Lotus House Women’s Shelter: Lead Agency in Service-Driven Research Projects

The Sundari Foundation, Inc.’s Research Team
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WINNER OF THE “BEST REFLECTS POLICY RESEARCH” POSTER
The Need for Community-Based Research

Rationale
• Advance Equity and Social Justice
• Ethical
• Pragmatic

Purpose
• Provide critical services tailored to the needs of those served, addressing gender, racial and social inequities
• Continuous improvement
• Inspire positive social change
• Extend scientific knowledge base
The Lotus House as an Exemplary Case

Our Premise
The collaborative research was particularly successful because Lotus House has ownership.

- Was the initiator
- Led the research efforts
- Managed its funds and service delivery
- Kept and controlled its data
- Actively engaged in dissemination

Lotus House’s Emergence as a Research Entity

- Lotus House sought and received grants to develop service driven research project
- Research aligned with its mission and programs
- Local researchers/evaluator volunteered services
- Funder receptive to community based organization led research
Program A. Study of Mental Health Services and Parenting for Sheltered Children and Families

Entry assessment of
- Children’s status and trauma histories
- Mental health/developmental needs

Provision of mental health/parenting services
- Child Parent Psychotherapy and/or
- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy and/or
- Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy
Program A. Study of Mental Health Services and Parenting

In 3 years, met mental health and parenting needs for

• 1,118 children
• 619 mothers
Study A: Family Outcomes

Statistically significant & clinically meaningful improvements
  • Behavior improvement
  • Reduced trauma symptoms
  • Positive parenting
  • Strengthen mother-child relationships
Research Programs, cont.

Program B. Study of single women’s survival strategies while homeless.

• Focus groups of alumni sheltered women
• Focus on successful organizational principles – a culture of care
• Several manuscripts in preparation
  • Lotus House as a “culture of care”
  • Gender specific experiences of single women experiencing homelessness
Program C. Pilot study of women’s and children’s nutritional intake and food insecurity prior to shelter.

- Baseline for grant proposal
- Acquisition of innovative hydroponic urban garden to improve nutrition
- Food waste harvesting project and neighborhood food distributions
Institutional Outcomes

Enriched services and programming

Capacity building on
  • Clinical training
  • Research methodology
  • IRB certification
  • Valid interpretation of results
  • Data entry & management

Established research, policy and public education department

Created replicable model for community based organizations
Reasons for the Success Label, cont.

Sustainability

• Efficacy of outcomes for women and children
• Continued financial support
• Additional academic and field papers in preparation
• Additional proposals in preparation
• Expansion of services
• Continued and expanding collaborations
• Goodwill and camaraderie among collaborators
Reasons for the Success Label, cont.

Dissemination

Academic publications


LH web-platform publications


Yearly reports to Funder

Hindering Factors

- Time
- Financial resources
- Intensive data management
- CBO has competing priorities for operations and services
- Academic research perspective versus community service delivery perspective
  - Empirical and experiential criteria for decision making
  - Differences in professional jargon/semantics
Facilitating Factors

• Shared belief in mission
• Trust, respect for each other’s expertise
• Frequent communications
• Clearly differentiated roles
• Leadership vision and commitment
• Skilled, dedicated staff
• Positive program effects
• Benefit for all collaborators
• Well regarded by funding agencies
• Memoranda of understanding
Successful research projects satisfy the goals of the community based organization as lead

- Meet the service needs of the persons to be served
- Document positive outcomes from service driven research and inform continuous improvement
- Address impacts of gender, racial and social inequities
- Extend current knowledge and inspire change on a national level
- Replicable and scalable
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Learn more at www.lotushouse.org and contact research@lotushouse.org