

Funding Homeless Services: COVID19 and Beyond

Examining a King County Homeless Service Agency's general and policy changes resulting from increased funding during COVID19, and what those changes may mean for homeless services going forward.

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Abstract

This research project will primarily analyze fiscal and policy changes as well as shifts in general practice occurring at Catholic Community Services of Western Washington (CCSWW) during the COVID19 pandemic, with a specific focus on changes felt within King County (CCSWKC) that resulted from a funding increase, in hopes that it may represent changes felt by homeless services as a broad sector since COVID19. The project will analyze homeless services through a comparative lens via a qualitative narrative, ultimately making broader inferences regarding changes in homeless services evolving “post” COVID19 in the United States and other nations with similar federal gov. structures and cultural views on homelessness (i.e. the global west). The paper will then conclude with broad policy suggestions related to the long-term success of King County homeless services post-COVID19. Due to its size and influence, CCSWW serves as an ideal candidate to provide a general understanding of how agencies of its kind have experienced differing changes in recent years (or since March 3rd when COVID19 was declared a U.S National Emergency).

There has seemingly been a substantial lack of research on the effects of COVID19 on homeless services and studying a shift in funding and its effects on agencies (i.e. the success of homeless services) is critical in understanding what will make these agencies operate most effectively. I argue that COVID19 allotted more funding to be allocated towards homeless services during the pandemic, further claiming that the funding increase along with emergency policy orders will result in substantial long-term changes in how homeless services will serve clients at large.

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CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES

CATHOLIC HOUSING SERVICES

SERVING PEOPLE OF ALL BELIEFS

(CCSWW, 2022)

Introduction

Social services are a field that has been slowly growing not out of scarcity, but out of necessity as the wealth divide across the nation continues to widen. Homeless services are a sub-field within social services that are designed to serve vulnerable populations by providing services to persons experiencing homelessness. These services range widely depending on the monetary budget for agencies via federal income and private donations, as well as the level of political action occurring at the local, state, and federal level for homeless representation. Naturally, homeless services are exclusively non-profit, whereas nonprofits are often on the front lines of serving those who are most vulnerable (Hess et al., 2021).

Many persons may vocalize complaints due to the rise of homelessness, yet it is the lack of compassion from citizens in concision with state failure to solve the problem of homelessness due to the expansion of poverty and its transformation into a chronic condition (Luiz et al., 2021). As urban populations increase, addressing various social issues experienced by differing populations is crucial in ensuring urban society is safe and healthy. It may be common knowledge that as a broad sector the infamous social service struggle with funding drastically varies state to state, and populations needing assistance rarely have access to all if not any of the resources they need.

We need to care about social services, especially services working with homelessness, to achieve a society where we may one day realize that all men are created equal and therefore deserve equal opportunities. We must note that the existing economic model for much of the global west has made the idea of equality a rather distant pursuit. Afterall, neoliberal policies in which intensified over the last two decades of the 20th century ultimately played an important role in shaping contemporary indigence patterns (Luiz et al., 2021). Yet from a global financial

perspective, the effect of governmental financial aid to multiply in societal welfare improvement is nothing more than a proven fact in economics (Puaschunder, 2021). When drafting any poverty-related assistance policy, it is imperative to note the contribution of financial economic theories in U.S poverty-related politics.

Shifting towards a micro perspective, homelessness in King County, by far the largest county per capita in Washington State, has grown exponentially in the past decade (Haorui et al., 2020). Seattle, WA is the 18th most populated city in the U.S and yet it sits poised at number 3 in the nation for cities experiencing homelessness, as over 12,000 persons sleep without a roof over their heads nightly throughout the County (Leins, 2019). It is easy to begin pointing fingers towards the tech giants that populate the area as one of the dominating reasons as to why the income divide within the Seattle Metropolitan Area has become quite stark, naturally contributing to a rise in homelessness. With Amazon, Microsoft, T-Mobile, and Starbucks (all of which are leading Fortune 500 companies) having headquarters in the Seattle area, it is relatively easy to begin to visualize the immeasurable economic impact on the surrounding community.

Roughly a third of the state's population lives in King County in which these corporate giants reside (U.S Census, 2022). Naturally, the more persons who occupy a spatially limited area, the more services they demand. Or if viewed from the most basic economic lens, supply=demand. This is one of the leading reasons as to why poverty tends to be more concentrated in urban areas, as more population in a shared congregate space will always equal a greater demand for social services. Yet King County is simply but a micro example of wealth division on a far more macro scale, as recently the Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS) identified the largest economic gap between world economies for at least forty years (Puaschunder, 2021).

In early 2019, what started off as whispers of an uncontrolled virus in the East ultimately morphed into a worldwide pandemic over the following months. For a period of a several long months, much of the U.S was on a mandated lockdown when businesses and schools along with stores and recreational centers were shut down. Washington State perhaps took a more “liberal” viewpoint on the virus, with Governor Jay Inslee issuing an extended Stay-at-Home Order. Policymakers at both the local, state, and federal level worried as SARS-CoV-2 accounted for the most unexpected widespread external economic shock to modern humankind that shifted consumption and behavior pattern around the world dramatically (Puaschunder, 2021).

While most of the U.S population had a home or safe space to quarantine in, many members of the most vulnerable populations did not, and thus concern on how to protect our vulnerable neighbors grew. During the COVID19 crisis, persons experiencing homelessness faced high risk of community transmission of COVID19 due to limited public health interventions, their unsafe living arrangements, their poverty, and the lack of opportunities for them to ‘stay home’, ‘physically distance’, and ‘wash hands consistently’ – all public health protocols (Haorui et al., 2020).

