Help and Emergency Response, Inc. Evaluation Results

Chloe Andres

Old Dominion University

Results

With the observation of the Help and Emergency Response, the evaluator noticed that the shelter was a house rather than a building facility. Inside the home it is split where there is an office area for administrators and staff. On the other side is a fully furnished home with a living room, play area, kitchen, dining room, laundry room and rooms that contain a twin bed, bunk beds with furnishing for the residents. Given the timing of the evaluation many of the residents were not present and their children were at school. For the few that were there they seemed comfortable being at the home, at one point during the evaluation one of the women needed assistance looking for more bowls in the kitchen. Having staff and administrators work in the same area where the residents reside can be beneficial to residents because any issues that they are facing or need, they can easily get assistance immediately rather than traveling to a main building. The staff are warm and welcoming, each having a specialized field that can assist the residents or clients.

Ms. Summer Riverbark is the volunteer coordinator who holds a degree in Communications. During a one on one interview with Ms. Riverbark, she shared her experience on being in positions throughout her career that give her the opportunity to help, encourage, and make a difference in the lives of others for the better. What she wants the community to realize that the H.E.R shelter is more than shelter. It is a resource center that strive for women who have been abused to get back on their feet with the help and support from people who to want to establish a better life for them and their children.

Conclusion

Data collection collected through observation of the residents and the interview from the H.E.R volunteer coordinator suggest that overall the services offered can have a long term positive effects on the women who currently reside at the shelter as well as those women who were past residents and those who continue to use the shelter as a resource center. The H.E.R shelter is not just a shelter where the women come for a little bit and then go off on their own. They are a resource center where they welcome women to stay however long it takes for them to start a new chapter in their life. During the observation one of the past residents who lives in her own apartment came by just to use the laundry facility. The doors of the H.E.R shelter will always stay open to those who need it. The evaluator also noticed that there are cameras outside the residence and in front of the door. When the evaluator asked Ms. Riverbark during the interview she stated that it is vital to have those cameras up as well have a relationship with the local police in the event an ex-significant other tries to violently enter the home. These precautions make the women feel safer given that many of them come to the H.E.R shelter beaten and bruised.

Implications

The findings of the H.E.R shelter can is extremely important for the community to be aware of because it can save a loved one or a person’s life. Domestic violence unfortunately can result in death, majority of the victims being women. The number of reported cases of spouse abuse has been alarmingly increasing with most cases not being reported, but were considered "domestic spats". Some women may feel like they have nowhere to go and are alone in this toxic situation. The main mission of the H.E.R shelter is to provide emergency shelter to women under violent attack, and to educate the community, especially women who feel threatened. Their goal is for these women is to break the cycle of violence and become healthy, productive, caring individuals with a strong sense of self-worth.

Recommendation

From the findings, the evaluator recommends to increase the number of H.E.R shelters throughout the Hampton Roads area, rather than there only being two. The larger of the two locations, the Portsmouth Shelter, is currently also the location of the Employment, Housing, Children's, and Volunteer Services offices. The Chesapeake Shelter, called the Beazley Center for Hope, is a much smaller home where the Executive, Case Management, Legal Advocacy, and Hotline offices reside. It would be ideal to have a building that is serve just as a resource center for any women who feels that they need information and guidance. It could also serve as library style facility where they can provide computers, activities and programs for the women’s children. Another recommendation would be expanding the program Sweethaven Baked Goods, as its own building and sell baked goods throughout the community with some of the proceeds going to the H.E.R shelter. Sweethaven Baked Goods is a workforce program that is a fully-licensed professional bakery dedicated to empowering survivors of domestic violence by teaching them professional baking and kitchen management skills needed to gain employment.

Goals and Objects

1. Increase the education program
2. Host mini colleges fairs and invite colleges to encourage women to think about going back to school
3. Conduct field trips and speak to financial college advisors
4. Increase the Sweethaven Bakery program
5. Create a Sweethaven bakery shop where the women can be employed after the training to build up their work experience
6. Encourage and train women about marketing techniques to gain and build up experiences.

Research

Domestic violence shelters are vital for women who are trying to leave an abusive home. In the article, “*Length of Women’s Stay in Domestic Violence Shelters: Examining the contribution of background variable, level of violence, reasons for entering shelters and expectations*”, it explains that the longer women stay in the shelter, the more successful they become when it comes to leaving the cycle of violence. There are various reasons why women would enter a shelter, the study found that some women enter for personal reasons to change their life around while other women see it as a transitional step towards their independence. The findings of this study showed that there are no accurate evidence that shows the longer a woman stays in the shelter, the more positive the outcome. There is no definite time frame when it comes to length of stay at a shelter. Every woman’s healing process is different and may need a longer time to recover and receive support. Some women may stay longer because the shelter becomes a source of comfort and support.

References

Ben-Porat, A., & Sror-Bondarevsky, N. (2018). Length of Women’s Stays in Domestic Violence

Shelters: Examining the Contribution of Background Variables, Level of Violence, Reasons

for Entering Shelters, and Expectations. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 088626051881142.

doi: 10.1177/0886260518811425