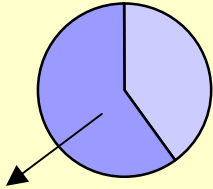


Reaching Out . . . Saving Lives

In the New Haven area alone, an estimated **4,000** people are homeless.



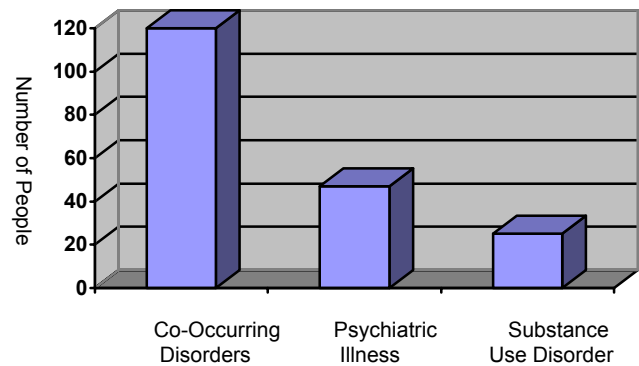
Of those, **60%** are thought to have a mental illness and/or substance use disorder.

The first goal of the **Outreach and Engagement Project (O&E)** of the DMHAS Connecticut Mental Health Center is to find homeless people with mental illness and/or substance use disorders who are not receiving treatment. Most early mornings and late evenings of the week, teams of outreach workers circle New Haven city streets in their van, looking in familiar places: abandoned cars, under highway bridges, along the railroad tracks, and in public shelters. Through street outreach, they find homeless people, gain their trust, and bring them supplies. For some, success means getting enough warm clothes and blankets to sleep safely outdoors. For others, the connection with the O&E Program has meant substantial improvement in their quality of life: Housing has been secured for many who had been homeless for many, many years.

The DMHAS-funded O&E Program was formed in 1993 as a comparison site for the federal ACCESS research. Across the country, the project studied a total of 7,000 homeless persons with mental illness and found promising results from contact with outreach teams. Outreach workers were successful in engaging homeless individuals into case management and treatment, often within an average period of 30 days. Once engaged in treatment programs, homeless people showed:

- **a decrease in symptoms of mental illness,**
- **a reduction in their substance use,**
- **an improvement in their quality of life,**
- **a greater likelihood of keeping shelter once they had gained it**

**Contacts with Homeless People in One Month
What Illnesses Do They Have?**



New Haven's homeless range in age from **19 to 76**, with a mean age of **43**. In most samples, at least **40% will be women**.

Teamwork among organizations that serve the homeless, including both public and private agencies, is crucial for the success of this program. *Of note, in the original study, the New Haven multi-agency program was found to have the highest level of system integration of the 18 national sites.* While the current O&E Project works with thirteen member agencies of the Community Services Network, its participating members are Columbus House, Inc., ALSO-Cornerstone, Inc., Hill Health Center, Marrakech, Inc., the APT Foundation, Easter Seals Goodwill, and Workers Achieving Gainful Employment (WAGE). Project staff members provide mental health and addiction services, housing supports, vocational training and employment as well. The project is also strengthened by active support from the Mayor's office, area shopkeepers, local universities, local treatment and social services agencies, as well as the New Haven and Yale University Police Departments.

O & E is housed at 34 Park Street in New Haven, CT. For more information, and to reach their extraordinarily dedicated and skilled staff, contact Debbie Fisk, LCSW, Dir. Of Community-Based Clinical Services, at Deborah.Fisk@po.state.ct.us.

Visit <http://www.dmhas.state.ct.us/infobriefs/index.htm> to review previous issues.