

Organization Evaluation Paper

Bree Adams, Charity Sutherland & Hannah McNelly

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Introduction

For the purposes of this paper, our group decided to evaluate an agency called Family Promise in Bradley County. This agency is located in Cleveland TN at 1110 Norman Chapel Rd NW, Cleveland, TN 37312 and is surrounded by the city of Cleveland Tennessee. Family Promise of Bradley County is easy and convenient to locate through Google Maps and parking is available at the church next door. The facility is wheelchair accessible and there are translator resources available. Physical assets include a company vehicle used for agency-related tasks, a sixteen-passenger van for transporting the families in the program to host churches, and trailer to transport beds to host churches. The church next door, Wesley Memorial United Methodist, allows them to use the building for their day center and office.

The idea for Family Promise first started when a lady named Karen Olson passed a person experiencing homelessness on the street. She bought her a sandwich and listened to the story of the woman. She realized that experiencing homelessness brought many feelings of diminished self-worth and a distance between herself and society. After this encounter, Karen and her family started delivering food to people experiencing homelessness on the streets in New York.

In 1986, as Karen learned more and more of the extent of people affected by homelessness, she knew that she needed to do something bigger than just serving food. Karen, along with other members of the community, opened the first interfaith hospitality network on October 27, 1986. This service offered food, shelter, housing, help to find employment, reconnecting with society, showers, and discounted vehicles. All of these things became possible through the generous community coming together to help people experiencing homelessness.

The idea began to spread and more communities came together to open more interfaith hospitality networks in 1988. They also added more programs such as transitional housing, childcare and homelessness prevention. In 1992 Family Promise was awarded a Point of Light by the President and Barbara Bush which recognized Family Promise as one of the top volunteer agencies not just in one state, but the whole country. The organization changed its name from National Interfaith Hospitality Network to Family Promise in 2003 reflecting their goal to be committed to ending family homelessness. Family promise has continued to grow throughout the years having 200 locations in 2016. Family Promise of Bradley County is just one of the over 200 locations where individuals and communities are coming together to combat the rising homelessness crisis in America.

The overarching main goals of Family Promise in Bradley County are shown through their mission statement, which states “Our mission is to help homeless and low-income families achieve sustainable independence through a community-based response”. They are able to fulfil their mission in several ways. They are able to achieve and fulfil their mission through their volunteers and volunteer positions, their paid staff, and their intervention methods.

In order to achieve their mission, Family Promise has five or so volunteer positions available both in the churches and at the day center that they encourage community members to participate in. These positions include dinner angle, evening hosts, overnight hosts, van driver, and trailer hauler. Dinner angles help prepare the food which is served around 6pm. Evening hosts are the individuals that welcome the guests, eat dinner, and socialize with the guests. Evening hosts are also responsible to help clean up after the meal. Overnight hosts spend the night at the host church and are responsible to handle emergencies if needed. Van drivers pick up guests with the Family Promise van and take them to and from the churches. Last but not least,

the trailer hauler transports the trailer that holds all beds for families and volunteers from church to church. Volunteers are needed for all of these positions for Family Promise to run effectively.

While Family Promise of Bradley County utilizes many volunteers, there are also a few paid staff who help make sure the program runs smoothly. Eva VanHook is the executive director, Elizabeth McElhanney is the program manager and Lindsey Clark is the case manager. They also have multiple board members that are involved in making decisions regarding Family Promise of Bradley County. Their board members include Payten Holcombe who is the President, John Ellerbe who holds the Vice President position, Mark Lay who is the Treasurer, Cindy Lawson who holds the Secretary position, and Amy Mott. All of these individuals combined with the volunteers allow Family Promise of Bradley County to function the way that it does.

One other aspect that helps Family Promise of Bradley County fulfill their mission statement is through their intervention methods. Family Promise does not use a specific model of intervention methods as each family is a case by case scenario, however, there are a few services and methods utilized that aid in proficiency. Educating volunteers on the culture of poverty, reaching out to graduates of the program to stay in touch, and advocating for their program through their needs and upcoming events at interagency council meetings. By educating volunteers on the culture of poverty the clients are facing, volunteers will be more likely to understand what their situation is really like and less likely to make assumptions or say something that may offend the clients. This aids in the success of clients in the program as well as satisfactory relations among volunteers. The connection with previous graduates of Family Promise programs not only creates social opportunities for past clients but it has proven to create opportunities to help these graduates in small ways to keep them on their feet. Lastly, the case

manager attends monthly interagency council meetings to share what is happening within the agency as well as any presenting needs. Attending these meetings create great networking experiences as well as hearing about other services offered in the area that may benefit clients or potential clients. Through using these intervention methods, Family Promise of Bradley County is able to serve an average of 286 clients each year.