Naturally, many nonprofits are indeed on the front lines of serving those who are most vulnerable, and homeless service agencies were called to action to a greater degree at this time (Hess et al., 2021). During COVID19, the U.S federal government distributed funds in a “trickle-down” effect, modeled similarly after Reaganomics but in terms of relief funding. Essentially, federal distribution money such as the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act), and various other COVID19 relief funds were given out under terms of federal loans to individual municipalities in which the municipalities decided where funds were most needed. CCSWW wasn’t ignored when it came to funding, yet the stress of the agency

attempting to prevent the rapid spread of COVID19 amongst the vulnerable populations in which it serves with limited finances still proved a challenge. It held true that financial stress occurred even with CARES Act funding mechanisms, such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), Emergency Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL), and Coronavirus Relief Fund (Hess et al., 2020). The struggle of allocating different funds, enacting, and managing emergency policies, and most crucially, how to protect vulnerable populations from the deadly virus became the for-front of the homeless service agenda.

Yet as 2022 saw CCSWW and the rest of the world monotonously crawl out of the COVID19 crisis as more persons became vaxxed and many universal protective orders were removed, what were the lasting policy and general changes within the agency? More importantly, how will these changes affect the agency's clients going forward? What are the policy recommendations for ensuring homeless services agencies fulfill their missions and beliefs after a worldwide pandemic? The "goal" of this research is to answer these questions with a specified focus on examining how an increase in funding during COVID19 changed short/ longer-term policies and general practices in relation to a King County homeless service agency.

Review of Literature

All literature for this research project will predominately center around 3 centralized themes; (1) setting the tone for understanding why studying homeless service agencies are important, (2) providing resources and a brief explanation for the reader via entry-level knowledge on non-profit funding and policymaking, in tandem with (3), understanding diverse narratives surrounding the struggle of homeless service agencies in other states and nations during the pandemic. Selected literature for this review was picked not only based on its relevance to these 3 themes, but more importantly on the level of influence in analysis for the project in its entirety. Firstly, the three themes will be explained in more depth before selected literature (2 pieces per theme) will be briefly reviewed and tied into broader narratives within the research project. The chapter will close with a broad description of CCSWW before continuing onwards to chapter 3 (methodology).

The three themes explained:

(1) Although the understanding of the *why* of why homeless services is important seems rather self-explanatory, it is imperative to note that if everyone understood the obvious, then the crisis of homelessness wouldn't be an issue. Homelessness is not disappearing or even improving at a notable rate, as it is indeed the sheer visibility of contemporary homelessness that is perhaps its most gnawing attribute (Hombs, 1989). To justify reasoning of importance for a western audience, caring for our neighbors is noted as much in the Christian bible as it is in the U.S constitution, and fostering an environment of equality is critical to the long-term success of our nation. Although it holds true that equal treatment in an unequal society could still foster

inequality, as society expands it is not important, it is *necessary* that we care about the research and funding that supports our unhoused neighbors (Desmond, 2017).

(2) In contrast, understanding the basics of the non-profit funding structure is noteworthy as the reader may hope to scratch the surface of having an entry-level idea of how funds were distributed during the pandemic. Funding changed drastically during COVID19, with a substantial amount of public and private donations flooding into many homeless service agencies. It was in record speed that governmental economic bailout and recovery packages gained worldwide unprecedented momentum to alleviate the negative socio-economic consequences (Puaschunder, 2021).

During the initial surge, emergency orders changed the way homeless services handled their respected funds. Understanding general non-profit governance and funding allocations provides a background for the reader to situate the pandemic in time and place for many non-profits. Regarding homeless services, understanding the existing policies that effect persons experiencing homelessness is crucial in understanding what legal rights our houseless neighbors have. When natural and man-made disasters occur, such as a pandemic, this is also critical in further understanding existing and available resources for aid.

(3) Finally, a small yet growing pool of interviews/articles have been produced over the past couple years on the struggles of homeless service agencies during COVID19. These pieces range from an expansion on personal struggles within the agency to generalized case studies to few and far between. Recent reports on agency struggles have been done in the UK, Brazil, and the states of Georgia and Nebraska thus far. Further reports may become more available as

COVID19 moves away from a crisis and eventually becomes “just another” illness apart of daily life.

1) Why is studying homeless service agencies important?

Non-Profit Housing Organizations (Peter Salsich).

Through a macro lens, Salsich attempts to divide differing agencies providing supportive housing into various informative subsections with the goal of aiding the reader in understanding their importance in how they operate while making the case for the relationship between housing and homelessness. He highlights that the increasing visibility of homeless individuals and families consequentially leads to a greater public awareness of their plight, in which a consensus is developing among persons who work with persons experiencing homelessness that any solution to the phenomenon of homelessness must include a substantial component of permanent, affordable housing (Salsich, 1989). Most critically, it introduces the suggested narrative in understanding that homelessness is largely an issue of affordable housing.

Salsich further nods to the relationship between necessity and invention, alluding to the fact that homeless services (particularly rehabilitative housing operations) are a matter of necessity, and were therefore “invented” by those who understood that fact.

Another relevant dialogue within the piece is one that revolves around the struggle of non-profit landlords in understanding their respective relationship/governance with their tenants. He notes that the conflict between the "hard" and "soft" management forces is one of the most significant challenges facing nonprofit housing organizations to date (Salsich, 1989). This is important to understand because it is a critique of the available resources/system in place that

oversees supportive housing. On the policy side, Salsich delves into the infamous Section 8 federal housing voucher program, explaining the logistics of how it works and how effective it has been. The piece ultimately provides the foundation for understanding the housing argument and therefore how COVID19 has affected supportive housing within King County and beyond.

Serving the Homeless: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Homeless Shelter Services (Glisson, Thyer, & Fischer).

