

HELP USA



Building Better Lives

HELP USA Leadership Council Handbook:

Students Organizing for the End of Homelessness

The HELP USA Leadership Council unites student leaders on campuses across the United States with the focus of ending homelessness through advocacy and action.

Who is HELP USA?

Founded in 1986 and recognized by the United States Congress as a national model, HELP USA is one of the country's largest builders and operators of service-enriched, transitional, and low-income permanent housing. HELP USA has 19 residential communities in the New York metropolitan area, and was recruited to expand our successful model in Philadelphia, Las Vegas, Buffalo, Newark and Houston. HELP USA continues to pursue every opportunity to provide service-enriched housing to people in need, with the goal of opening 200 units of new housing each year.

Building on 24 years of experience, HELP USA is prepared to meet the evolving challenges facing homeless populations in the 21st century. Consistent with the changing real estate model for urban landscapes, the future is defined with expectations of "mixed use" projects: combining residential, commercial and public space to encourage social interaction. Job services, affordable housing, and supportive family centers will break the cycle of dependency and enable the homeless to reclaim their lives.

HELP USA's mission is to provide housing and the supportive services necessary for the homeless and people in need to become and remain self reliant. Through the development of quality housing with on-site support services, HELP USA provides resources for its residents to become independent and self-sufficient. HELP USA breaks the cycle of dependency by addressing the underlying causes of that dependency in a way that respects the dignity of those we serve.

The comprehensive continuum of services offered at HELP USA residences includes employment training, job placement, life skill building, vocational education, childcare, and domestic violence counseling. As clients build confidence and skills, they take control of their lives and find a new beginning.



What is the HELP 1 Service Project?

There are two parts to the concept behind the HELP 1 Service Project:

- First, the concept is to virtually bring people together around the issue of homelessness. While such a union is not likely in the material world, our project makes it possible as the HELP 1 website is fully integrated with viral media tools and social media platforms for users (<http://help1serviceproject.org>).
- Second, the project recalls the founding vision of the organization: How can you help so many people, all in need? The goal of the Help 1 Service Project is to leverage the internet to give more people the power to help another human being.

Users from vastly different walks of life can unite in a concerted effort to understand and overcome the challenges that families, veterans, domestic violence survivors, and single adults face when they experience homelessness.

A participant in the HELP 1 Service Project accumulates “**Service Points**” by raising money as an individual or as a part of an online team via the HELP 1 Service Project’s website (<http://help1serviceproject.org>). The “**Service Points**” earned via online fundraising correlate to real life situations: helping a homeless veteran put a down payment on an apartment, helping a homeless family pay for diapers, helping a single adult pay for transportation to a job interview, etc...

How the University Leadership Council Works:

1. The University Leadership Council is a *student driven initiative*. Proactive students are asked to register their Council chapter with the governing body on campus that handles student groups/ organizations. A thorough “Constitution” template is attached and can be used to create an official document confirming the chapter’s goals, procedures, and standards. The chapter will also need to register with HELP USA’s central office (by simply calling or emailing HELP USA Development Associate, Spencer Ford: **216.926.1455** / sford@helpusa.org)
2. Students who join the council will *commit to taking action by hosting a minimum of two events per year*. Students also commit to advocating HELP USA’s efforts to increase constituent numbers by encouraging their fellow students to join the Leadership Council as well.

Actions may take place *on one of two levels, local and national*. At least one action/event should take place on the **national level**.

Local:

- Students are asked to meet with local homeless service providers, identify their needs, and launch drives or other donation vehicles for clothing, toiletries, etc...depending on the needs of the local service provider. Students should then document their activity on the HELP 1 Service Project website, Facebook, Twitter, etc...

National:

- Students are asked to organize advocacy events on campus (i.e. hosting a candle light vigil for people who have died on the street or a hosting a visiting public speaker focused on homeless issues, etc...).
- Students are asked to gather names and addresses for petitions (attached) on Congressional bills or advocacy initiatives that relate to the core problems of homelessness, all in concert with the HELP USA national effort.
- **Online advocacy and the HELP 1 Service Project.**
 - Students are encouraged to propose and lead online advocacy events. These events can include posting messages on Facebook profiles, Tweeting fundraising updates to share experiences with other volunteers, and, **perhaps most importantly, promoting the fundraising aspect of <http://help1serviceproject.org>**