Preventing Issues

When assessing the issues that prevent this organization from being successful, there are a few that are especially noticeable. First, there is a long wait list for the shelter program. Often, by the time the agency is able to respond to a certain family's spot on the waitlist, they typically no longer need services or cannot be reached through the given contact method. Another barrier is the policy that states a couple must be married in order to be accepted to the program. Since the agency partners with local churches, they have this policy out of respect for the churches beliefs. However, this blocks a large number of families from entering the program. The last prominent issue is the lack of Hispanic population served. When comparing the number of Hispanic clients of Family Promise to the Hispanic population in the community, Family Promise serves significantly less than

As with most anything, there are always going to be consequences whether intended or not. Some positive consequences that we want to see happen include getting the funded need so then we can hire a bilingual full-time staff which will then enable us to help more people from the Hispanic community. On the other hand, this could cause many unintended consequences. Some of these consequences could include losing the support that we currently have. Family Promise could lose focus on their current clients by putting too much focus on reaching their

goal of reaching the Hispanic community more. However, possibly the riskiest consequence would be that Family Promise loses money in the process.

Some potential barriers are involved with Family Promises current operations. First, there is an extensive waitlist for the shelter program. Being a small agency, they are only able to serve one to two families at a time. The shelter program takes at least eight weeks to graduate, leaving families that are in need waiting for substantial periods of time. After consulting with Family Promises case manager, we discovered that by the time they are able to get to a certain family's spot on the waitlist, they either no longer need assistance or cannot be reached. This is a great barrier for families facing homelessness because they are left scarce resources.

Another barrier for potential clients is that the program only serves families with at least one child under the age of eighteen and either be married or single. While having a child to be in the program makes sense for Family Promise with their aim of serving families, the policy of being married is discriminating against couples who cohabitate. This policy was put in place in respect for the host churches they partner with since the families in the program are staying overnight in these churches, however, families who are not able to get married or simply do not value marriage should not face barriers in receiving help because they have different values.

The last most prominent barrier we found was that the disproportionate Hispanic population compared to Cleveland, Tennessee's Hispanic population. Family Promise

Our first step in evaluating this organization will be interviewing the volunteers and staff. By obtaining feedback from individuals who are familiar with everyday issues and goals, we would gain more insight into what struggles they may be facing. Since they are working with these issues every day, they have first-hand experience.

After consulting with staff and volunteers at Family Promise, we will give a questionnaire to graduates of Family Promise's program. This survey would gather helpful insight regarding how the agency has benefitted them as well as what potentially could have been done better during their time. This feedback could potentially be an immense factor in prioritizing which issue to tackle first. Since the graduates were once the clients being served, they are the only ones with first-hand experience of how the program works in real life. Our next step in our evaluation method will be reaching out to community members of Bradley County to obtain their feedback as it relates to their feelings towards how Family Promise benefits their community. This will be done through a mail-out survey and may also familiarize more people about our program. The results of this survey will produce information about how Family Promise is viewed in the community and what individuals think Family Promise is doing to help or hurt the community.

When assessing the issues that prevent the agency from providing the best quality services and lead to many of the barriers we identified, the main issue is funding. Family Promise receives funding through donors and some government grants. While their current funding provides them with enough for their current ... they would be able to assist more families at a time with additional funding. Another issue that blocks them from providing better quality services is the lack of translators. This has proven to hinder Hispanic clients from entering the program. Having a bilingual employee or translator could potentially serve to reach more Hispanic families. The last issue we will mention is the lack of host churches. Since Family Promise relies on churches to host families in the program overnight, when there are not sufficient numbers of churches willing to help, the agency must pay for a hotel for the family to

stay in. Currently, Family Promise partners with enough churches to host families for just under half of one calendar year. This is a huge burden on funding.

For this evaluation, we will focus on one specific issue that we consider to be the most important at the moment. This issue will be the low number of Hispanic clients being served. This is especially important to focus on because most minority groups make up a larger share of the homeless population than they do of the general population. Individuals who identify as Hispanic make up eighteen percent of the general population but are overrepresented in the homeless population at twenty-one percent (Data and Graphics, 2018). This is a major issue when realizing the clients Family Promise serves are rarely Hispanic.

