



NIGHTLIGHTS

FALL 2022

Revised Mission Statement Recognizes Primacy of Human Connection and Dignity of Clients

If you've read NIGHTLIGHTS before, you may have noticed that, with this edition, the terms "human connection," "housing," and "health care" now appear in a different order at the bottom of the front page. This change is related to revisions The Night Ministry has made to its mission statement.

"We are not revising our mission," said Paul W. Hamann, President & CEO of The Night Ministry. "Rather, we have updated our mission statement to more accurately reflect the range of the services we provide to our neighbors who are without housing or experiencing poverty. We have also adapted language regarding our clients in a way that greater recognizes their dignity and autonomy."

In the revised statement, the term "human connection" is now placed first among the three "h's" that are at the core of The Night Ministry's mission.

"Human connection is the thread that runs through all of what we do at The Night Ministry, from our Health Outreach Program to our Youth Programs," said Hamann. "Prioritizing the placement of human connection in our mission statement reflects its primacy in our work."

As a result of the agency's recent growth, the term "housing" has also been expanded to "housing support" in the mission statement. This change serves to better reflect the extent of The Night Ministry's housing services, including assistance provided with housing needs beyond the walls of its shelter programs. Examples include the work staff undertake to help connect clients with more stable housing, as well as the stabilization support provided to those who have obtained permanent housing after a period of being unhoused.

The Night Ministry's previous mission statement referred to those whom we serve as "experiencing homelessness." The word "homelessness" has been deliberately replaced with "unhoused,"



The Night Ministry is a Chicago-based organization whose mission is to provide human connection, housing support, and health care to those who are unhoused or experiencing poverty. With an open heart, we compassionately accept each individual as they are and work alongside them to advocate for their immediate physical, emotional, and social needs while affirming our shared humanity.

Princess (right), a resident of the Pathways Transitional Living Program, speaks with Program Specialist Tracy Walker.

as the former often has derogatory connotations. The term "unhoused" also puts the focus on the fact that a person lacks what is a basic human right—housing.

In addition, the terms "alongside" and "advocate" have been added to the portion of the mission statement that speaks to how we provide services. These terms describe how The Night Ministry's services are client-centered, a process that respects clients' autonomy, personal agency, and right to make decisions for themselves. ♦

HUMAN CONNECTION • HOUSING • HEALTH CARE

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Health Outreach Bus Expands Presence on South Side

The Night Ministry's Health Outreach Bus, which brings health care, resources, and supportive services directly to neighborhoods around the city, has visited the New City and South Shore areas on the city's South Side for years. The Bus recently added the Roseland neighborhood and the CTA 95th/Dan Ryan Red Line station to its schedule.

"Programs like our Health Outreach Bus must remain responsive and flexible in where they deliver services, to make the most impact," said David Wywialowski, Director of Outreach and Health Ministry. "That nimbleness includes adjusting the Bus schedule when appropriate to ensure the Bus goes where there is a demand for services."

Jenny Merritt, Community Engagement Manager at The Night Ministry, said the process for determining if the Bus should start visiting new areas is complex.

"We have always started with data to understand where the needs are. For example, we look at how many people are unhoused, living in poverty, or lacking a source for primary health care in a particular area," she said.

Roseland, for instance, has an unemployment rate that is more than twice the overall rate for Chicago. When compared with residents of other neighborhoods, those living in Roseland are more likely to spend a larger portion of their income on housing than is considered affordable.

In addition to collecting and analyzing data, Merritt and other staff have discussions with local officials and organizations to get a better understanding of the unique circumstances of a neighborhood and to determine if The Night Ministry's services would be beneficial for and welcomed by the community.



Outreach Professional Erica Lusk (left) provides a face mask to a Health Outreach Bus visitor in Chicago's Roseland neighborhood.

Health Outreach Bus Outreach Professional Erica Lusk said her interactions with Bus visitors in Roseland confirm the neighborhood is a good fit for the Bus.

"We have actually seen an increase in the number of clients coming to the Bus since we started visiting Roseland," she said. "Through conversations, we've learned that many of them have not had housing for years."

The Night Ministry's CTA program, which serves unhoused individuals who ride public transit, had previously offered services at the 95th/Dan Ryan station, but recently relocated to the Red Line's Howard Street stop to address logistical challenges staff faced when delivering services inside the station. In June, the Bus began visiting the 95th/Dan Ryan location to continue serving clients at the site.