How effective are homeless shelters? Since many shelters receive a “trickled-down” income of federal money, and largely run off private donations, studying their effectiveness is important as most homeless service agencies receive taxpayer dollars. Ideally, a shelter having a high turnover rate into permanent housing is the goal for many (Salsich, 1989). It is important to note that some clients are placed into supportive or transitional housing, which shows up as a negative turnover rate for shelters as the housing was not considered “permanent.”

It is also important to understand the general population that is being served. In total, an estimated 34 percent of homeless service clients are members of homeless families, and 23 percent are minor children (Glisson, 2001). Furthermore, a staggering 50% of African American children and forty percent of Hispanic children live in poverty, and the single-parent African American family constitutes the fastest-growing segment of the nation's poor and homeless populations (Glisson, 2001). These numbers do not add up in comparison to the nation-wide population of minorities in relevance to white counterparts.

The research of Glisson et al. involves a case study for a rehabilitative housing shelter in the state of Georgia, and along with informing the reader with logistics it examines the

effectiveness of a shelter in action. As far as the turnover rate, it is after a short stay in the shelter that most of the individuals located to relatively safe, affordable, and stable homes, however it should be noted that the majority of the Athens Area Homeless Shelter (AAHS) former clients continued to live in poverty and perilously on the verge of a return to homelessness (Glisson, 2001). AAHS was the shelter where the case study was performed, and is just outside of Atlanta, Georgia. Since this research project examines a homeless service agency in Washington State, we must note the difference in allocation of funding between Georgia and Washington. The state of Georgia distributes far less funding to homeless services than Washington, which likely limits the client's ability to achieve long-term "success."

Both Salsich and Gibson et al. provide reasonings as to why studying homelessness is important. Salsich does this by relating homelessness to housing on a macro scale, and Glisson et al. by noting the disproportionate number of Americans effected with housing instability, and the success rate within a Georgia homeless shelter. By understanding why studying homelessness is important, we may begin to justify why studying the effects of COVID19 on homeless service agencies is important, as COVID19 saw many of the agencies enter crisis-mode.

2) An entry-level introduction to non-profit funding and policymaking effecting homelessness

Budgeting- A Management Tool. (Robert Carr)

Carr's highly condensed article touches on the importance of establishing an annual budget within nonprofit service agencies, while simultaneously highlighting an ideal internal

agency structure for non-profit budgeting. In essence, it introduces foundational information on how non-profit budgets operate, and more importantly how they *should* operate.

When looking at a non-profit agency's budget, one will always be looking at magnified scarcity. For-profit companies theoretically have no limit to the profits their products and/or services generate, meaning wealth has the potential to be limitless, therefore placing a lesser stress on operating costs. While many for-profit companies do not achieve "limitless" success, scarcity has the greater potential to be of lesser importance. Non-profits, in particular homeless services, operate with an increased sense of scarcity, as unfortunately it is impossible for a nonprofit organization to have waste and expect to survive (Carr, 1980). Thus, most nonprofit organizations have ample experience in preparing budgets for specific purposes (Carr, 1980).

Budgeting in nonprofits runs off the idea of *accomplishing* over *profiting* or in other words, many nonprofit organizations engage in program budgeting (Carr, 1980). Unlike commercial budgeting in which an organization budgets for profits on sales or investment, nonprofit institutions budget to accomplish educational, cultural, or social programs, in which the budget is organized by program (Carr, 1980). Each program is tasked with the goal of accomplishing a different aspect of the mission of that program. For CCSWW, programs range from Catholic Housing Services (CHS) to the Counseling, Recovery, and Wellness (Crew) program, and few and far between. Each area has a different goal to accomplish under the umbrella of the mission of CCSWW, and each goal is limited by perpetual scarcity. In the case of COVID19, or any crisis according to Carr, an organization can through careful planning, be freed to act rather than forced to react (Carr, 1980).

Federal Policy for the Homeless (Mary Hombs).

What legal rights does a person experiencing homelessness have? As of now, the only existing federal legislation for the rights of the unhoused in the United States is the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, ironically established in 1987 during the Reagan administration. Pushed strongly by Stewart B. McKinney, at its minimum it guarantees federal money to homeless service programs. Naturally, the Act continues to see slashes in funding 30 years onwards. Hombs notes that it was the first large-scale federal response to homelessness, establishing a range of programs to meet the emergency needs of the homeless, yet it has not achieved even that goal because Congress has not fully funded it, and the White House has not aggressively implemented it (Hombs, 1989). Hombs eerily describes classic Reagan-admin effects on vulnerable populations which are still arguably applicable to this day, delving into an increasing wealth divide, higher housing costs, and a nearly defunct social safety net.

If we understand both basic non-profit budgeting practices along with existing federal legislation for the unhoused, we may begin to understand the available resources homeless service agencies worked with during COVID19, and we may therefore infer how limited their support was in comparison to the demand for their services. Furthermore, by understanding the already limited rights of our unhoused neighbors, we may begin to grasp how scary the effects of COVID19 have been for vulnerable populations.

3) limited narratives surrounding the direct struggle of homeless service agencies during the pandemic

The Non-Profit Response to COVID19 and What Lies Ahead (Hess et al.).

For this research project, it was critical that at least one case study in relation to COVID19 and homeless services was examined, not only to provide a foundation for a comparative dialogue but also to simultaneously prove that homeless service responses were similar across state lines and possibly international borders. One agency examined in this piece is in the homeless service sector, while the other targets food instability. Both agencies are located within the state of Nebraska. A recent Nonprofit Association of the Midlands poll taken in October 2020 demonstrated the financial worry among Nebraska and Southwest Iowa nonprofits: 71% have cancelled events and programs with corresponding reduced revenue and 75% are experiencing budgetary implications (Hess et al. 2021). Furthermore, the increased demand for services has tested the ability to provide services (Hess et al. 2021). Both organizations applied for and received PPP monies, and both organizations were in process of submitting forgiveness applications after making determinations of whether to use the eight-week or 24-week forgiveness period and what, if any, safe harbors may apply to the calculation of payroll (Hess et al. 2021).

