

Campus Initiative Handbook

We are an assembly of educators, community activists and young philanthropists. We are dedicated to changing current systems to improve the livelihood and opportunities available to those who are disenfranchised. Specifically, we aim to improve the treatment and welfare of our Commonwealth's youth who have been subjected to adversity and or discrimination.

Administrators and poverty advocates nationwide attribute the recent spike in homelessness among college students to several factors: a parent losing a job, a lack of affordable housing and or rising tuition costs. Unlike the homeless population at large, homeless college students are largely indistinguishable from their peers. Many live out of their cars. Some spend nights in the school library pretending they fell asleep studying; others couch-surf at friends' houses. The rest shack up on the streets or in shelters or motels.

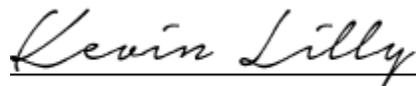
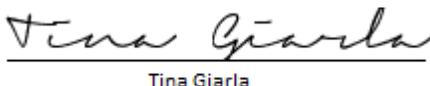
We have created this chapter of Samaritans Steps to provide support to young adults ages 18-24. This support comes in many forms, including resources to help with the pursuit of higher education. We are able to train and prepare the participants that

are involved in Samaritans Steps to provide direct or indirect services such as financial assistance from our scholarship, active relationships with a local continuum of care agencies that are able to assist in providing the immediate needs of homeless individuals. This includes but is not limited to: income-based assistance such as food stamps, health insurance, temporary income, employment, unemployment benefits, and healthcare services.

Grassroots marketing starts from the ground up. Instead of launching a message you hope will appeal to many people, you target a small group to help spread your message to a larger audience. Often, grassroots efforts can produce unconventional, yet powerful results in a very mainstream atmosphere.

This chapter is our grassroots effort to launch an initiative dedicated to the eradication of homeless youth and the stigma they compete against to simply succeed in life.

This is why we need you! Sincerely,

Founder and Executive Director

Tina Giarla

Business and Community Outreach Director

Background

Recently, the publication Salon released an article entitled *College kids' homeless hell: Why a secret, massive crisis is getting even worse*. The article pointed out the number of homeless college students there are on college campuses: more than 58,000 in America today, according to Free Application for Federal Student Aid data from the 2012-2013 academic year. The figure -- which does not account for students who either did not realize they qualify as homeless (i.e., couch-surfers) or those who choose not to report their cases out of fear or shame -- marks a more than 75 percent increase from the past three years.

This is one of many recent articles (more located in the appendix) about the problems homeless students face. A fundamental issue is that many universities, and colleges do not have the expertise or resources to effectively address these problems.

This club would advocate for homeless students, build awareness, provide support services, and develop preventive measures to eliminate conditions that lead to homelessness.

What is a Samaritans Steps Campus Chapter?

A Samaritans Steps campus chapter is a student led group, representing and servicing our mission to help support the needs of homeless students attending institutions of higher learning. The peers on campus will advocate on their behalf, educate their peers about the issue of youth homelessness, and inspire others to join them in taking action.

The club would be an eclectic coalition of young, civic-minded activists. Students of faith, students without, students from all genders & gender identities, as well as students from all majors and backgrounds would come together for this important cause. Being a student led & run club it empowers young people to realize system changes. The Samaritans steps club would also work with faculty and school staff members who might be interested in serving as host families for homeless students on campus. The club would build relationships with the housing and financial aid departments to help guide homeless students through these departments' processes.

A fundamental goal is to eliminate the stigma surrounding homeless youth and educate student populations about the realities of this issue. Many stereotype homeless youth as lazy, drug addicts, mentally ill or criminals. While some do deal with serious addiction issues, mental illness issues, and the collateral consequences of a criminal record, a campus coalition that

actively works to prevent youth homelessness would help ameliorate the damage of these factors and prevent relapse. Performance in the classroom, mental health, physical health, and relationships with peers and staff are all impacted by a student's housing situation—it's imperative there are measures in place to

effectively address the issue. There is also a possibility that once a student is experiencing homelessness they might not be able to afford to continue their education, and the school risks losing that student and all that they bring to the university/college.