Recommended Interventions

We intend to use a variety of intervention strategies to address the mentioned barriers. First, we will focus on the funding issue. To obtain more funding, we will present our case to the local government to appeal for larger funding. We will set up an appointment with governor Bill Lee and address the barriers the agency is facing and how more funding would help the community thrive. We will then present to the community and show statistics of why more funding is necessary to reach more clients. This use of this funding would be used to reach more clients and hire a bilingual staff member. Presenting to the community will educate them about the agencies success and what more donor funding would result in. Next, we will suggest the agency forms a church committee with staff, volunteers, and board members. This committee will focus on gaining more church host commitments as well as making the current host churches feel appreciated through presenting success stories to the congregation, thank you letters, and posting “host church of the month” on social media. It is important to gain more host

churches but by having a committee that focuses on not gaining more churches but showing appreciation to current churches could buffer losing churches in the process of implementing changes among the agency. This committee will be beneficial for short term and long-term goals.

Another way to increase funding would be to decrease spending on food. This can be done by partnering with local agencies that already distribute groceries to families in need as well as local restaurants that may donate food. This would save approximately \$1,067.56 each year that is spent on food for the family in the program. The next issue that needs to be addressed is hiring a bilingual employee.

As with most changes, there is a risk associated. It is important to address potential costs that implementing these changes could bring. First, there is a possibility that the agency will lose money when trying to raise funding. The mentioned steps to increase funding are mostly associated with cost. For example, mailing out surveys to the community could potentially be a hefty cost. Another danger could be losing current supporters and donors. As the agency implements change, their current supporters and donors may disagree with what they are trying to accomplish or simply the way they are doing it. Lastly, while the agency puts more focus on implementing changes and fundraising, there could be a decrease of attention on the current clients going through the program.

While there are some possible risks involved, there are also potential benefits. The first benefit would be that the agency is successful in receiving more funding. This would address many of the current issues they are facing. One benefit that would come along with receiving more funding would be that the agency is able to hire a bilingual employee. This would

potentially increase the number of Hispanic clients Family Promise serves. As we assess both the potential risks and benefits, we believe the given recommendations will produce more success in the long term with minimal strain on the agency.

Of course, there is a possibility that all of the recommendations will be unsuccessful. The potential barriers and sources of resistance we may face during our intervention maybe not being able to get funding or additional host churches involved. This barrier would be a negative outcome because of the time and money spent on these interventions. Another possible barrier would be being denied government funding on the basis of utilizing faith-based resources. This is a possibility because of the agency's involvement with churches in the area. There could also be no outcomes from reaching out to agencies and local restaurants that distribute food. This would potentially cost the agency a lot of time in reaching out to various places and take away from attention to current clients. Lastly, a potential barrier could be having trouble finding a qualified bilingual employee who is competent in this line of work. This would hinder the program's growth in serving bilingual clients.

Some available resources Family Promise could utilize could be agencies like The Caring Place, a nonprofit in Cleveland, TN that distributes groceries. Family Promise could utilize this agency by obtaining grocery food for the current family in their program to cut down on food costs. They could also contact the local food bank to see what they would be willing to donate. The second resource that could potentially serve to influence the intervention in a positive way is the great number of churches in the surrounding area. Bradley county is home to an overwhelming number of churches. This is a great strength for the placement of an agency like Family Promise who thrives off of church partnerships. Another strength is that the organization is already receiving some government funding. This is a good indicator that they may be able to

receive more funding. There are also many community volunteers that invest their time in this agency. Many people see what good comes from their work and want to be involved. Lastly, the agency has great relationships with the current churches they are partnering with and were even able to gain two new churches last year.

After assessing all of the potential barriers and resources that could affect the intervention process, we are suggesting a step by step implementation plan to reach the goals in an orderly manner. By only having one step to focus on at a time, the staff will be more likely to keep their current success rates. The first step should be contacting Eva VanHook, director of Family Promise of Bradley County to start a church committee. The next step should be contacting food distributing agencies and food banks. Once this is complete, if funding is still lacking, the staff should apply for grants and potentially present their case for increased funding to Governor Bill Lee. Lastly, the agency should have enough funding at this point to hire a bilingual employee.

Evaluation Process

Five years after we have effectively hired a full-time bilingual staff member, we will look at a few statistics in order to see whether or not our intervention was successful. For starters, we will make a specific outline of everywhere our budgeted money is going. We will then compare that to an outline of where our money went before we hired a full-time bilingual employee. In this way, we will be able to judge whether or not we are successfully saving money through different methods such as partnering with more churches and food banks. Is less of our budget going towards feeding/housing our clients which allows us to keep an extra full-time employee? By looking at these numbers, we will be able to evaluate the success of our intervention.