Within many nonprofits, services for vulnerable populations have experienced an increase in demand, further exacerbating the tensions between the ability to provide and the increased demand for services (Salsich, 1989). During COVID19, while giving may be up significantly among private donors, restrictions surrounding grant expense included in the Coronavirus Relief Fund can prove difficult to navigate and, in some instances, do not provide for adequate indirect administrative costs or overhead to successfully manage the increase in clients and attendant grant management (Hess et al., 2021).

Focusing on COVID19 Bailout and Recovery (Julia Puashunder).

Puashunder provides essential grounds for understanding basic policy changes and new enactments during COVID19 almost exclusively in relation to government-funded agency relief. Understanding the paramount effect that the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act) and other federal relief had on homeless services and social service agencies in general is important. The CARES Act was perhaps the largest of federal relief distributed, allocating 2.2 trillion USD during the COVID crisis to citizens and agencies alike (U.S Congress, 2020). By following where the increased public funding came from, we may better analyze and track the method of distribution. Puaschunder describes other various policies including the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which provided businesses with nearly a trillion dollars in federal money.

Furthermore, Puashunder notes that COVID19 accounts for the most unexpected widespread external economic shock to modern humankind, consequentially shifting consumption and behavior pattern around the world dramatically (Puaschunder, 2021). By approaching agency funding predominately through a socio-economic centered lens, a conversation may be opened by the article which unironically guides many political decisions. Lastly, Puashunder cements earlier claims regarding COVID19 in relation to further effecting inequality by stating that COVID19 has indeed become the ultimate inequality accelerator due to changed demand patterns, resulting in economically gaining and losing industries (Puaschunder, 2021).

In Hess et al.'s claims, it is made concrete that there were similar experiences regarding funding and various operating challenges experienced in at least one other homeless service agency inside the U.S on a short-term fiscal and policy level. Puashunder highlights how some of

these policy changes could be directly related to a change in public funding during the COVID19 crisis, thus potentially influencing long-term policy and operating challenges effecting clients served by various homeless service agencies. By examining the fiscal and policy narratives surrounding these agencies during the time of COVID19 within CCSWW, we may begin to branch out on this narrative to expand on more potential long-term changes.

What is Catholic Community Services of Western Washington (CCSWW)?

CCSWW is perhaps best described by their belief statement, which goes as follows:

We Believe...

...in every child growing up in a safe, loving, and nurturing environment.

...in elders living in security and dignity.

...in healthy family life being affirmed and supported in our communities.

...in every person having the right to a safe, affordable place to call home.

...in compassion, love and respect for all people, especially those who are poor and vulnerable.

...in joining with others to change the systems which oppress, discriminate or otherwise cause human suffering.

...in employees and volunteers working in an environment which offers respect, teamwork, and excellence.

...in all these things for all people, whatever their color, whatever language they speak or however they worship.¹⁸

CCSWW is the dominate private social service provider in Western Washington, with 180+ programs ranging from family shelters to single men and women's shelters, and from

addiction recovery centers to overnight church emergency shelters. Essentially, CCSWW is the state's largest private provider of assistance to individuals and families struggling with poverty and the most vulnerable in our communities (CCSWW, 2022). Primarily, the agency specializes in aiding those experiencing homelessness. The head of the organization and its entirety is the Archdiocesan of Seattle (currently the Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne, respectfully), and it has been around for quite a while, having been founded by the Seattle Council of Catholic Women in 1918 (CCSWW, 2022).

In 2022, thousands of persons were served throughout the 180+ programs, providing an immeasurable positive impact on homelessness in the Western Washington area. Some shelters operated by CCSWW are run out of church basements on a nightly basis for emergency shelter situations, while others offer a broader range of support services including but not limited to aid in applying for federal housing programs and assistance in education enrollment. CCSWW further advocates on the state and local policy level for persons experiencing homelessness.

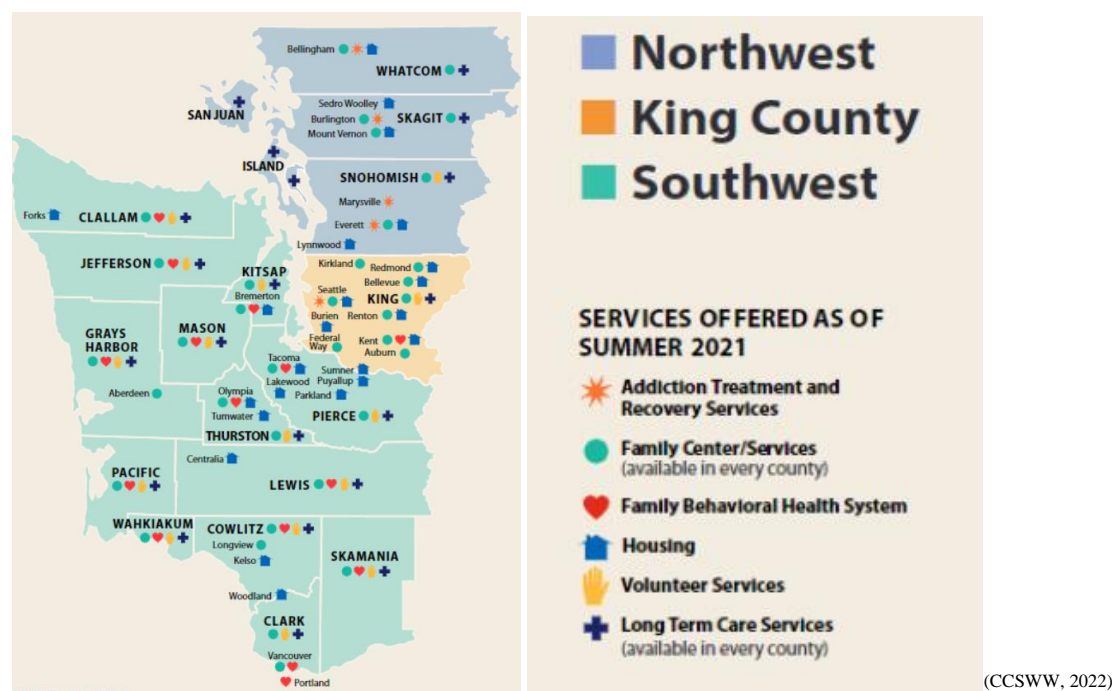
CCSWW is organized into 3 differing divisions: CCS Northwest, CCS King County, and CCS Southwest (CCSWW, 2022). This paper looks most closely at the largest sector of CCSWW, which is CCSKC, or Catholic Community Services of King County specifically, along with a brief glimpse at Catholic Housing Services, or CHS respectfully.

