




H.E.L.P.
**HOMELESS ENGAGEMENT
 & LEADERSHIP PROGRAM**



ABOUT DPL PROGRAMS

In 2011 during the height of the financial crisis, the J. Erik Jonsson Central library observed increasing numbers of homeless neighbors using the library every day. Dallas Public Library then made a conscious decision to begin building relationships with and programs for this very vulnerable population.

Today, the Homeless Engagement and Leadership Program has three goals: provide warm referrals, offer opportunities for mental stimulation, and organize public education around homelessness and poverty. Treating our homeless neighbors like any other neighbor often means the library is the one place where people feel recognized.

4,000+

RECORDED
 CONTACTS WITH
 HOMELESS FOLKS

70%

SURVEYED VISIT
 LIBRARIES MORE
 THAN TWICE A WEEK

150+

INDIVIDUALS
 KNOWN TO RECEIVE
 HOUSING

400+

RECEIVED
 WINTER SUPPLY
 PACKS IN 2019



HIGHLIGHTS

Partnered with Dallas County Courts District to launch a new Homeless Diversion Court to alleviate barriers to resolving legal matters.

CitySquare holds office hours at the library to connect shelter resistant individuals to housing opportunities.

Texas State Libraries and Archives Commission funded a three-year pilot program that became city-funded in 2018. The library now has a full-time LPC on staff to make referrals and offer group therapy.

Dallas Public Library is recognized as a partner within the Continuum of Care. DPL staff attend CoC meetings and informal service provider meetings.

The Central Library is a stop on the Dallas Connector, a transportation for homeless neighbors.

HOMELESS ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS

SERVICE REFERRAL

Two full-time H.E.L.P. staff and a group of trained Central Library staff, operate a referral and support desk that focuses on the needs of homeless patrons. The Homeless Engagement Coordinator, Suzanne Glover, has an extensive work history in homeless services, and she helps nearly every homeless neighbor who asks.

The H.E.L.P. desk see over 1,500 visitors in any given year.

EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

Ending homelessness is complicated. Mythology and prejudice around homelessness is widespread. One of the greatest services the library can provide for our homeless neighbors is to educate housed neighbors about the causes of homelessness and evidence-based solutions.

Each year, the library presents a Community Forum and takes a close look at one aspect of homelessness. Throughout the year, the library partners with MDHA to provide quarterly education opportunities.

ENGAGING MINDS

The library supports local service providers by providing some of the intellectual and creative needs of our homeless neighbors. Every day of the week, there is something to do from classic movies to game day and arts programs. The library offers music classes three times a week to give neighbors an opportunity to express themselves. For our neighbors, being recognized as someone with talents and interests can be life-saving.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Getting to know the folks who visit the library regularly has improved the experience for everyone, staff and library visitors alike. Because staff have made efforts to learn about our homeless neighbors, it's easier for them to notice if something is wrong and act proactively.

Building relationships with our homeless neighbors also provides critical support to folks who may have little to no support network. It is not uncommon for staff to visit patrons in support programs and celebrating their wins.