"The entire Health Outreach staff were adamant about continuing to provide assistance to clients at the 95th Street location," said Wywialowski. "Having a Health Outreach Bus stop alongside the 95th Street station now allows us to maintain a presence in the area while also addressing some of the challenges we were facing at the location." ♦

"Programs like our Health Outreach Bus must remain responsive and flexible in where they deliver services to make the most impact."

– David Wywialowski,
Director of Outreach and Health Ministry

NIGHT LIGHTS

Wednesday, September 21, 6 to 9 pm • River Roast, Chicago

Join the Associate Board for an evening of fun and philanthropy!

Night Lights supports The Night Ministry's mission to provide human connection, housing support, and health care to members of our community who are unhoused or experiencing poverty.

\$100 per person ticket includes drinks and appetizers. To purchase a ticket, become a sponsor, donate, or to find more information, visit bidpal.net/nl2022.

Meet Terri Sharpp, Vice President of Operations

Terri Sharpp brings a wealth of experience in finance, human resources, and strategic planning to her role as Vice President of Operations at The Night Ministry. We asked her to share about her background and her role at the agency.

Please tell us about your professional background.

My professional background includes diverse experience in government, higher education, public schools, and nonprofit sectors. I have had the pleasure of working in the financial arena throughout my career and added on human resources when I started working for school districts about 10 years ago. I've always been able to work in environments that allowed me to give back and make a personal difference.

What lead you to join The Night Ministry?

I was approached by an executive recruiter and upon reviewing the work of The Night Ministry, along with the mission and the vision, my interest was piqued. I've always wanted to give back to the communities that look like me and joining The Night Ministry staff gave me an opportunity to do so.

What about the agency's mission appeals to you?

The fact that we focus on human connection and receive everyone as they are. This opens the door to assist those in need without judgement. Our clients experience homelessness for various reasons, and I believe it is important to provide open doors to all who are in need without question.

What does your role as Vice President of Operations entail?

I have the opportunity to serve staff and clients from the back office. My team provides vital services to keep The Night

Ministry running efficiently. I oversee finance, human resources, facilities, and IT. These are areas that impact all levels of operations, and I have a unique view from behind the scenes. I also serve in a strategic capacity and assist in shaping the direction The Night Ministry moves in.



Terri Sharpp joined The Night Ministry as Vice President of Operations, a new position for the agency, in 2021.

What are some of the challenging aspects of your job?

A current challenge is identifying and hiring staff to serve our clients. The work that we do on the front lines is challenging and has been nonstop throughout the pandemic. We strive to attract those who understand our mission and are committed to serve. The Night Ministry is impacted by the current staffing shortages, and we consistently seek alternative methods to attract candidates.

What are some of the rewarding aspects of your job?

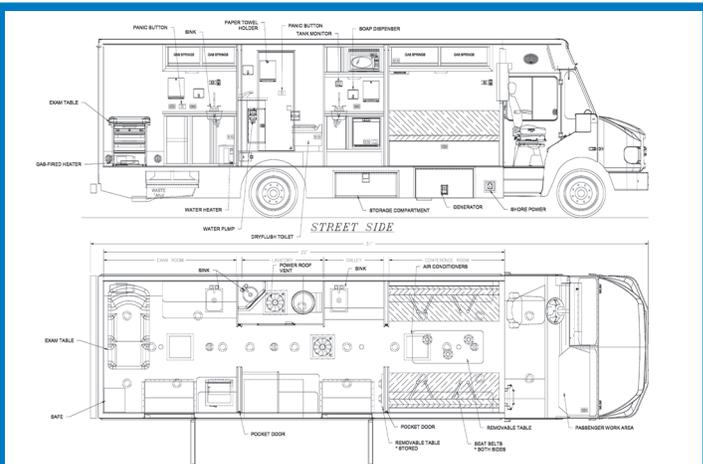
Having the opportunity to work with such a talented and committed group of people. When you look at the staff and see the tenure of so many exceeding 10 to 15 years, it says a lot about the organization and the work that we do. It's refreshing to see staff enjoy the work that they do and their commitment to transform lives. ♦

"When you look at the staff and see the tenure of so many exceeding 10 to 15 years, it says a lot about the organization and the work that we do."