To Provide a broader idea of the impact of CCSWW...

By the Numbers:

Meals Prepared and Served	1,072,679
Shelters for Those Experiencing Homelessness	19
Emergency Bed Nights for Adults and Families Experiencing Homelessness	416,915
Children, Youth & Families Provided Behavioral Health Services	17,290
Hours of In-home Personal Care Provided By Long Term Care	2,268,327
Affordable Housing Units for Adults, Families, Veterans, Seniors, and People with Special Needs	2,567

(CCSWW, 2022)



CCSWW has thus morphed over the decades to care for a diverse range of those left in economic and societal desolation in Western Washington. It is at its core, a homeless service agency and a large-scale non-profit. Each individual program at CCSWW has its own unique budget tailored to the specific needs of that program, and the agency runs many of its budgeting models based on this principle.

Methodology

Methods:

This project received IRB expedited approval on May 25th, 2022, by the University of Washington Internal Review Board. Qualitative research was chosen as the primary overarching method of analysis for the project because many qualitative investigators believe they can get closer to the actor's perspective by detailed interviewing and observation (Norman et al., 2005). Furthermore, qualitative investigators are further likely to confront and come up against various constraints of the everyday world (Norman et al., 2005).

Data was collected utilizing an interview-based method before being interpreted and then grouped into general themes based off interviewees' respective experiences. Interviews were chosen as the optimal method for data collection because of the opportunity for interviewees to freely answer proposed questions at length in a conversational setting, ideally prioritizing comfortability for the interviewee and therefore maximizing the opportunity for an in-depth response rate, in which responses may not have been as in-depth if a quantitative-based survey method was chosen.

Furthermore, within the research there is a narrative-based case study approach for data collection in which collection was carried out utilizing a semi-structured interview process. A "narrative" might be the term assigned to any text or discourse, or it may be text used within the context of a mode of inquiry within qualitative research (Cresswell, 2007). By using a narrative-based approach, interviewees were given substantial lead way in answering proposed questions and were therefore allowed to expand on the questions in ways that may be difficult to repeatedly quantify en mas. Narratives were then analyzed and interpreted into various themes which ultimately become the research outcomes, whereas an "analysis of narratives" uses paradigm

thinking to create descriptions of themes that hold across stories or taxonomies of stories (Creswell, 2007).

Research design for the project centered around repeated interview questions for a small sample group of several key figures within CCSWW. The semi-structured interview process was chosen because each of the four interviews needed slight variance depending on the position held within the agency. Semi-structured interviews are conducted conversationally with one respondent at a time, employing a blend of closed- and open- ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up how or why questions (Adams, 2018). A case study design was chosen because the research ultimately hopes to represent changes felt by other homeless services agencies on a broader level based off the input of a small population.

Question: How has an increase in funding during COVID-19 changed short term and longer-term policies as well as general practices within a King County homeless service agency?

Null: There have been no changes within a King County homeless service agency since COVID19 in relation to the fiscal sector that changed short and longer-term policy and general practices within the agency.

Data source:

General research for the project centers around a group of subjects consisting of 4 people. The following names are the real names of persons interviewed which were obtained after collected consent: Bill Hallerman (CCSKC Agency Director), Dan Wise (CCSKC Deputy Director), Flo Beaumon, (Director of Catholic Housing Services (CHS), and Amber North (Program Director for New Bethlehem Programs in CCSKC). The persons briefly described

below are some of the most knowledgeable people in King County on COVID19 and homelessness.

Participants and Procedure:

Each interviewee was interviewed in a one-on-one sit-down style setting over the course of the months of June 2022-August 2022, in an office or secluded outdoor space, and all audio recordings were stored safely on iCloud. Responses to the questions stated below were recorded using an iPhone X video recording. Responses were then documented on a case-by-case basis in a protected word document. All interviews were limited to 1 hour per person. Responses were then pulled based on relevance to the various research question(s) and analyzed in a second document which ultimately became the completed capstone.

Interviewees were first asked for usage of their name (collected consent) before being encouraged to stay strictly on topic to the question while describing their personal experience with changing policy and practice. Interviewees were then asked to apply the questions to broader social service issues in King County, sometimes going off topic from the original interview question. The entirety of the responses was then recorded, stored, dissected, and reported. Quoted responses in “results” were strictly chosen based off how relevant the response was to the posed question. Results were organized by the interviewee’s relationship to the agency. Interviewees were given a period of 5 days (3 business days) to look over and edit their responses on a final draft copy pending research publication and approval to ensure comfortability and accuracy in their respected responses.