Goals of the campus chapter:

- Actively work to prevent homelessness on college campuses with innovative peer- to-peer programs and services. (

- Collect data that could be used to better understand the problem of homelessness on college campuses so that we could be as effective as possible with our approach (**What are the three functions of a Samaritans Steps campus chapter?** (*In-reach*: This would involve providing support and services for your homeless peers on campus. This would include fundraisers, working with housing on campus to help that student live on campus during breaks, as well as other creative peer to peer support services. (*Outreach*: This is very important, and can be achieved through various ways: drives, fundraising campaigns, and delivering care packages to the homeless in the surrounding neighborhood, etc. As time progresses this can also include our “adopt a (



high school” program. You will take action not only with members of your chapter, but also with members of other chapters as well as the organization as a whole.

Advocacy: By joining this chapter you are now an advocate. Being an advocate is using your voice to fight on behalf of others less fortunate. As advocates for homeless youth, our role is to be a microphone for their voice. Being a good advocate is just as much about listening as it is about speaking up, and ensuring there is sufficient dialogue between homeless students and campus advocates is just as critical in achieving this goal.

**Depending on the need of the college/university some campus chapters might focus primarily on outreach and advocacy, while others might focus on all three. This is why data collection is very crucial*



What are the requirements of a Samaritans Steps Campus Chapter?

Organizational Structure: * For a visual chart see Appendix 2

Faculty Advisor:

This would be a faculty member who would essentially serve as an advisor for this campus chapter. Ideally the faculty advisor would be the one who helps build relationships between the chapter and other on campus departments and resources. This can be the homeless liaison at the school, a professor, or even another member of the faculty.

The Executive Board – Student Organization Officers

All student organizations are required to have the following officers:

President - Mandatory

The President is the primary student contact for the student organization and the “external spokesperson” of the group who regularly interacts with other student organizations and university officials. He or she is the liaison between the student organization and the advisor and other university or community contacts. The duties for this position should be tailored to the needs of student organizations as they deem necessary. The responsibilities of this position will include but will not be limited to:

- Supervising all student organization meetings;
- Overseeing the process of student organization event planning;
- Completing all student organization purchase requests;
- Maintaining a current list of; residences, email addresses, student ID numbers and (phone numbers of the student

organization officers, advisor and members; (

- Submitting all required paperwork for student organization renewal;
- Holding a minimum of six meetings for the general membership per semester;
- Submitting a report per semester and annually of student organization activities.

Vice President – Optional but recommended

The Vice President should be the President's "right hand person" and should maintain continuous contact with the President. The Vice President must be up-to-date on all student organization communications and events. The responsibilities of the Vice President will include but will not be limited to:

- Supervising student organization meetings in the absence of the President;
- Assisting the President with the oversight of the student organization including fundraising, event planning, etc.;
- Working with the student organization's Treasurer to prepare an annual budget;
- Maintaining a current accounting of the student organization's financial status including income and expenses;
- Identifying locations for meetings and events;
- Coordinating student organization fundraising efforts with the Treasurer.

Secretary – Optional but recommended

The responsibilities of the student organization Secretary will

include but will not be limited to:

- Taking minutes at every student organization meeting;
- Maintaining the student organization history for that academic year;
- Verifying all student organization purchase requests;
- Assisting with student organization projects where needed;
- Maintaining communications between the student organization President and (individual participants (this may include emails, letters, and phone calls)).

Treasurer – Mandatory

- All student organizations are required to elect or appoint a chief financial officer (Treasurer) to manage their financial matters. A student organization that has a large membership and completes many fundraisers, events or programs should consider having an Assistant Treasurer to share the financial responsibilities. The Treasurer should keep the officers and members informed about the student organization's financial activities. The responsibilities of the treasurer include but are not limited to:
 - Preparing the annual student organization budget;
 - Monitoring the student organization's budget;
 - Completing an annual financial report for the student organization;
 - Tending to the status of all purchase requests;
 - Collecting funds and depositing to the student organization's account;

- Keeping a record of all transactions, i.e. deposits, checks and adjusting entries;
- Preparing monthly financial reports and documents to keep the student (organization's membership informed about the student organization's financial situation.

Fees & Dues

Unlike other campus chapters we aren't requiring any fees or dues. The idea behind this is because we want to see all the money raised going into being effective. The only money we would be getting is if the chapter decided to order shirts or other swag from the organization.

Records & Data

One of the goals of the campus chapter is to collect data so that we can get a clearer scope of the problem of homelessness on college campuses so that we could best address it. We want our campus chapter to keep concise and organized records specially regarding the club's finances as well as how many students they serve and other relevant data. The data collected should remain confidential especially since it could involve a student's status. The campus chapter would submit all the data collected at the end of each semester to Samaritans Steps Inc.

