

Introduction to Steps

STEPS Inc. stands for "Southside Training, Employment and Placement Services, Inc." Their purpose is to provide job training and employment opportunities to people with disabilities.

STEPS offers four different programs; Housing, Education, Workforce & Economic Development, and Supportive services programs.

"STEPS is committed to creating, coordinating and delivering quality comprehensive services in an effort to foster self-sufficiency and eliminate poverty."

Point in Time Count

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides funding to areas through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program to provide housing and other resources to the homeless. Any area that receives this grant must do a count to see how many homeless are in there area to be able to receive adequate resources. This count is performed annually in the last week of January for a 12 hour period. The count also determines if the individual is an unoccupied youth, an individual, or a family unit.

It is also important to figure out if the person is chronically homeless. The results are used to help policymakers track the progress of reaching their goal of ending homelessness. The report is also reported to the Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (AHAR), to look at the effectiveness of the programs in place for the homeless.

STEPS in Farmville participates in this count and covers the counties of Amelia, Buckingham, Cumberland, Lunenburg, Nottoway, and Prince Edward.

Programs offered by STEPS

Housing

STEPS offers a variety of programs that can help people to get housing. STEPS has a program called Energy Share which partners with Dominion Energy to help pay for heating and cooling services for families in need. Another program called Granting Freedom provides funding for home and rental unit modifications that helps with accessibility for disabled service members. Finally, their Virginia Homeless Solutions Program provides case management services to individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. These programs created by STEPS helps to provide stable housing situations to those in need.

Education

The Head Start program provides education to three to five year olds in the eighth South Central Virginia Counties. It also offers services to expectant mother including prenatal education, family support services and education, postpartum support, connections to community, health, nutrition resources, and breastfeeding support. The Early Head Start Program provides infant and toddler care in Charlotte, Amelia, Prince Edward, and Lunenburg counties.

Workforce & Economic Development

STEPS offers a variety of different services to the community of Farmville that promote the workforce and economic development. They offer a Senior Community Services Program that provides employment skills to people over the age of 55. They also offer a Workplace Supports that help people to sustain employment and encourage independence.

STEPS also has Commercial Business Lines that employs adults with disabilities. STEPS also supports the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) which provides job services to youth who are no longer in school.

Supportive services programs

The Family Partnership Facilitation provides the local Departments of Social Services with a certified facilitator to help make safe plans for families and their children.

As the needs of vulnerable citizens continue to grow, STEPS is positioned to help meet those needs in the most cost efficient and trustworthy manner.

Conclusion

One of the most overlooked populations in any community is the homeless. This population can be valuable to the community if given the correct resources. Therefore, it is important for communities to be cognizant of the homeless population present in the area so that they can make informed decisions on policies that pertain to this population and the allocation of resources.

The four of us participated in the Point in Time count this January. Between us, we covered Buckingham, Lunenburg, and Nottoway Counties. We did not personally find any homeless, However, this experience was very eye opening as to what those who work at STEPS are involved in. They have many different programs, and their staff works tirelessly to help the homeless population in Farmville and the surrounding areas get back on their feet. It is important that organizations like this continue to get the funding they need to make such an impact on their communities.



References

- <https://www.steps-inc.org/workforce-economic-development>
- <https://www.steps-inc.org/education>
- <https://www.steps-inc.org/>
- <https://www.steps-inc.org/supportive-services-programs>
- <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/what-is-a-point-in-time-count/>