Limitations:

It is imperative to note that this research was conducted with the understanding that the author has worked on the front lines alongside King County's vulnerable populations since the beginning of the pandemic, and therefore has experience in the field in which is being studied and may have stronger opinions on homelessness along with innate bias more so than a person who has not worked in a similar position.

About the Interviewees:**Bill Hallerman, CCSKC Agency Director**

Bill has over 30 years of experience working with vulnerable populations. He oversees the approximate 40-million-dollar annual budget of CCSKC and directs many initiatives within the agency that regularly serves over 25,000 clients on an annual basis. Bill has been awarded a 2019 Executive Excellence Award by Seattle Business Magazine for his outstanding management practices, and he is known for emphasizing a push within CCS to be a more data driven agency, setting a new standard for social services operations both regionally and nationally.

Dan Wise, CCSKC Deputy Director

Dan has worked with CCSWW for over 20 years. She has ample experience in working with the CCSKC budget, and frequently works on local low-income housing policy initiatives while managing general program oversight.

Flo Beaumon, CHS Agency Director

Flo has been with CCSWW for 30 years and has served 1 of those respective years as the Agency Director for Catholic Housing Services (CHS). CHS develops, owns, and manages

more than 2,500 affordable housing units at 62 properties throughout Western Washington. The agency has an annual operating budget of 23 million USD (CCSWW, 2022).

Amber North, Program Director at New Bethlehem Programs

Amber is currently the Program Director for New Bethlehem Programs, a chosen sample shelter (serving families only) in the city of Kirkland, operating as just one of the 180+ programs under CCSWW. Amber has been in management for 4 years and has been with New Bethlehem since 2016.

Design:

Questions were designed to start small before becoming broader, with the goal being to understand some of the primary changes in funding and policy/practice within CCSWW.

Questions were listed and asked in order. Sometimes interviewees went off topic, or chose to expand on a related topic, which took the interview in a different direction. Sometimes interviewees did not answer the question directly. All interviewees provided insightful information complimented by supporting literature which led to the conclusion of this project.

Selected Questions for Dan Wise and Bill Hallerman

1. Has there been an increase in federal funding during COVID19 for CCS? How much?
2. Where has this excess funding gone towards?
3. Has there been an increase in private donations?
4. Where has private donor funding gone towards?
5. Do you have a plan to keep the funding coming in from newly interested private/public parties? Why/Why not?
6. Have donations slowed down, increased, or remained the same since the WA state mask mandate was lifted?
7. How do you decide where funding goes?
8. What short term policies have changed in CCS (more specifically in King County Homeless Services) since COVID19 during the short term?
9. What long term policies have resulted from increased spending during COVID19?
10. Do you think COVID19 has made the public more aware of issues faced by disadvantaged communities?

11. How do you think clients will be impacted by policy changes?

Selected Questions for Flo Beaumon:

1. How would you describe CHS's relationship to CCS regarding funding?
2. Has there been an increase in federal funding during COVID19 for CHS? How much?
3. Where has this excess funding gone towards?
4. Has there been an increase in private donations?
5. Where has private donor funding gone towards?
6. Do you have a plan to keep the funding coming in from newly interested private/public parties? Why/Why not?
7. Have donations slowed down, increased, or remained the same since the WA state mask mandate was lifted?
8. How do you decide where funding goes?
9. What short term policies have changed in CHS since COVID19 during the short term?
10. What long term policies have resulted from increased spending during COVID19?
11. Do you think COVID19 has made the public more aware of issues faced by disadvantaged communities?
12. How do you think clients will be impacted by policy changes?

Selected Questions for Amber North:

1. Has there been an increase in federal funding during COVID-19 for New Bethlehem Programs specifically? How much approximately?
2. Where has this excess funding gone towards?
3. Has there been an increase in private donations?
4. Where has private donor funding gone towards?
5. Do you have a plan to keep the funding coming in from newly interested private/public parties? Why/Why not?
6. Have donations slowed down, increased, or remained the same since the WA state mask mandate was lifted?
7. How do you decide where funding goes?
8. What short term policies have changed at New Bethlehem Programs?
9. What long term policies have resulted from increased spending during COVID19 in relation to spending increase?
10. Do you think COVID19 has made the general public more aware of issues faced by disadvantaged communities?
11. How do you think clients will be impacted by policy changes?

Results and Discussion

Data collected from the interviews led to six outcomes of notable interpretation. Several of these interpretations became four repetitive themes in which resulted directly from a universal increase in funding during COVID19. These themes were: **1)** a shift from congregate shelter space to a more segregated living environment for clients, **2)** an increased acquisition of shelter space and accessible housing, **3)** a universal push for 24/7 shelter staffing, and **4)** a greater expansion of agency-wide technology for staff. An outcome of a change unrelated to a COVID19 funding increase that had a strong relation to homeless services and COVID19 was **5)**, a substantially greater public awareness on the intersection between homelessness and public health. **6)** Finally, several short-term policy changes were revealed, of which these did not ultimately lead to any notable long-term policy changes effecting clients, but resulted in a noteworthy response.

Perhaps most critically, the resulting themes stem from the fact that there was clearly an increase in agency wide funding in relation to COVID19 for CCSWW. In response to question (1), Bill exclaimed that; "...absolutely there have been increases, they have been pretty spread across the board..." before noting how funds were divided between CHS and CCSWW, and that "there was maybe a 10% increase related to COVID..."

Dan echoed how "...there was so much federal money that was administered by the state and the county and the cities...we did have a swell of funding... if you really dive into that it was federal dollars that were allocated to the city to distribute." Allocating these funds proved to be rather complex, as interviewees discussed how funding through federal subsidies such as the CARES Act came through to the agency via a trickle-down effect from the state to the county to the city and ultimately into the hands of the agency itself.

