Executive Summary

Due to homelessness being a critical national issue; it requires immediate attention from federal, state, and local leaders and community stakeholders. With the largest homeless population in the United States, Hawaii leadership must concentrate on the organizational dynamics, financial management, strategic planning, and multicultural variables when they develop homeless assistance programs. Obtaining permanent housing and gainful employment are two of the most important factors that are essential in the task to prevent and eliminate homelessness. Veterans have sacrificed their life and so many other things during their military career; therefore, homelessness should be the least of their worries. This study highlights how gender, race, and sexual orientation play a role in aiding the general homeless population.

It also recommends strategies that will assist homeless assistance programs and agencies with implementing services based on the need of an individual person rather than a certain group of people. Although it may not put an end to homelessness instantly, the benefits of this study should gradually decrease homelessness.
Critical Analysis of Programs for Homeless Veterans in the City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii

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Chapter I: Research Problem

Research Problem

Homelessness is a widespread problem all over the United States. Out of all the states, Hawaii has the highest rate of homelessness due to its exorbitant cost of living expenses. In 2017, the United States Census Bureau estimates the population of Hawaii at 1.4 million. Honolulu, the capital of Hawaii, has a population of approximately 988,650 based on the United States Census Bureau (2017). Homeless individuals erect homeless encampments along sidewalks, in public parks, under bridges and overpasses, and on beaches in popular tourist areas. These encampments are an eyesore for tourists, and the officials of the City and County of Honolulu and surrounding areas are seeking solutions to an expanding issue.

Although the intentions were to highlight homeless Veterans, this study includes the general homeless population in the target area. The risk factors of homeless include: unemployment, lack of permanent housing, having a physical disability, mental health issues, substance abuse issues, and domestic violence. In addition to the previously mentioned risk factors, the risk factors for homeless Veterans also include: having a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and the inability to transfer military skills into the civilian workforce. Eliminating homelessness is a top priority for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The VA can only assist eligible Veterans according to their discharge status from the military, while the public has access to any homeless assistance program provided by HUD.

Hopefully, the Governor of Hawaii, Mayor of the County and City of Honolulu, Director of the Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH), city leaders of surrounding areas, program coordinators of the VA, representative from state and/or local homeless assistance
programs, and any community stakeholder with an invested interest in ending homelessness will review this study and take some of the listed recommendations into consideration. This report summarizes and provides recommendations for the homeless issue in Honolulu and surrounding areas as it relates to these areas: organizational dynamics, financial analysis, strategic planning, and globalization and multiculturalism. This study answers the following questions:

**Organizational Dynamics**

1. What are the organizational dynamics of federal agencies that provide assistance to homeless veterans?
2. What is the organizational structure of state agencies that affect homeless veterans?
3. How does the organizational structure of local agencies affect homeless veterans?
4. How effective are the federal, state, and local agencies that offer assistance to homeless veterans?

**Financial Analysis**

1. How does the VA distribute available funds to homeless assistance programs?
2. In Hawaii, how are state funds distributed among homeless assistance programs?
3. How are local and non-profit homeless assistance funded in the City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii?
4. How does the allocation of funds in the federal budget affect homeless assistance programs?

**Strategic Planning**

1. Based on their current plans, how effective are federal, state, and local agencies in Hawaii increasing access to affordable housing for anyone in Hawaii experiencing homelessness?
2. Based on their current plans, how effective are federal, state, and local agencies in Hawaii providing employment services for anyone in Hawaii experiencing homelessness including Veterans?

3. How accessible are federal, state, and local health care services to individuals experiencing homelessness in Hawaii?

4. Are federal, state, and local agencies effectively collaborating in order to maximize the amount of funds and number of services available to homeless individuals?

Multiculturalism

1. How does gender inequities play a role in the utilization of services provided by homeless assistance agencies?

2. Does sexual orientation factor into the utilization of homeless assistance programs?

3. Are there racial inequities within homeless assistance programs?

These are just a few questions that need to be answered to accelerate the mission of eliminating and preventing homeless in the Honolulu area. The answers to these questions are highlighted in the summary section of this paper.
Chapter II: Summary

Organizational Dynamics

The first paper for this course highlights the organizational structure and dynamics of federal, state, and local homeless assistance programs. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) is the national leader of efforts to prevent and end homelessness in America (USICH, 2018). Federal and state homeless assistance programs base their agendas off the foundation of the USICH. Slated to be eliminated in 2017, USICH received an extension until 2020. If this organization is terminated, the progress made in the struggle to end homelessness will be wasted.

The VA and HUD have numerous programs geared towards the fight to end homelessness, but the effectiveness of these programs is questionable. For the VA, there are no parameters in place to track the long-term effectiveness once Veterans are discharged from their programs. The VA’s Northeast Program Evaluation Center (NEPEC) only allows program managers to collect information to determine if certain services are beneficial to the intended population in a service area. HUD has its own homeless assistance programs and they collaborate with the VA for other programs. Due to the limited data on how efficient these programs are executed; their effectiveness cannot be evaluated.

The Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH), tailored after USICH, mission is to the end homelessness and strengthen the continuity of efforts to end homelessness across future State of Hawaii administrations (HICH, n.d.). As of this date, the website for this agency has not been updated in some time; therefore, it is uncertain if this agency is still in existence. Locally, the Institute for Human Services, Inc. (IHS) partners with other community-based organizations to provide an array of services to homeless individuals in the Honolulu and
surrounding areas. The inaccuracy of the data available for some agencies explains how navigating various homeless assistance programs can be cumbersome for homeless individuals seeking services. Organizations must continually evaluate their programs to ensure they are implemented and executed properly.

Financial Analysis

The second paper for this course analyzes the financial aspect of federal, state, and local homeless assistance programs. Most of the homeless assistance programs rely heavily on the federal government as its funding resource. With the election of each President, funding of various programs is subject to reduction or elimination based on the agenda their term. The fear of the unknown is unfair to the homeless individuals who are dependent upon these services.

Next, leaders of homeless assistance programs should study their budgets and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the programs they currently have in place due to funding restraints. Because resources were being allocated incorrectly, the programs that needed the most funding were being eliminated. On the other hand, the programs with limited use reported more resources than were necessary.

Sponsors and public donations are the funding source for local non-profit organizations. Some of these organizations provide health and social service assistance for uninsured homeless individuals. Homeless individuals use public services like the Emergency Room, although they have no health insurance, for non-threatening conditions. The costs of these services can become extremely expensive for health care organizations. A document by Partners in Care: Oahu’s Continuum of Care (PIC) (2014) explains that 1,751 homeless adults were responsible for 564 hospital admissions and racked up $4 million in admission costs. The financial aspect of providing homelessness assistance services can be very overwhelming.
Strategic Planning

The third paper for this course focuses on strategically planning services for the homeless population; such as affordable housing, employment opportunities, accessibility to health care, and the collaboration of services among federal, state, and local agencies. It also discusses the effectiveness of goals and missions of homeless assistance programs. The main reason homeless individuals decline the utilization of homeless assistance programs is due to the difficulty in navigating the various eligibility requirements for these programs. Some programs must enforce certain eligibility requirements based on the criteria attached to their funding resources. An agency that conducts performance improvement procedures on a regular basis have access to more funds and resources that other programs leave on the table.

Due to the limited number of services available in rural areas, homeless Veterans migrate from rural to urban areas to take advantage of the variety of services that cater to the targeted population (Metraux, O’Toole, and Treglia, 2016). The generosity of public assistance programs appeals to homeless Veterans; therefore, they migrate to cities that will assist them in stabilizing their future. It is in the best interest of the program to identify their strengths and weaknesses to ensure they offer services that are easily accessible to homeless individuals and families.

Federal, state, and local homeless assistance agencies and programs should ensure their strategic plans align with the needs of the targeted population.

Multiculturalism

The fourth paper for this course documents gender bias, racial inequities, and discrimination based on sexual orientation as emerging risk factors for homelessness. Ending and preventing homelessness is one of the most thought-provoking issues facing the United States. Many homeless assistance programs operate on a “one size fits most approach” and the services
they provide are for the general homeless population. Due to the rising number of female Veterans engaged in combat, programs should tailor some of their services toward the unique needs of female Veterans. Benda (2005) discovers in her study that 48.7% of homeless female Veterans compared to 44.4% of homeless male Veterans have thoughts about committing suicide. Family problems, self-esteem, current and childhood physical or sexual abuse, and depression are commonly associated with suicidal thoughts for homeless female Veterans; whereas, combat exposure, alcohol and drug abuse, and aggression are linked to suicidal thoughts for homeless male Veterans.

Some may characterize homelessness as a poverty issue. Lurie, Rankin, and Schuster (2015) hypothesize that minorities are disadvantaged due to poverty, source of income discrimination, and discriminatory federal housing programs and policies. First, the widening wage gap causes minorities to live well below the poverty line as opposed to their White counterparts. Second, minorities account for 62% of housing and subsidy vouchers where safe housing environments are limited due to landlords rejecting these vouchers. Third, discriminatory housing programs promote residential segregation by limiting minorities to sub-standard housing areas with low-performing schools, crime, and insufficient access to health care.

The risk factors for homeless individuals based on sexual orientation are: family conflict, disapproval of sexual orientation, or childhood sexual abuse. Due to these risk factors, this subpopulation of homelessness is at a greater risk for mental and health problems. Robinson (2018) emphasizes that placing a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth in the wrong housing environment could expose them to unnecessary violence. Transgender Veterans within the VHA, the largest health-care system in the United States, have experienced
health disparities when seeking medical care within the VHA or its affiliates. Brown and Jones (2014) report that Black transgender Veterans experienced health disparities due to their sexual identification or preference when compared to White transgender Veterans.

Organizational dynamics, financial analysis, strategic planning, and multiculturalism play a vital role in the mission to eliminate and prevent homelessness. It would benefit homeless individuals if homeless assistance program coordinators and social service providers would implement programs that tailor to females, sexual and gender minorities, and exclude racial discrimination. It will take the commitment of the federal, state, and the local community stakeholders to ensure that homeless individuals, including Veterans, have access to services that will end and hopefully prevent homelessness. These types of strategies will establish long-lasting relationships that will assist in getting some of these people off the streets.
Chapter III: Recommendations

Several homeless assistance entities listed several strategies to end homelessness. Each of them have several


