

Abstract

- Exploratory research on factors regarding homeless individuals in Hawaii: single person vs. family; length of being homeless; working status; housing preference. Demand for affordable housing outweighs the supply.
- Purpose: Determine if homeless individuals utilize resources to resolve their current situation.
- Research Question: What are the main factors into why a person is homeless? How can we help?
- Interviewed members of the City and County of Hawaii, Stored Property Ordinance section. Purpose of this section is to assist HPD and other County departments with removal of homeless individual's property during enforcement of city park closure rules and sidewalk nuisance enforcement. Corporal Leland Cadoy, HPD officer assigned to SPO section. Ken Shimizu, City and County of Honolulu, SPO supervisor

Research Design & Data Collection

Method Used: Qualitive Field Research and Literature Review.

Data Collection:

Informal interview with members of the SPO section and Corporal Leland Cadoy



Picture 1: City and County of Honolulu's SPO section

Introduction & Research Question

Introduction

- Homelessness is defined as a person that "lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. They sleep in a shelter designated for temporary living accommodations or in places not designated for human habitation".
- Drug addiction/ dependency
- Mental Health Issues: undiagnosed, PTSD, treatment refusal
- Chronically homeless individuals defined as being homeless for more than 6 months with mental and or physical health conditions

Research Question

What is the main factor for an individual to be homeless?

Hypothesis

Research will show that there is no main reason why an individual is homeless. There are too many factors that can make a person homeless. Factors include substance abuse, mental illness, and financial status. Another environmental factor would be the cost of housing in Hawaii.

Results

Over a period of two days, I got to follow the SPO section to two different locations. The first location was Waikiki Beach. Cpl. Cadoy was the officer on duty that evening and provided law enforcement if needed. They assisted a few homeless individuals with disposing of items they did not want to take with them. Some individuals asked that some of their belongings be stored. The SPO section store an individuals belongings in a secured location for up to 30 days. Many take advantage of this service, but, some never return at the end of the 30 days. Once the 30 days is expired, items are thrown away. During this particular shift, social workers from IHS were available to help with placement assistance. To my surprise, no one asked for assistance.

The next location was Old Stadium Park in Moiliili. This location had many types of people, ranging in ages. I noticed more men than women. I also noticed a few families with young children, mainly living in parked cars. Because there were more homeless at this encampment, several more officers were called to assist Corporal Cadoy with issuing warrants. I was surprised that during this encounter, no social workers were on site.

I was able to informally interview each worker once they arrived back to the base yard. I informed them that the purpose of my interview was to gather data for my research project for one of my classes. I got verbal approval from each of them. Overall, I learned that many of them that they do not like it when the media says that their sections will be "sweeping" homeless out of parks. They all concluded that their role is to work along with HPD to enforce City parks closure rules and sidewalk nuisance enforcement. Also, they mentioned that many individuals that they encounter are mentally ill. Some of them do want to seek help because many of them are also addicted to drugs. Some of the few families that they encounter are actively seeking permanent housing, but, only one adult is working and cost of living in Hawaii is very high.

Implications

- Social Services available for all homeless encounters.
- Outreach programs that will homeless individuals to seek mental health care 24/7.
- Government subsidies increase for rental assistance for families seeking permanent housing.
- More options for safe shelters that allow individuals to live independently.

Conclusions

CONCLUSION:

- Homelessness is wide spread on the island of Oahu.
- Homeless individuals in Hawaii are considered chronically homeless. Not having a permanent shelter for over 6 months.
- Many suffer from mental illness along with drug addiction.
- Homeless families usually have one working adult. Unable to make ends meet due to high cost of living. They are willing to seek assistance at a shelter.
- SPO section and HPD are not the bad guys when it comes to park closure and sidewalk enforcement.
- Resources are not always available on site for homeless individuals.

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