By using special emergency income appeal, many donors both private and public responded on average with more urgency to emergency need rather than non-emergency requests. Naturally, when emergencies do occur, this makes it rather difficult to have necessary resources available to effectively respond to them, thus many shelters consequentially operate not only in scarcity, but also in a frequent flow from one crisis to the next. Furthermore, whenever the agency asked for more funding during COVID19, according to Dan; "...you always had to prove what you were doing was related specific to the pandemic."

Interviewee responses showed how many of the policy and general changes in the agency during COVID19 were directly related to a funding increase. As quoted by Dan; "The interesting thing with the funding increasing is it allowed us to make those big programmatic shifts and changes... we had access to these spaces, we had funding for additional 24/7 staffing, and so we were essentially able to prove that that type of care yielded better outcome." When Dan used the word "prove", she is alluding to the fact that the conversation around the need for additional funding in homeless services is imperative, and advocates of homeless services have been vocal about this need for decades. In essence, COVID19 allowed advocates of homeless services to prove on a larger scale that a funding increase for homeless services is necessary.

1) The shift from congregate shelter

Perhaps the most universally emphasized change described by all interviewees was the agency-wide shift in where/how clients sleep and go about their day at differing shelter locations. Previously, many CCSWW shelters had clients sleep in congregate settings with privacy being a virtue due to limited funding. Clients frequently slept on mats on the floor, oftentimes no more than a few shoulders-lengths apart. Flo noted that since the funding increase, "...we have turned a corner with shelter, in not having shelter be just mats on the floor anymore..." Funding

allowed more private space to be available for client usage, which was directly related to rapid acquisition and general shelter expansion.

This change was largely made possible because clients needed a space to isolate safely during COVID19. Dan clarified how CCSWW "...worked primarily with King County to lease spaces that provided people with their own physical space...a hotel room is a good example, where people could sleep, there was separation between individuals, and people had direct access to hygiene." After the "emergency" of COVID19 surpassed, much of local government realized how having separate space for clients must remain as intact as possible, and this observation directs pertains to the conversation around an increased societal awareness between the intersection with homelessness and public health.

2) Rapid Acquisition and Housing

The shift from congregate shelter space to a more segregate environment for clients was also an almost direct result from COVID19 funds allocated towards rapid acquisition and general shelter expansion. As Dan put it, "...there was funding for rapid acquisition... a building that was already built could be bought, so a hotel or nursing home or in some cases apartment buildings could be purchased and then intentionally put to use for homeless housing." Essentially, CCSWW could use buildings already existing to house new and current clients. "The old model wasn't working as well as this one." "The old model," in this case, is congregate shelter. By having segregate spacing, CCSWW argued that clients could successfully quarantine rather than be close together without any barriers.

3) Universal push for 24/7 staffing

To operate newly acquired and expanded spaces while offering new services for clients in those spaces, there needed to be staff present at multiple CCSWW shelter locations 24/7. Many shelters previously operated as a nighttime only shelter and did not offer services such as case management and meal service.

“...the other change that it enabled us to make is that we were able to extend services to 24/7 care. A person was able to stay in that hotel room all day and night, we were able to then provide ongoing case management services if we saw a direct correlation into folks exiting the shelter towards housing at a higher rate,” exclaimed Dan. Essentially, what resulted from this was a “...deeper engagement with folks, resulting in a better outcome in terms of housing.”

4) Tech

During COVID19, staff of both public and private sectors alike had to work around absences of employees when infected with the virus. One of the ways CCSWW worked around this was increasing the presence of technology around shelters, allowing primarily more management-level staff to be present virtually when sick, as well as encouraging the agency to follow suite with the world-wide push towards online software usage such as Zoom and Skype. Dan noted that not only has technology changed the way clients do mobility transport in shelters, there also is “...a hybrid workplace policy now that we didn’t have in the beginning...each program has a little bit of autonomy on how that lays out... some of our outreach and case-management based folks work there and there is some time for admin to work at home, that’s definitely a policy change...” As echoed by Bill; “...we learned that there was some technological advances and ways we could use technology in our work because of having to do that in a good way...”

5) Short Term Policy Changes

The impact social distancing measures have had within shelters as a short-term policy change was substantial, as nearly all organizations who were engaged in face-to-face contact with clients providing direct services, counseling, and support or group activities to vulnerable target groups enforced physical distancing measures that had a major impact on their core activities (Raeymaeckers et al., 2021). The daily life within many shelters was greatly disrupted with COVID19, and it is likely that further short-term policies following suite of the implementation of social distancing were enacted.

“... the main thing that comes to mind is just all of the basic protocols for social distancing and extra sanitation, and how that has impacted the day to day in our spaces... ..for example, (it has impacted) how we do meal service, and it has impacted how we stagger hygiene and play services for better safety... it has led us to think through organization of space for one-on-one meetings, as well as implementation of isolation and quarantine procedures when people test positive so that we can quickly keep that positive case from spreading to a larger outbreak...,” said Amber.

CCSWW is not “just” a shelter program for persons experiencing homelessness. Along with case management, youth services, and mental health, it also partners with Catholic Housing Services (CHS) in providing transitional and permanent housing to clients in their journey to being permanently housed and mentally supported. As the agency director for Catholic Housing Services (CHS), Flo’s job is crucial in how CCSWW operates successfully. On the management of current complexes within CHS, Flo noted how difficult it was for clients to keep their space during the brunt of the pandemic as “...we got hit with huge, huge losses of rent...the rent assistance that was issued through county and some cities (CARES ACT money, originally

federal money) ...” was used rapidly. Yet she also emphasized how important it was to note how many clients were able to keep their space and manage to scrape by when things were bad.