- Terri Sharpp, Vice President of Operations

NEW HEALTH OUTREACH BUSES

We are excited to announce that two vehicles are being custom-made for The Night Ministry to replace the current Health Outreach Bus, which has been on the streets for nearly a decade. The new Buses will be easier to maneuver around the city and their frames will be made from a stronger material to ensure the Buses can withstand harsh winters and to prolong their life spans. Having two identical Buses will allow for more flexibility with the program's schedule, among other benefits. The Buses are expected to hit the road next year.



Overdose Reversal Drug Is a Key Tool in Saving Lives

Deaths from drug-related overdoses have soared in recent years in the United States. With opioid use common among a segment of the population The Night Ministry serves, the agency is often on the front lines in efforts to save lives by preventing overdose deaths among Chicagoans who are unhoused.

Naloxone, a non-addictive medication that can reverse an overdose by blocking the effects of opioids on the brain, helps make this work possible. The Illinois Department of Public Health provides The Night Ministry with naloxone, at no cost, in the form of the Narcan nasal spray, a delivery system which makes it easy and safe for those who are not medical providers to administer.

Staff with The Night Ministry's Health Outreach Program, which brings health care and supportive services directly to individuals where they live, carry Narcan with them during outreach, to administer if they encounter an individual who is experiencing an overdose. And because a prescription is not required for the medication, they distribute it to clients in case someone they know overdoses.

Substance Use Specialist Yoela Tepper has administered Narcan numerous times on unhoused individuals and trains clients on how to use it. "The great thing about Narcan is that it is accessible to anybody. It's so much easier than people think. If you are the one administering the first dose of Narcan, you are increasing an overdosing person's chance of survival by so much," Tepper shared.

The provision of Narcan to unhoused people is an important



Substance Use Specialist Yoela Tepper assembles a harm reduction kit, which includes the overdose reversal drug Narcan.

component in The Night Ministry's harm reduction strategies, which focus on keeping those who use drugs alive and as safe as possible and also include the offering of clean needles and facilitating access to treatment. Harm reduction is a key pillar in the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services' plan to

address the nation's opioid-related overdose crisis.

"Getting as much Narcan as we can into the hands of folks who may need it is probably one of the most significant things that we do," said Mary Poliwka, Community Health Manager.

Over the course of a year, The Night Ministry distributed 3,925 Narcan spray units.

"We know that people are using it and it's working," said Poliwka. ♦

"If you are the one administering the first dose of Narcan, you are increasing an overdosing person's chance of survival by so much."

- Yoela Tepper, Substance Use Specialist

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Racial Discrimination in the Justice System Contributes to Disproportionate Rates of Homelessness in the Black Community

Racial discrimination in the American justice system is nothing new. For centuries, Black Americans have faced an ideology that placed whiteness at the top and them at the bottom of a racial hierarchy, with unequal treatment under the law among its manifestations. According to the Equal Justice Initiative, Black people in America experience more unfair sentences, wrongful convictions, and greater police violence when compared with other racial groups. The effects of this imbalance spread beyond interactions with the justice system alone, including into housing.

This article, which centers on the justice system's role in the disproportionate rate of homelessness among Black Americans, is the third in a NIGHTLIGHTS series examining the intersection of race and homelessness. The series is a small part of the agency's striving to become an anti-racist organization.

According to a 2019 Housing Action Illinois report, Black Illinoisans are approximately 8 times as likely to be unhoused as their white peers. Many unhoused people face fines, misdemeanors and even incarceration for survival behaviors like panhandling and sleeping on the street. Because Black people are overrepresented among them and face racial bias in the justice system, they are more likely to face punishment for such—often unavoidable—actions.

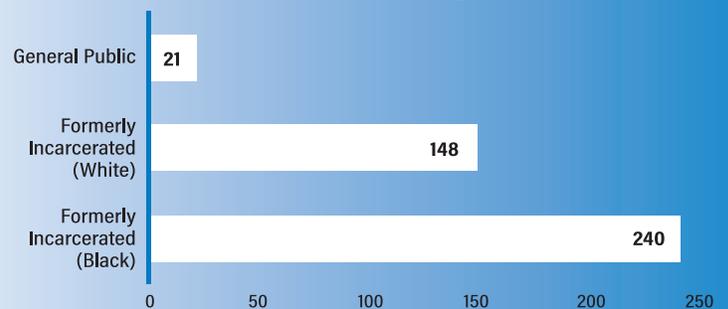
“When you have a prison system full of Black people, this reinforces our cultural nerve—that somehow the problem here is Black people—not our criminal justice system or our economic system.”