Logo Compliance

As a campus chapter you are an extension of the organization. We want to ensure that everything that involves the campus chapter is done in a way that reflects well on the Samaritans Steps as a whole. We ask that campus chapters run any ideas through our campus chapter director.

What can the campus chapter do?

- Clothing Drives/Blanket Drives

The students in our campus chapter can do clothes drives on campus, and the clothes donated can be given to students on campus, passed along to students in the high schools they are working with, and even other nonprofit organizations like Y2Y that work with homeless youth.

•Awareness Campaigns

There are many ways to raise awareness about the issue of youth homelessness, one of them being our #VoicesOfBostonsHomeless poster campaign for example. We as an organization are excited to see creative ideas from student groups to bring awareness to this issue. The only thing we ask is that student organizers run it by our Campus Initiative Director first since it would involve the name of the organization. We aren't going to limit your creativity, but want ensure that any awareness campaign is in good taste, effective, and is something we as Samaritans Steps can fully endorse.

•Host Family program

Our campus chapter can work on establishing a host family program with the goal of giving a homeless student on campus a stable housing situation during breaks when stable housing is vital. They can also work with the housing department on campus and work with them to provide cheaper on-campus housing for students during breaks, and raise and use club money to help those students be able to afford to stay there.

•State House Advocacy

This would be a great opportunity for students in our campus chapter to meet with legislators and advocacy with their homeless peers as well as for homeless youth throughout the state. They can show legislators that young people do indeed care about this issue, and want to see them take action. We can work with

MA Coalition for the Homeless as far as setting up meetings.

- Direct outreach

This would involve passing out blankets, sandwiches, supplies, etc. to the homeless directly.

Adopt a High School.

Homelessness in high schools throughout the state is another problem that isn't addressed as well as it could be. According to statistics there are 6,000 high school students in MA who are currently homeless. This number doesn't account for the young people who dropped out. Our campus chapters can work with the homeless liaison in local high schools and help mentor and support homeless students who are currently in high school to ensure that the homelessness they are experiencing doesn't hold them back from success both short-term as well as long-term. Our chapter can work to set up a similar host family program within the high school to ensure that the student is in a stable housing situation while the search for permanent housing is carried on. The permanent housing element could be something social work students who are involved with the campus chapter can take on specifically. The campus chapter can also pass along clothes and other resources to the high school to help those students in need.



Steps to start a Samaritans Steps chapter on your campus

1. Get a group of friends or interested peers together
2. Form the club like you would any club on campus

3. Get a faculty advisor
4. Register your club with Samaritans Steps Inc, and meet with the campus initiative team
5. Congratulations you are now an official Samaritans Steps chapter!!!

Appendix I. Articles relating to the issue

Saccaro, Matthew. "College Kids' Homeless Hell: Why a Secret, Massive Crisis Is Getting Even Worse."

<http://www.salon.com/2014/11/17/college_kids_homeless_nightmare_inside_a_little_known_horriifying_crisis/>.

Ashtari, Shadee. "A Look Into The 'Double Lives' Of America's Homeless College Students."

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/26/college-student-homeless-boston_n_6145980.html>.

Ellis, Blake. "Homeless College Students Seek Shelter during Breaks."

