Social Advocacy Initiative

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**Introduction**

Social Advocacy refers to ‘the activity in which individuals or groups challenge the decisions and structures of a political or social system'. It tends to bring a positive change in the society through campaigns, social media or public speaking. In modern times people use these platforms to bring awareness about a social issue that is being neglected by the authorities. The practice is more common in the United States and Canada where people use social media as a platform for collective actions against civic engagements. The social advocacy initiative in this paper considers the ‘California’s Homeless Youth’. The definition of youth varies in different locations, however, in California, the term ‘Homeless Youth" define two categories of people. One refers to unaccompanied individuals aged between 12 to 17, who are not living with their parents or legal guardians. Whereas, the second refers to young adults between 18 to 24, who are financially detached from their families and are living in inadequate conditions. These include living in shelters, under bridges, and streets. There are many reasons for the issue. It includes the choice of some adults who do not want to live with their parents and have left their homes, while others are being expelled. In some cases, the youth represents the released juvenile who has no option to go anywhere. Also, the families and the system do not accept such individuals.

**The Problem**

The increasing trend in the number of youth leaving their homes in anticipation of living independently results in negative consequences. Lately, they are unable to facilitate their living expenses that result in extreme negative impacts on their lives. The most common reasons for homeless youth are family conflicts, abusive behavior of parents, drug addiction, young pregnancy, and rejection due to the sexual orientation of individuals. These individuals leave their houses without any prior arrangement of shelter and thus have to live on roads. Also, the youth that moves from mental health sessions or juvenile justice without proper settlement of jobs and accommodation tends to be homeless. These are known as foster youth, and the national estimates for such homeless youths are 20 percent. Specifically, in California, one in four individuals is homeless. Also, the number of homeless youth cannot be identified easily because they do not share their data and secondly they are highly mobile (Slesnick, Bartle-Haring, Dashora, Kang, & Aukward, 2008).

The federal programs for homeless youth are insufficient to cater to their needs due to the exceeding number of homeless youth. This results in further unsafe conditions for the youth, they are more vulnerable to diseases and physically and mentally unstable. The health issues include asthma, diabetes, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis. Due to their unsafe living conditions, they are most likely to involve in sexual activities that tend to increase the tendency of further diseases. Such youth have a high tendency for mental disorders that includes anxiety, stress, and depression. Suicides are also common in this group of people who are helpless and tired of their lives. They also have higher ratios of substance use such as alcohol, 40 percent of youth are drug addicts that increase the probability of health concerns. The percentage of sexual victimization is also higher in homeless youth compared to their peers. They are subjected to regular abuses and harassments. Homeless youth are also individuals highly involved in illegal activities such as stealing and prostitution. They can harm anyone for the sake of money. The require to fulfill their food requirement that compels them to indulge in such activities (Hickler & Auerswald, 2009). Furthermore, homeless youth interact with law enforcement on a daily basis that further results in illegal acts and warnings. All these problems compel them to indulge in such activities that are ethically and morally illegal and not acceptable.

**Social Advocacy Interventions**

The issue of homeless youth is not limited to their lives but it impacts the whole society. It threatens the societies with high costs thus, they needed to be properly advocated. Firstly, the initiative can be taken by identifying these individuals. They should be taken into confidence that the advocacy is for their betterment. The homeless youth are young and require immediate involvement of their parents and guardians. They should be given the responsibility of these homeless youth. However, if there are no guardians, they should be provided with shelter homes with the help of the Emergency Shelter Grants Program (ESGP) (Parriott & Auerswald, 2009).

**Arrangement of Shelter Homes**

The shelter homes can be arranged by cooperating of the overall society. Fundraising is the primary component for arranging shelter homes. Funds will be collected from the community, as well as the authorities of Ngo's will be asked to contribute to the cause. Also, the churches would be asked to contribute and provide space for the homeless youth. Also, another aspect would be that we can also use the church as a shelter home. They will be transformed into a living area, where the basic accommodation such as beds and crockery will be provided. The concerned authorities must be involved to put these children into considerations and donate as much as possible looking into the consequences of homeless youth. Secondly, the arrangement for their proper meals should be done. They would be provided with meals focused on their proper hygiene and basic requirement (Barman-Adhikari et al., 2016).

**Medical Treatment**

The second step is to provide efficient medical help to the homeless youth who are sick and require proper treatments. Their diseases would be identified and should be provided with immediate cure with the help of public medical facilities. Qualified doctors will be allocated with the help of the California Health Department to provide free of cost medicines to the individuals. Besides medical treatment, they also require mental therapy to overcome anxiety and depression. They need to improve their mental health that would result in the realization of their social responsibility. It would help them to improve their mental capabilities and to overcome the issues of stress. Thirdly, they would be provided with help to reduce alcohol and drugs. The drugs intake causes a high risk to health and needs to be eliminated from daily routines.

**Awareness and Advocacy**

The last step is to educate homeless individuals and make them aware of their role in society. They require awareness and advocacy about their social responsibility. They need to acknowledge that the constant instability in their lives is producing more issues. They need to make proper arrangements for their living and need to find suitable jobs for themselves. They need to earn enough money to fulfill their daily expenses. Also, they would be provided with awareness sessions about sexual harassment that needed to be reduced. They need to figure out their value and should not let anyone harm them. In case of any issue, they would be informed about legal actions against sexual harassment. Homeless people can also act as evidence to capture such people who are continuously harassing young individuals.

**Impact of Intervention**

The impact of these interventions includes both short and long term changes in the structures. In the short term, the societies and concerned authorities will be informed about the young homeless. They are hard to identify, thus with this initiative more and more homeless individuals will come and join the shelter homes. This will help the administration to figure out the exact ratio and execute friendly policies for these people. The intervention will also help the individuals to overcome their depressions and anxiety and will develop belonging to society. The health facilities will help them to improve their hygiene and health. They will not be vulnerable to sexual harassment and will be in protected hands. In the long term, they will be provided with proper education facilities. They would be able to enroll in colleges and achieve growth. Also, jobless individuals would be able to find suitable employment opportunities. The State will also be held responsible to provide homeless people jobs on a priority basis to overcome their vulnerabilities and finance their requirements.

**Conclusion**

The goal of this intervention is to safeguard the lives of young homeless who are living miserable lives with no financial safety. It will help to provide a platform to these individuals so that their voices will be heard by the State and will reflect in their policies. The intervention is not only determined to help the homeless but to make them self sufficient and independent. It is focused on the advocacy of these individuals who will be empowered. It will improve their quality of life and they will be in a better position to sustain in society. The objective of the intervention is not to provide a one-time solution but to deliver sustainable strategies that would help them in the future as well. The communities should also be educated to help the homeless people in regards to provide funds and accept them in society. They require awareness about the treat concerned with homeless youth to their societies as well as their children. Thus, they need to contribute in the improvement of their lives. The counseling programs are highly encouraged in such cases that increase the capabilities of such individuals to better look upon their lives and work hard to get success in the future.

**References**

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