The second strategy we will use in order to determine if our intervention was successful is to compare the statistics of the Hispanic community population with the population that Family Promise is serving. We will then compare those numbers with our starting baseline of how many Hispanics we were serving compared to the Hispanic community population before we hired a bilingual employee. In this way, we will be able to evaluate whether or not we have reached our goal successfully.

In order to effectively evaluate whether or not our interventions have been successful, it is crucial to understand the baseline of what Family Promise is working with. These include the number of churches that are currently partnered with the agency. Out of the numerous churches in the local area that surround Family Promise, only eleven are partnered with the agency.

In Cleveland Tennessee, 10.60% are Hispanic. However, out of all the different populations served by Family Promise, only 5% are Hispanic. That means that Family Promise is only serving half of the Hispanic community in Cleveland Tennessee ("Data USA", 2017).

And the last thing we need to know the baseline of is what the budget currently looks like for Family Promise. Currently, the amount of money they spend on food and housing for their clients is \$10,448.17.

The tools that we will be using for the evaluation are communication skills, networking skills, public relation tactics, and broadcasting methods. We will also be using surveys, questionnaires, and interviewing individuals. Though the questions for the interviews, questionnaires, and surveys are not listed here, these forms can be found in the appendix. Last but not least, we will be gathering statistics from the agency and from the state to use in our evaluation to measure progress.

While we will be using many tools for our evaluation, we will also be providing different corrective measures for our strategy. Some corrective measures of our intervention strategy that we will be providing include communication skills, appeals, and public relation tactics. We will also be providing surveys, questionnaires and interview questions. These different questions and forms can be found in the appendix section.

Conclusion

It is obvious that the issue is a big deal in that Family Promise is not helping the Hispanic community as much as it would like to. However, by following the brief steps of reaching out to the community, partnering with churches and food banks, requesting a larger grant from the government, and doing other small steps to enlarge their budget, Family Promise will be able to hire a full-time bilingual staff member. In doing this, Family Promise will be able to reach more Hispanics in the Cleveland area. And five years after this accomplishment, Family Promise can assess and determine whether or not it was effective. They will be able to look at their budget and compare it with before they hired a bilingual employee and they will also look at how many Hispanics they serve in comparison to the number of Hispanics in Cleveland. In this way, they will be able to fully achieve their goal without losing money or their focus on other community clients.

References:

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Appendix:

Mail-out surveys for community members:

1. Are you familiar with Family Promise of Bradley County?
 - a. What is Family Promise?
 - b. I've heard of it once or twice
 - c. I know what they do, but have never been there
 - d. I've volunteered/worked/benefited from their services
 - e. Other: _____

2. In your opinion, how well is Family Promise doing at serving the community?
 - a. Extremely bad
 - b. Somewhat bad
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat good
 - e. Extremely good
 - f. Other: _____

3. Are there areas where Family Promise could improve to serve the community better?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Other: _____
 - d. What areas does Family Promise of Bradley County do well at?

5. What could Family Promise of Bradley County do better at?

Questionnaire for graduates of Family Promise Program:

1. When did you graduate from the Family Promise program?
2. On a scale of 1-10 where 1 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied, how would you rate your level of satisfaction for the Family Promise program?
3. What did Family Promise do while you were in the program that helped you the most?
4. Were there any barriers that kept you from receiving the help you needed?
5. What, if anything, could Family Promise improve on to provide better quality services to families in the community?

Interview Questions for volunteers and staff of Family Promise:

1. How long have you been volunteering/working for Family Promise?
2. What is your job role within Family Promise?
3. How satisfied are you with how many clients Family Promise is able to serve on a scale of 1-10 where 1 is extremely dissatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied? Explain.
4. What are some areas that Family Promise excels at in helping clients?
5. What are some issues, if any, that you see at Family Promise?
6. What could be done differently to help clients more effectively?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add or say about Family Promise?

[Company Name]

Please rate your familiarity of our services

- 1 2 3 4 5

Not Familiar

Very Familiar

Please rate your satisfaction of services we provide in our community

- 1 2 3 4 5

Disappointing

Exceptional

How frequently do you volunteer for our agency?

- 3-5 times per month 1-2 times per month
 Once every 2 months Other

Are you interested in learning more about our programs?

- Yes | No