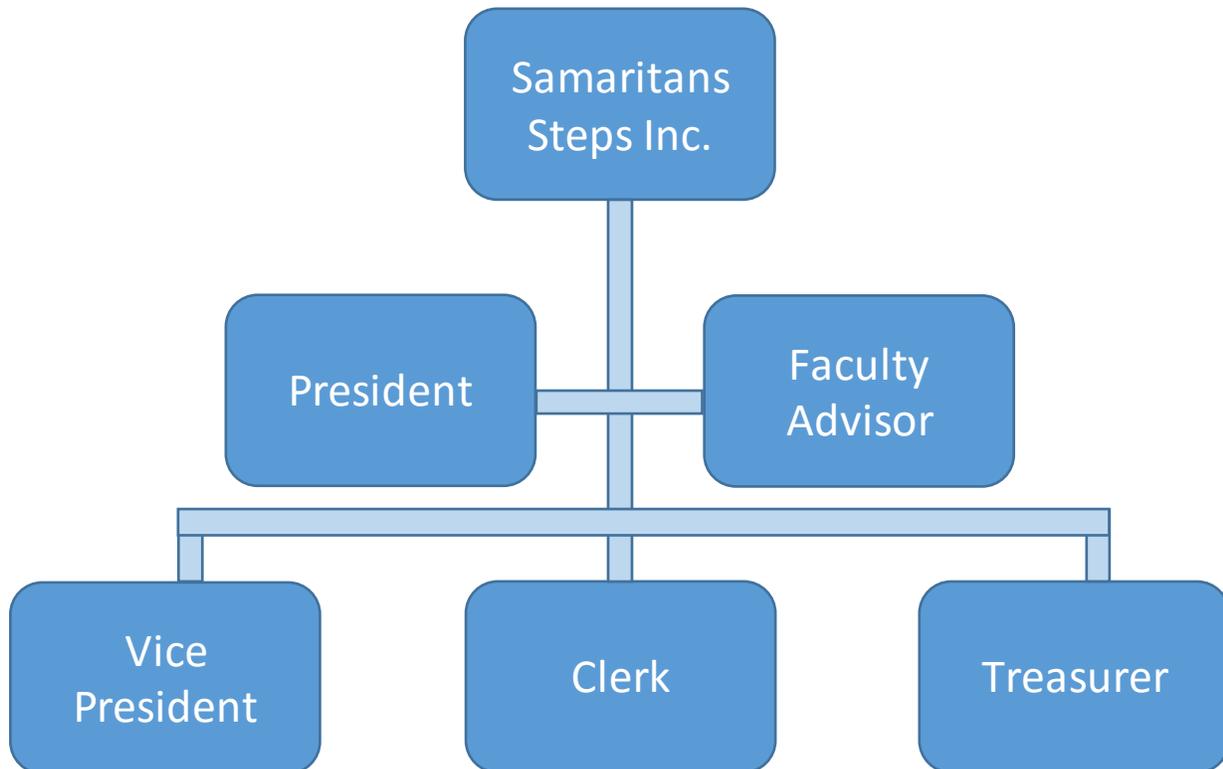
file://localhost/<http://money.cnn.com:2013:12:10:pf:college:homeless-college-students:index.html%3Fhpt=hp_t3>.

AOL News. "Approximately 58,000 college students are homeless" <http://www.aol.com/article/2015/07/24/approximately-58-000-college-students-are-homeless/21213755/>

Zeeble, Bill. "Homelessness happens in College too"

<http://keranews.org/post/homelessness-happens-college-too>

II. Organizational structure



III. Advocacy how to guide

The idea of reaching out to legislators might seem a bit intimidating at first, but trust us when we say its not as bad as you might think.

Setting Up Meetings

We would be more than happy to help you set up the meetings

with legislatures if you wish, but we will also run through how you could do it yourself in three simple steps.

1. Do your research, look up as much information about your Representative(s) and Senator. This will educate you on their social awareness and what causes he/she has supported, proposed and or opposed. Knowing this information will give you an upper hand because you can go build a foundation to place your meeting upon.
2. Call your legislators both in office at the statehouse and their district office. Doing so will give you an understanding what their schedules may be. We encourage you to visit them at their district office, and if unavailable visit at the statehouse. Accept any opportunity you will have to speak to your legislator. This may be with he/she themselves or a legislative aide from their office. Do not be discouraged if their aide is only available, accept the meeting with appreciation and get ready for your last and final step.
3. Prepare. Prepare notes and a great understanding as to why you are there and what it is that you would like them to do as a result of the meeting. Always remember to dress appropriately, just as you would if you were going on an interview. This will leave a great impression as well as prove that this meeting is to be taken seriously.

Meeting with Legislatures

Setting up the meeting is the hard part, but actually meeting with the legislature is as easy as it comes. I think it's important to note there will be some times where you schedule a meeting with a legislature, but when you get there you realize you would be meeting with one of their aides instead. While it is a bit disappointing, realize that's how politics works, but that being said

still go about the meeting like the legislature themselves were in the room. A few things to mention when you meet with legislatures or their aides:

- Be polite, but still come in as passionate as always
- Come in prepared because legislatures will ask questions. Know why you are there, why they should care, the solution/action step they can do, and also it wouldn't hurt to have a few statistics as well.
- Have some visual one sheet for them with all the main points as well as current statistics and data regarding the problem. This is good just in case the legislature isn't present at the meeting, and it'll give them something to reference later on.
- Make sure you bring up why you as a student care about homeless youth.

