

CWIC Notes

Connecting Where It Counts

Topic: Generational Poverty

Project: Hennepin Research Presentation to School of Social Work

Date of Issue: November 2005

Introduction

The issue of Generational Poverty is one with far-reaching ramifications and long-lasting effects for those it touches. Hennepin County has made a priority of understanding both the causes and effects of this phenomenon as it is believed to be a primary contributor to repeat usage and dependency on County services and programs. The Community Corrections department and the NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center have each undertaken research efforts to both document and analyze the trends in the populations they serve, with the hope of developing more appropriate and effective service delivery techniques and programs.

Generational Poverty is defined by Hennepin County as two or more generations living below the poverty line. The rationale is that a family may fall into poverty for one generation due to circumstance, but maintains the support system and connections common among most middle- and upper-class families. When the poverty persists beyond one generation, the effects become cumulative and more severe; many of the typical support systems dissolve and it is more and more difficult for individuals to define their own lives.

Background for the Event

In October 2005 H-UP convened a meeting of Hennepin County staff and a few University Faculty members relating to Generational Poverty. At this meeting, Tamra Boyce of the Community Corrections department and Stacey Rude of the NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center each mentioned on-going research they were conducting relating to the effects of Generational Poverty on the populations each organization serves. Following that meeting, Kathie Doty, the H-UP Liaison, worked with Professor

Marcie Jeffreys of the University of Minnesota's School of Social Work to bring the two practitioners to Campus to present the full findings of their research to a small group of interested faculty and community members. By bringing the Hennepin researchers to Campus H-UP hopes to foster the connection between academic and field research for the betterment of both organizations.

Summary of Proceedings

Tamra Boyce, Community Corrections Department

Community Corrections is a last resort for families, many of whom have used the other social services provided by the family, and the system is starting to see many "crimes" that are symptoms of other issues rather than malicious intent. Such crimes, among teens, generally include vandalism, truancy, petty theft, and probation violations. Concerned that the corrections system was becoming a holding place for the poor, the developmentally disabled, and the mentally ill, the Department cooperated with the Urban League to who was entering their system and how they came to be there.

The study screened over 700 kids picked up for various crimes and held as "floats" for less than 6 hours before being released to a family member. The screening looked at peer relationships, education, family relationships, substance abuse, and mental health among other issues. The screening process identified some startling trends:

- Most kids were of color and average age of 15, most were male, over 50% lived with mother only.
- Over one-third of the youths had a medical history including a concussion with loss of consciousness
- Forty-seven percent had a very poor relationship with their parent or guardian.

For more information on the Hennepin-University Partnership go to <http://www.cura.umn.edu/H-UP.php> or email Kathie Doty at kdoty@umn.edu

- Sixty-one percent had a family member in the criminal justice system,
- Thirty-six percent murdered family member

Nearly half were in violent/poor/drug areas – they move around frequently.

- Seventy-six percent of the 8,881 charges against the youths were dismissed.
- Forty-three percent were victims of violence
- Fifty-three percent had open cases with other county agencies.
- Sixty percent were in the child welfare system.

The Community Corrections Department has just begun an adult/family mentoring program to try to address some of these issues. Mentors are placed with families to help the adults make better decisions and hopefully begin to end their dependency on County Social services.

Stacey Rude of the NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center:

NorthPoint was established to address the many social economic and health needs of the community in North Minneapolis. This organization is a unique entity that is administered jointly as a County Agency and a community non-profit. Their services extend beyond health care to community outreach, financial counseling, client advocacy, and community food shelf services among others.

The residents of the Near North neighborhood are overwhelmingly people of color, over sixty percent of the families with children are headed by a single parent, and unemployment in the area is around fourteen percent. An analysis of the intake forms yielded many insights into the multiple issues that face this community. Among others:

- The top diagnosis for children was ADHD (26.7%)
- The top diagnosis for adults was Major Depression (32.4%)

- Half of all children were identified as definitely having a parent with chemical dependency issues.
- Over forty percent of children were involved with child protection, and at least thirty-seven percent had been in out-of-home placement at some point.
- Over ten percent of kids were identified as homeless.
- Nearly thirteen percent of children were in need of a psychiatric hospitalization or had had one in the past.
- Among adults, nearly seventy percent had been in Mental Health Outpatient Treatment.
- Close to sixty percent had identifiable chemical dependency issues, but only thirty-five percent had sought treatment for this problem.
- Over half were suicidal, or had been at some point in the past.
- Almost half had a history of Psychiatric Hospitalization.
- Over one quarter had been incarcerated.

Seeking to address the problems posed by generational poverty has led NorthPoint to develop several integrative programs. For example, the Gateway Project is intended to help coordinate service provision among county agencies serving the same families. As part of this program, intake workers at NorthPoint are trained to recognize the need for additional services by their clients, and provide information and recommendations regarding additional county services. NorthPoint is also initiating a Community Health Worker Program to perform more direct outreach. The Center is also involved with the University Of Minnesota's new Northside Initiative involving renowned therapist and researcher Dante Cicchetti.

Discussion

Following the presentations, the

group discussed data sharing problems within the County that legally prevent further analysis of trends between human services and community corrections. The group also addressed issues related to bringing research into practice. Making the connection between research and policy is sometimes difficult to explain to voters, making innovation difficult for the County. Representatives from Native American Groups mentioned the difficulty they have in evaluating research related to their population; they are often not included as a separate group in research projects.

Contact Information

Tamra Boyce, Stacey Rude, and Marcie Jeffreys have agreed to accept contact from interested parties regarding the issue of Generational Poverty and efforts to connect via the H-U Partnership for effective collaborative work or research. For more information please contact:

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