

Research Proposal

1. Research Topic Introduction

(a) The research topic I have chosen for Writing 123 is focused on our mental health system, what services are provided in Bend, and what services are needed. The research question I wish to answer is: Homelessness among the chronically mentally ill is a community problem in Bend as well as elsewhere in the United States: As a community, how can we address this problem? I have chosen this topic partly as a result of my interest developed from my psychology professor last term. She mentioned in class that there are some chronically mentally ill (schizophrenic) people who live in Juniper Park. Additionally, I recently viewed a program on 60 Minutes which profiled a community in Geel, Belgium, that has a unique way to care for the mentally ill in their community. I was intrigued by the total community commitment and support of the mentally ill. In Geel, Belgium, you never see someone sleeping on the street. I wanted to further investigate their system for caring for the mentally ill and see if their methods could be duplicated in other communities, such as in the United States. If some of the methods used in Geel, Belgium, could be used elsewhere, as in Bend, this might have significant implications for the services we can provide in Bend. I feel as a community, we have a responsibility to care for those who are unable to care for themselves. I do not feel it is acceptable to have the chronically mentally ill living in our community parks or on the streets. I think some of our social problems are just accepted as part of living in a community and perhaps they are not addressed as they should be. In my research, I discovered a model program that was started in Long Beach, California, as a result of the frustration and dissatisfaction of family members of mentally ill, as well as professionals and business people who had an interest in improving the mental health system. As a result, the Village Integrated Service Agency in Long Beach, California, has received a growing amount of attention and commendation as a model mental health program. It incorporates a number of innovative approaches that may be valuable in effecting widespread system change.

(b) I believe this is a very appropriate topic for Writing 123. It fits in with the courses I have studied and presents a very real problem in Bend that can be addressed in a research topic. Until I viewed the program that focused on Geel, Belgium, and their unique methods for providing for the mentally ill, I had not considered other community options for addressing the problem of homelessness of the mentally ill. It is a very effective method to view problems from other perspectives to arrive at real solutions that may be helpful and appropriate in our community in dealing with this social problem.

(c) I intend to use the American Psychological Association (APA) documentation system for this research topic. When I consulted our textbook regarding citation formats, I learned that "The APA form is a variant of the author-date system of citing sources, used in the field of psychology and often in other behavioral sciences" (Hubbuck, 2002).

2. Research Question and Working Hypothesis

(a) My research topic is: Homelessness among the chronically mentally ill is a community problem in Bend as well as elsewhere in the United States: As a community, how can we address this problem?

(b) Working hypothesis: This is a problem not only in Bend, but in large, economically sound communities, as well. It is a problem that must be addressed as a community to have a working, caring system to provide for the mentally ill who are homeless. This involves having a community home to provide for these homeless individuals, having a foster care system that supplements a community home and having people receiving these services be treated with “respect, dignity and without labeling or discrimination of any type” (CareLink, 2002).

3. Research Strategy Description

(a) What do I need to discover in my research?

Assumptions

In the US you see many homeless people. In Bend we have homelessness. My psychology professor stated there are probably five or six schizophrenic people living in Juniper Park. Our mental health system fails to care for the chronically mentally ill.

Research Questions

Is our mental health system adequate? What services are provided in Bend? Why are the chronically mentally ill homeless? What services are needed in Bend?

Assumptions

There is a different approach for the care of the mentally ill in Geel, Belgium. You never see a person sleeping on the street there. They seem to have a successful way to care for the mentally ill.

Research Questions

How do the people in Geel, Belgium care for the mentally ill? What accounts for the success of their methods? Would this model be transferable to other places, i.e., cities in the United States? Bend? If not, why not?

Assumptions

The Village Integrated Service Agency in Long Beach, California, has received a growing amount of attention and commendation as a model mental health program. It incorporates a number of innovative approaches that may be valuable in effecting widespread system change. Dr. Mark Ragins, who is involved with the Village Integrated Service Agency, visited Geel, Belgium, and observed their system of care for the mentally ill in his process of gaining a worldwide perspective of psychiatric rehabilitation.

Research Questions

What is the Village Integrated Service Agency? How did it get started and why? What is it doing differently and what is successful, not successful? Would this approach work elsewhere? In Bend?

(b) Where will I look for answers?

I used Ebsco Host database for a web search of key terms: mental health; mental illness; psychiatric rehabilitation, Geel, Belgium. I have also searched Google.com. I have found useful journal articles relating to my topic, including an article in the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, Summer 2000, outlining and describing the Denver approach which combines “the best rehabilitation models and influences into one system of rehabilitation services.” Additionally, I discovered information about The Village Integrated Service Agency in Long Beach, California, which incorporates a number of innovative approaches in care for the mentally ill.

I asked the librarian at the COCC library for sources of information about services provided in Bend. She directed me to the appropriate website and the new Deschutes County Mental Health office located at 2577 NE Courtney in Bend to obtain information on what services are currently available in Bend. I visited the new office in Bend and obtained a pamphlet of information describing the services currently provided.

I have requested two books through interlibrary loan, Introduction to Psychiatric Rehabilitation and The Role of the Family in Psychiatric Rehabilitation, which I hope will offer some valuable insight into how the family and community can integrate care for the mentally ill.

Additionally, I have ordered a transcript of the 60 Minutes program concerning the unique care the community of Geel, Belgium, provides for the mentally ill. Viewing this program provided me with a new awareness and heightened interest to investigate this topic further.

4. Sources Consulted

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