

LC1– Brighton Center

Brighton Center is a non-profit organization that aims to create opportunities for individuals and families to reach self-sufficiency. They address the issues that prevent people from gaining independence, remove the barriers they face, and create hope so that individual goals and dreams can be realized. The Brighton Center acts as a hub, connecting community members to a wide range of programs and other organizations depending on a member's needs and eligibility. To target issues in the northern Kentucky community, the center offers a plethora of services including support in meeting basic needs, education, workforce development, substance abuse recovery for women, affordable housing, financial education and counseling, youth services, and neighborhood-based programs. Thus, the social determinants of health Brighton Center addresses are economic stability, education access and quality, neighborhood and built environment, and social and community context.



Figure 1: Categories of services provided by Brighton Center.



Figure 2: How the Brighton Center creates a path to self-sufficiency.

The Brighton Center administration had various difficulties due to COVID-19. Customers were limited to only having access to the pantry, and resource advocate meetings were halted because customers had limited access to virtual meetings. As a result, many customers were

not aware of Brighton Center's other resources and therefore unable to access them. With restrictions lifted in the fall of 2021, resource advocate meetings were still at low numbers, and many customers were still only utilizing the pantry. Thus, our project aimed at increasing awareness of Brighton's Center's resources and targeted the social determinant of accessibility.

In relation to service-learning, our ability to get involved with Brighton Center was hampered due to capacity restrictions. We were able to deliver food and assist in the pantry, but since customers were not allowed to directly come inside, our interactions were limited with community members. It was also hard to get an idea of the center's day-to-day operations and how they interact with the community. Further, we could not see firsthand the effects of our project since we were not able to witness the Resource Advocate interactions. Brighton Center administration also changed considerably during the pandemic. Our main contact changed four times due to various reasons, and as a result, our communication was inefficient. However, while we did notice considerable change in Brighton Center culture with each leadership change, they were still able to meet the needs of the community rather quickly. Their ability to adapt reflects the resilience of the community they serve.

Through many avenues of programming, Brighton Center has been able to support clients in acute crisis situations, as well as aid in establishing long-term security and independence. Such social determinants have multi-generational impact on community members. Based on census and Brighton Center data, the largest problems in northern Kentucky include lack of affordable housing, a decrease in employment and opportunities in recent years, about 1/3 of households being below the federal poverty rate, and the below-average quality of public schools and funding. Brighton Center has 47 unique programs that address these various concerns, but they have recently faced problems with underutilization and subsequent community harm.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a massive increase in demand for utilization of Brighton Center's food pantry (usage increased by 400%). However, similar increases were not seen in other areas of service they provide despite increased need with greater concerns for housing insecurity, unemployment, and childcare, among others, which was exacerbated by the expiration of the eviction memorandum. This was in large part due to a restructuring of their entry system in which customers were no longer required to meet with Resource Advocates who would work one-on-one with customers to assess their situation and suggest other programs that would be of benefit. While this change was needed to help ensure safety, removing this requirement limited individual's awareness of Brighton Center's resources, as well as their comfort in asking for and accessibility to additional support in areas of need.

Accessibility and, more specifically, the distribution of information greatly impacts clients and community members. When the most vulnerable members of the community are left uninformed, beneficial resources are left underutilized, and community members suffer. Individuals are not able to move beyond their current situation and barriers. One next step to increase accessibility and awareness could be to develop and implement strategies for effective community outreach. When designing community outreach, some of the most important

considerations are meeting the community members where they are, building trust and showing respect, addressing needs in a non-stigmatizing manner, and presenting information in a way that is easy to understand. Strategies for outreach could take the form of paid advertisement, word-of-mouth, partnering with other community resources, community events, social media, and other methods. Focusing on and funding outreach and access has been shown in other organizations to be an effective way to improve utilization of available resources, ultimately helping people lead more prosperous and fulfilling lives.

As future physicians, we can be partners in the cause to improve utilization of community resources by being informed of both the needs of our patients and the resources available in the communities we serve. We can then take that knowledge and share it with our patients, as well as advocate to local government officials.

Our project showed how influential Brighton Center is in the community with their extensive resources, far beyond the scale of what we could get involved in through our service-learning project. However, they struggle with staff turnover as previously discussed. One way to advocate on behalf of BC would be to help them increase funding to facilitate resource advocate and staff longevity. It's also important to listen to them directly rather than assuming their needs - our main contacts were clear that housing insecurity is their customers' biggest challenge.

City Council meetings occur every week and are open to the public for either in-person or virtual attendance. If registered in advance, public citizens can arrange to speak with council members in chambers prior to the scheduled meetings. Additionally, it is also possible to submit comments that will be forwarded to the Mayor and Council if in-person and virtual attendance is not possible. Those in attendance at each meeting include the Vice Mayor, President, and seven City Council Members. There are five subgroups led by distinct Committee Chairs: Budget & Finance; Climate, Environment & Infrastructure; Equitable Growth & Housing; Healthy Neighborhoods; and Public Safety & Governance.

The most relevant committees for Brighton Center would likely be Budget & Finance, Equitable Growth & Housing, and Healthy Neighborhoods. Contacting the Committee Chairs whose names are listed on the Cincinnati City Council website would be the most effective pathway for Brighton Center to spread their message, mission, and needs to the committees.

Brighton Center is a keystone resource in the Northern Kentucky area. Working together to increase resource accessibility for customers reinforced how social determinants impact health and wellness while also allowing us to be exposed to a community we will continue to serve throughout our careers. It further helped us become more flexible communicators and gave us a real-world example of the intricacies involved in advocacy, funding, and outcomes. We hope our project will have a lasting positive impact for both customers and staff.

Resources:

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Renault, V. (n.d.). *Chapter 23: Section 6: Using Outreach to Increase Access*. Community Tool Box. Retrieved October 15, 2022 from <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/access-barriers-opportunities/outreach-to-increase-access/main>.

United States Census Bureau. (2021, July 1). *QuickFacts*. Retrieved October 15, 2022 from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/newportcitykentucky,KY/PST045221>.

Cincinnati City Council. (n.d.). *Meeting Calendar*. Retrieved October 15, 2022 from <https://cincinnati.oh.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>.