

**A Case Study: What Are the Benefits and the Cost to a Homeless Services Agency When They Hire Formerly Homeless Individuals as Staff?**

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to examine why homeless service agencies hire staff who represent the population that is being served, i.e. formerly homeless individuals. The research was pursued using qualitative analysis and took a case-study approach, conducting the investigation within the confines of one agency. Interviews were conducted at all staff levels of the organization, with six staff participating in one-on-one interviews and fifteen staff filling out surveys. Four active clients participated in one-on-one interviews and fifteen clients filled out surveys.

The interview questions centered on the benefits and the costs to the agency and clients when services are provided by staff who are formerly homeless. The surveys focused on whether staff and clients thought that there was value added to the agency if it employed staff that represents the target client population. Documents from the agency such as the mission statement, guiding principles and hiring practices were examined.

The research hypothesis is that there is a strong correlation between an agency hiring from the population that they serve and a commitment to a peer-based model of service delivery. There is a connection between the mission statements of organizations and the organizations' ability to successfully hire from the population that they serve.

Limitations of this research include the utilization of only one agency for the study, geographic location and type of agency.