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Casting Off: Lessons Learned from the ANCHOR Project

by Corrie Brinley

The ANCHOR Project (Accessible Network for Coordinated Housing, Opportunities, and Resilience) concluded activities in September 2017, with a final ice cream social—a warm gathering of participants,

their friends and family, project staff, and collaborators that had become a tradition over the course of this three-year project.

Two previous SIROW projects have focused on LGBTQ+ issues, both funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration—Eon-Prism, a sexual health and HIV prevention program for LGBTQ+-identified adolescents, and i-TEAM: A Treatment Enhancement for Adolescents on the Move, which created a system of care for homeless LGBTQ+ youth.

Building on the work of prior projects, ANCHOR proudly provided culturally-responsive and LGBTQ+-affirming services for 166 LGBTQ+ adults experiencing homelessness and housing instability. ANCHOR served a diverse participant population, with majority (59.5%) of these participants identifying outside of the male-female gender binary as transgender, genderqueer, two-spirit, or another term. Additionally, 35.7% of participants identified as people of color. Participants ranged in age from 18-64, with the average being 29.2 years old. About 12% of participants identified as straight allies, while 88% identified along the LGBTQ spectrum.

ANCHOR participants faced serious mental health challenges and life barriers. At intake, more than three-quarters (77.1%) of participants reported serious depression, 83.7% indicated serious anxiety or tension, and 15.7% experienced hallucinations. Mental health issues affected the daily lives of participants—70.5% reported trouble understanding, concentrating, or remembering, 18.1% had difficulty controlling violent behavior, and 1.2% reported attempting suicide during the past 30 days. Only 31% reported living in their own house or apartment during the past 30 days. The majority (83.6%) of participants were educated with at least a high school diploma or equivalent, yet 73.5% were unemployed.

A collaboration between SIROW, CODAC Health Recovery & Wellness, and the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation, the spirited and diverse ANCHOR project team worked passionately to ensure participants received services to address these serious needs. Services included mental health and substance abuse treatment, housing assistance, education and employment assistance, weekly evidenced-based support groups, case management, sexual health education, leadership development, social opportunities, bus passes, food, HIV testing, medical care, and a drop-in community space.

The project successfully housed 36 participants in shelter, permanent supportive housing, or rapid re-housing (an intervention with minimal entry requirements to quickly transition homeless individuals to more permanent housing options). This was a significant achievement, considering the substantial and unique challenges LGBTQ+ people face in securing housing. In order to address participants' housing needs further, the ANCHOR Project joined a small team of local service providers working to make shelters and other housing options safer and more welcoming for LGBTQ+ individuals. This multi-agency team also composed a set of guidelines and recommendations for serving the LGBTQ+ community in

housing programs. These guidelines were shared with the local housing authority and service providers.

High rates of group and drop-in space participation, as well as data collected in focus groups with participants, revealed that one of ANCHOR's greatest successes was cultivating a welcoming and safe space for LGBTQ+ participants to build and maintain community and take pride in themselves. Associate Director Claudia Powell and Program Evaluator Courtney Waters continue to seek funding opportunities to further SIROW's mission of supporting LGBTQ+ homeless individuals and creating safe and affirming spaces for the LGBTQ+ community in Tucson. For more information, please contact Claudia Powell at claudiap@email.arizona.edu.

SIROW Researchers Present at the Pima County Community Prevention Coalition Meeting

by Cate Clifton



In early spring, Dr. Jo Korchmaros and Cate Clifton presented to 25 prevention professionals at the Pima County Community Prevention Coalition meeting. Dr. Korchmaros shared information about SIROW, including current endeavors, partnerships and organizational goals. Cate Clifton presented on the Bridges to Wellness project. Bridge to Wellness is a five-year grant funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration that seeks to prevent substance abuse, HIV, and viral hepatitis among youth involved in juvenile justice, mental and behavioral health, and/or child welfare/child protective

services. Both spoke to the importance of integrating sexual health risk prevention with substance use prevention, explaining the benefits of integrating different prevention topics as a holistic approach to youth services. The audience, made up of representatives from law enforcement, behavioral health networks, juvenile and adult corrections, as well as other prevention-involved networks, listened aptly as SIROW made a case for integrating these prevention topics and related services.

Following the SIROW presentation, Paul Lovelis, chair of the coalition, discussed current recommendations in the field of prevention around integrated prevention activities and topics. Lovelis referred to SIROW's presentation as an important contribution to the Pima County Community Prevention Coalition, stating that a holistic view of youth health is necessary to affect youth substance using behavior in a significant way. Coalition Director Amy Bass advocated for SIROW's goals as well, commending SIROW's work, and highlighting media coverage to show the relevance of Bridges to Wellness activities and of SIROW's overall mission and goals.

SIROW extends our thanks to the Pima County Community Prevention Coalition for their continued support of our work advocating for integrated prevention services to improve the lives of those most impacted by substance abuse and health disparities. For more information, please contact Dr. Korchmaros at jkorch@email.arizona.edu.



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Southwest Institute
for Research on Women

MISSION

Develop, conduct, and disseminate collaborative outreach, education, intervention, and research projects of importance to diverse groups.

GOALS

- Engage in collaborative feminist research on topics pertinent to the lives of girls, women, and

families;

- Develop and conduct outreach, education, service, research, and trainings with regard to mental and physical health, sexuality, legal matters, education, workforce, equity, diversity, and other issues;
- Address social inequalities and group-based disparities;
- Examine and support women's contribution to literature, the arts, and Southwest heritage;
- Advocate for women and families by linking researchers with community organizations and policy makers;
- Identify, illuminate, and disseminate research on girls, women, families, and gender differences.



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