA

Abstract:

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Introduction

This research explores how key informant interviews with professionals in homeless outreach organizations in Marin County provide critical insights into the healthcare-seeking behaviors and resource availability for unhoused individuals. The purpose of this study is to understand how these interviews reveal practical recommendations for improving homelessness outreach and services in the region.

Methods

This qualitative analysis consisted of a total of six, semi-structured interviews conducted by student researchers. Participants were approached at the Ritter Center, St. Vincents, Community Action Marin, and Downtown Streets because of their work and volunteer

experience; interview questions sought to understand how these local community partners were engaging with the homeless population.

Results

Using constant comparison methods, researchers found four themes: workplace objectives, lessons and reflections, solutions, and challenges. Interviewees identified work roles and responsibilities that provide direct services to the community, possess necessary skills to deal with the challenges of homelessness, Personal stories from outreach organizations working with homeless individuals create a picture of difficulties faced by the homeless community. These anecdotes highlight identifiers of homeless populations along with the spectrum of homelessness ranging from acute to chronic. Accessing resources is challenging due to strict eligibility requirements, long waitlists, and insufficient services. Stigma surrounding homelessness isolates individuals and discourages them from seeking help. Lack of trust, limited funding, staffing shortages, and resource constraints make it even harder to address the issue effectively. Success is reflected in individuals moving from homelessness to stable and permanent housing, a process that depends on building trust between service providers and those seeking help.

Discussion

Our study used key participant interviews from staff who work at different organizations that help the population experiencing homelessness to give more insight into the key issues. They describe the challenges the homeless population faces and offer their suggestions for what could be done to solve this problem based on their knowledge and experience from working directly with those currently experiencing homelessness.