

Bethsaida Community, Inc.

**HWDT (Homeless Women Deserve Treatment)**

2010 to 2015

HWDT was a \$1.75 million-dollar (SAMHSA funded) outreach program to support homeless women in Eastern CT. The program was implemented in September 2010 and completed in August 2015. Bethsaida was the lead applicant and partnered with UCFS (United Community and Family Services, Safe Futures, the New London Homeless Hospitality Center, Norwich Human Services, and St. Vincent De Paul Place. Services were provided to women in New London County and Windham County.

In total, 768 unduplicated homeless women were referred to HWDT.

The ages were: (2%) 17 years old or younger, (20%) 18 to 24 years old, (19%) 25 to 30 years old, (20%) 31 to 40 years old, (25%) 41 to 50 years old, (11%) 51 to 60 years old, (1%) 61+ years old, and (2%) were unknown.

The races were: (1%) Asian, (16.9%) Black or African American, (15.9%) Multiracial, (2.3%) Native American, (.3%) Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, (58.3%) White, and (5.2%) unknown.

The ethnicities were: 1 Canadian, 1 Cape Verdean, 6 Chinese, 6 Dominican, 2 French, 6 German, 1 Irish, 6 Italian, 1 Laotian, 1 Navaho, 1 Nigerian, 1 Peruvian, 3 Filipino, 1 Polish, 3 Portuguese, 54 Puerto Rican, 1 Salvadorian, and 2 Swedish.

The primary languages: 6 spoke Chinese, 2 spoke French, 3 spoke Haitian Creole, 1 spoke Laotian, 1 spoke Portuguese, 72 spoke Spanish, and 683 spoke English.

Other information:

41 of the women were pregnant (10 were pregnant and homeless with their children)  
166 were not pregnant and homeless with their children  
1 was active military, and 10 were veterans  
2 were transgender

**Staff members were able to actively work with 442 of the 768 women**

(including 106 mothers who were homeless with their children, and consequently helped 183 children). 25 women were homeless and pregnant (4 were homeless with their children). In total, 39 of the women were not formally enrolled in HWDT (since they were out of region, or already had case management services in place and did not need HWDT services).

Of the remaining 403 women who were supported through HWDT: 6 were Asian (1.4%), 81 Black or African American (18%), 89 Multi-racial (20%), 13 Native American (3%), 1 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (.2%), and 252 White (55%).

Of the 403 women, 187 had a substance abuse disorder (46.4%), 356 had a mental health disorder (88.3%), and 187 had co-occurring disorders (46.4%).

Another group served by the HWDT program was female homeless veterans. In total 6 homeless veterans were served by the program (including one transgender woman).

The 403 women were from the following towns/cities/states:

1 from Alabama, 1 from Arizona, 1 from Colorado, 365 from CT (22 unknown city/town, 4 Baltic, 1 Berlin, 2 Bozrah, 1 Bridgeport, 1 Bristol, 1 Canterbury, 2 Colchester, 2 Danbury, 3 Danielson, 2 East Lyme, 1 Easton, 3 Gales Ferry, 3 Griswold, 22 Groton, 2 Hartford, 1 Ivoryton, 10 Jewett City, 1 Lebanon, 3 Ledyard, 1 Lisbon, 1 Medison, 2 Meriden, 1 Middletown, 2 Montville, 1 Mossup, 1 Mystic, 1 N. Stonington, 2 New Britain, 6 New Haven, 109 New London, 3 Niantic, 100 Norwich, 1 Oakdale, 1 Old Saybrook, 5 Pawcatuck, 2 Plainfield, 6 Preston, 1 Putnam, 1 Southbury, 1 Stamford, 2 Stonington, 9 Taftville, 1 Thompson, 2 Torrington, 5 Uncasville, 1 Wallingford, 2 Waterbury, 2 Waterford, 5 Willimantic) 6 from Florida, 1 from Georgia, 1 from Kentucky, 4 from Massachusetts, 1 from Maryland, 1 from Maine, 1 from New Hampshire, 2 from New Jersey, 7 from New York, 1 from Oregon, 2 from Puerto Rico, 4 from Rhode Island, 1 from South Carolina, 1 from Vermont, and 2 were unknown.

Abuse was a significant factor in the lives of many of the 403 women:

	Neglected as a Child	Neglected as an Adult	Verbally abused as a Child	Verbally abused as an Adult	Physically abused as a Child	Physically abused as an Adult	Sexually abused or Raped as a Child	Sexually abused or Raped as an Adult
Total	141	130	167	244	147	201	133	115
Percent	35%	32%	41%	61%	36%	50%	33%	29%

Neglect: Of the 141 girls who were neglected, 88 went into adult relationships where they reported they were neglected.

Verbal Abuse: Of the 167 girls who were verbally abused, 151 went into adult relationships where they reported they were verbally abused.

Physical Abuse: Of the 147 girls who were physically abused, 113 went into adult relationships where they reported they were physically abused.

Sexual Abuse and Rape: Of the 133 girls who were sexually abused as rape, 70 went into adult relationships where they reported they were sexually abused and/or raped.

129 of the 403 women attempted suicide (33 tried once, 26 tried twice, 15 had tried three times, 8 had tried four times, 3 tried five times, 2 tried six times, 2 tried eight times, 1 tried ten times, and 34 did not answer how many attempts they made). The women who had attempted suicide self-reported more abuse than the other homeless women.

Of the 129 women who attempted suicide	Neglected as a Child	Neglected as an Adult	Verbally abused as a Child	Verbally abused as an Adult	Physically abused as a Child	Physically abused as an Adult	Sexually abused or Raped as a Child	Sexually abused or Raped as an Adult
Total	64	50	76	91	63	78	72	53
Percent	50%	39%	59%	71%	49%	60%	56%	41%

### Evaluation findings:

- 34% found employment (19% found part-time work, and 15% found full-time work)
- 38% reported finding stable housing (10% went to transitional housing, and 28% went to permanent housing – their own apartment/condo with no housing subsidy).
- 53% of the clients who screened positive for having a substance abuse disorder self-reported gaining three or more months of sobriety/clean time.
- Through referrals and support, 39% of the women actively participated in treatment: 34% participated in treatment provided by UCFS (a collaborating agency for HWDT), and 5% participated in treatment with other providers.
- Of the 190 women who had criminal involvement, 80% reported no criminal activity for over a 6-month period.
- 87% of the women who completed client satisfaction surveys (103 out of 119 women) reported that the HWDT program helped them improve their lives.

### Conclusions:

Outreach programs for homeless women must have staff who are trauma informed, and culturally competent (able to speak the language, understand drug/alcohol abuse and mental health disorders, believe in empowering women, and believe in recovery).

Extensive resources need to be identified before beginning an outreach program.

Partnering agencies must be able to share information regarding services provided to allow proper reporting. Partnering agencies must be able to work as a team.

A simple mechanism for referring clients needs to be designed and established prior to program implementation. Also a time-efficient system needs to be developed for referrals within partnering agencies.

The lead organization must have the ability to build and maintain an encrypted and password protected database that can be changed (to accommodate increasing/revised data) and provides protection of all data, privacy and confidentiality.

Funding for recovery housing in conjunction with outreach programs is crucial, since homeless women are in need of housing and many are homeless due to drug/alcohol use.

SAMHSA and HUD definitions of homelessness differ. HUD is more restrictive of who is considered homeless, or who can be eligible for housing. SAMHSA has a broader definition and includes “doubled up” which accounts for many homeless populations.