– Alan Mills, Uptown People's Law Center

For many who are already unhoused or experiencing poverty, facing bail exacerbates their financial challenges. Racial bias may affect bail amounts judges set and defendants risk losing employment, housing, and more by remaining in custody. If individuals plead guilty for release, the mark on their record can cause financial problems too.

Those who are affected by the criminal legal system do not see punishment end when their sentence is complete. Many face denials for employment, housing, and more. The Prison Policy Institute reported that the rate of homelessness among

Rate of Homelessness (per 10,000)



Black Americans who have been incarcerated experience higher rates of homelessness than formerly incarcerated white Americans. Data source: Prison Policy Initiative, Nowhere to Go: Homelessness Among Formerly Incarcerated People, 2018.

formerly imprisoned people in 2018 was 10 times that of the general public. In some states, people with felony drug convictions even lose eligibility for public benefits.

“Society as a whole still thinks that people with criminal records are in some sense evil or bad,” said Alan Mills, Executive Director of the Uptown People's Law Center. “And when you have a prison system full of Black people, this reinforces our cultural nerve—that somehow the problem here is Black people—not our criminal justice system or our economic system.”

But tides may change. In 2019, Cook County passed the Just Housing Amendment, stipulating that landlords cannot discriminate against most applicants with criminal records from more than three years prior to their application. If an applicant's criminal record is more recent, they cannot be automatically denied. The Department of Housing and Urban Development is considering adopting a similar measure nationwide.

“The fact that we're saying it's illegal to discriminate against them just because they have criminal records would be a remarkable change,” said Mills.

For a longer version of this article, please visit www.thenightministry.org/blog/race-and-criminal-justice. ♦



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The Night Ministry and Rush University's Health Fair for Youth Fosters Education and Enjoyment

Learning and fun went hand in hand this past June at The Night Ministry's Health Fair for Youth Programs participants, an educational event centered on sharing information about important health topics. The fair, which took place just outside the agency's Bucktown headquarters, was a joint effort cohosted with medical students from Rush University.

The cohosts set up five booths staffed by the students. Each addressed topics including sexual education, the intersectionality of race & health, HIV/AIDS, and birth control. All provided games to get participants engaged.

"Each station had an interactive element along with information about the topic," said Devin Redmond, Residential Services and Training Coordinator. "To finish a station, participants needed to complete the game or activity." Among the games on offer were balloon pop and ring toss.

Because The Night Ministry has program facilities in several areas of the city, staff provided many Health Fair attendees with transportation. As the waves of young people arrived, each participant received a drawstring backpack filled with hygiene items along with a list of resources relevant to the event's topics. Guests were also given a food ticket which could be exchanged for a meal provided by The Night Ministry and a "health passport."

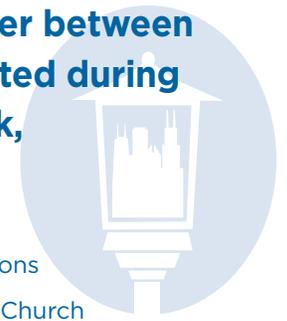


Youth Programs participants join in the fun at the Health Fair, an event hosted by The Night Ministry and Rush University medical students.

"The 'health passports' were used to track full participation at each of the booths. Participants who completed booths were given raffle tickets and those who tried all of them received a bonus!" said Redmond. "We had a lot of exciting raffle prizes including AirPods, Bluetooth speakers, and \$100, \$50, and \$25 Visa gift cards."

Attending the fair was not required for Youth Programs participants but a large number chose to come. "I came here to have fun," shared participant Christian. And amid the smiles and laughter, it seemed many others could say the same. ♦

Thank you to those who generously gave at the \$500 level or higher between May 16 and July 31, 2022. Thank you as well to everyone who donated during this time period through alternate giving portals, such as Facebook, AmazonSmile, Workplace Giving, and more.



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