Calling their office

There will be times as an advocate where things legislatures do or don't do will annoy you to no end, and you would want to give them a piece of your mind. As I'm writing this, Governor Baker just vetoed the portion of the budget with 2 million dollars for programs and services for homeless youth. As you can imagine advocates and youth alike aren't too happy with this.

First thing, take a breather. Passion is good; anger on the other hand can backfire when it comes to reaching out to a legislature. Also when you call their office most likely you will be getting their aid, secretary, or even their intern. They had nothing to do with the decision that legislature had made; so don't punish them for it. Instead present your case calm and passionately. Also realize that the phone call will be relatively short. Some other advocacy groups include long scripts, which aren't bad, but from my

experience phone calls to legislatures offices have lasted between 2-3 minuets max. Usually when you are going through a long script the person on the other line seems to just want the gist of your concern, then they take down your info and that's that. In your phone call be sure to mention these things:

- What the issue is
- Why YOU personally care about the issue
- The solution or action step you want that legislature to take

Hello my name is _____, and I'm a student representing Samaritans Steps (insert school here)'s Campus chapter. The issue of youth homelessness is one I care very deeply about. It troubles me greatly to know that my peers are experiencing homelessness and very little is being done about it. I am calling because the Governor vetoed a line item in the budget and I would like Sen/Rep _____ to restore it. This is an important issue not only for the present, but the future of this great state. There are many homeless youth who are dealing with mental illness, drug addiction, depression, and other issues and without housing and other services not only would the problem get worse, but we risk losing them to the streets forever. Help us be a part of the solution. Thank you so much for your time.

Also on the flip side, if a legislature does something really good in support of homeless youth definitely be sure to thank them. Send them an email, leave a voicemail, tell them in person if you come across them, and especially thank them on twitter @'ing them. Politics is high school drama with grown adults, and legislatures are like that high school kid who wants to be popular so bad, so they love attention and that includes a thank you on twitter. They might end up favoriting your tweet and stuff as well. **Letters to the Editor (Example)** Dear Editor, While this harsh winter is pushed to the back corner of your memory, please remember the

lives of thousands of unaccompanied homeless youth in the Commonwealth that endured the icy conditions. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education estimates that there are over 5000 unaccompanied homeless youth in our public school system; however, this does

not account for those youth not enrolled in school. The numbers of unaccompanied homeless youth are strikingly high, yet the Commonwealth does not provide these youth, our country's future, with the basic housing or services to succeed. During this budget season, the Senate Ways and Means of Massachusetts made the recommendation to include a new line item, 4000-0007, with funding of \$2 million to provide housing and wraparound services to unaccompanied youth and young adults through age 24 who are experiencing homelessness. These \$2 million, would be used to implement the new unaccompanied youth homelessness law, Chapter 450 of the Acts of 2014 and to build upon the ongoing work of the Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth. The House only included \$150,000 for the work of the Commission. In Massachusetts adult emergency shelters are not safe or appropriate places for unaccompanied youth to stay, as these locations are not equipped to meet the specific needs of young people. In the City of Boston, there are less than twenty-five beds reserved for people under the age of 18 experiencing homelessness, but by funding of the Youth Homelessness bill, this could change. Let's not leave our teens and young adults without a roof over the heads for another winter. If we want our community to thrive, we need to work together in protecting these youth as inevitably, they are the future of our community.

-- Tina M. Giarla



Direct Service Tips

Direct service activities might have some people in the chapter nervous, especially if they never participated in something like this before or never really interact with homeless individuals often. In this section we will offer a few tips to those first timers based on our experiences:

- Treat them the way you would like to be treated ○
Say hi, ask their name, be genuinely friendly ○ Learn their story... (listen)
- Seek to build relationships, but also have boundaries
- Be street smart
- Don't give cash

- There are some people experiencing homelessness who do use drugs and other substances, and the last thing we want to be is an unwitting accomplice in someone's self destruction, so we don't give cash. Instead we say give food, supplies and care packages, blankets, and point them in the direction of resources that might be able to help them. Also there are some "professional panhandlers" out there trying to take advantage of the kindness of strangers, so the best way to avoid this is by not giving out cash