Clients on all levels pulled together to make rent and stay in housing, weathering the storm of rent moratoriums and a skyrocketing cost of living.

During the first weeks of the lockdown, food banks, groceries, and other essential organizations experienced a rapid rise in demand for all kinds of material aid, such as food, clothing, and care equipment (Raeymaeckers et al., 2021). Homeless services was no different in the increased demand for services across every platform within CCSWW.

Flo operates at the same level as other agency directors in the non-profit world, and that is always with the understanding of conducting operations under a perpetual state of scarcity, which is, of course, made worse during natural and man-made disasters. “...we’ve come up through this culture of scarcity, and the charity mindset we are supposed to sacrifice...it’s not spread across society and that’s who’s work we are doing...more and more over the years we are taking on what the government used to do.” Unlike some western countries who lean towards having highly centralized public services, the U.S. federal government structure and limited social safety net result in unmet needs and implementation gaps that civil society actors seek to fill (Finchum-Mason, 2020).

Flo highlighted several other differing short-term policy changes within the interview, stating that; “We disallowed guests for a while in the permanent supportive housing programs...” as a very temporary short-term change. Both Flo and Amber further discussed how various new sanitation measures were implemented as well.

6) homelessness, public health, and the essential worker

Perhaps one of the things that COVID19 changed the most on a non-policy/funding related level was how homelessness is viewed on a macro scale by persons who are not experiencing housing instability.

“...we at CCS have been seeing housing, shelter, and homelessness as a healthcare issue gradually more and more...from the very beginning someone realized how important that issue was...the tie between healthcare in our work has been emphasized and COVID certainly cemented it...,” said Bill.

Expanding outside of the policy realm, COVID19 has changed how many people view homeless services, being that the homeless crisis intersects between affordable housing and public health. Amber noted how; “...in addition to the non-congregate topic, I think there is a wider sense that homelessness is a public health emergency, and therefore there needs to be more funding dedicated to the creation of more affordable housing, as well as an effort to make the barriers to those services lower...” It is also crucial to remember the reliance on essential workers during the pandemic and their value to our functioning society, and those essential workers very much include those who are operating within homeless services.

Amber offered her very real opinion on what this means; “I think the essential worker in social services has sometimes remained invisible to mainstream society—whenever you see commercials or programming citing types of essential workers, they often don’t list them as their own category....sometimes I wonder if this is because they are the “essential” worker that is dedicated to providing services for people experiencing poverty and marginalization... maybe this still says something about how far we have to go in our culture when it comes to valuing this population, and providing services for those experiencing homelessness, those in need of care, the aging, etc. ...one of my big takes aways from the pandemic is all the different types of

“essential worker” and how do we value them better... all of us that are working in this field are essential workers, and many of the people staying in our shelters are also essential workers...without which so much more would have broken down.”

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations...

Based off interpretations made within the “results and discussion” section, we may conclude that the hypothesis was correct, and thus disprove the null as due to a surge in funding during COVID19 within a King County homeless service agency, there were short/longer-term policy changes and general shifts in which were directly related to an increase in funding. We may further conclude that these changes will ultimately be felt on a client-level, and not just amongst agency staff.

Even though CCSWW received an approximate 10% funding increase during COVID19, the current supply of funds does not meet the growing perpetual demand for services. As stated earlier, Seattle is currently number 3 in the nation for homelessness, and the stats of housing instability amongst the population do not line up in comparison to its entirety. The Seattle Metropolitan Area, much of which is encompassed by King County, continues to grow as more persons come to the area, with many seeking employments in the tech sector. Interviewees repeatedly noted how important affordable/available housing was, acquired both for shelter and for low-income families to ensure success for clients served going forward.

As the increasing visibility of homeless individuals and families leads to a greater public awareness of their plight, there is a consensus developing amongst persons who serve our unhoused neighbors that any solution to the phenomenon of homelessness must include a substantial component of permanent, affordable housing (Manzo, 2002). Furthermore, housing has undeniably always been a major issue in the United States because it is a necessity, and the lack of housing directly leads to negative outcomes including increased health care costs,

increased crime, job loss, and disrupted education for children whose families are evicted (Espinosa, 2021).

We then may offer 2 policy recommendations that may be most effective in relation to the responses given by interviewees:

1 Dedicating a larger portion of King County’s current annual 12.6-billion-dollar budget towards rapid acquisition with the goal of attaining more non-congregate shelter space for homeless services, in which interviewees stated how rapid acquisition has contributed to a greater expansion of available shelter and therefore available assistance for clients since the COVID19 funding increase.

2 Dedicating a larger portion of King County’s current annual 12.6-billion-dollar-budget towards wages for 24/7 staff support within homeless services. The more 24/7 staff present on site at various shelter locations, the more support clients have. COVID19 funding proved that having more accessible round-the-clock staff had a better outcome for the clients being served.

A policy recommendation unrelated to the funding increase would be:

3 Having homeless services be recognized within King County as part of the public healthcare system, along with being granted all the legal rights in which that would entail. Interviewees discussed how since COVID19 the public may have developed an increased awareness on the intersection between homelessness and public health.

This project revealed that the funding increase in which occurred during COVID19 and the policies and general changes in which resulted from that increase are a part of a much bigger

picture in relation to homeless services. Essentially, COVID19 magnified struggles within homeless service agencies to a greater degree and searching for a “solution” ultimately becomes a part of a larger conversation on an international poverty-related discussion level.

“ I think there is an opportunity at this time, and we have taken advantage of some of it, to see the fragileness of our own lives and how that’s connected, we are not so different from the folks that we serve...”

-Bill Hallerman

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