

THE “SECRET SAUCE” MODEL

Sheltering & Supportive Services
“Best Practices” That Reliably Reduce Homelessness



PHIL JOHNCOCK & CHAD MCCOMAS
With Contributions from Matt Vorderstrasse

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine constructing a hospital in a single day—an impressive feat frequently showcased in military recruitment ads.

“If we possess such extraordinary capabilities to address emergencies overseas, why can’t we extend the same urgency and resources to resolving the homelessness crisis right here in our communities?”

This question highlights a profound disparity: our ability to mobilize resources and technology swiftly in some areas, while local issues like homelessness linger in a tangled web of complications and resistances.

Nearby, a homeowner declares, "I'm all for helping the homeless—just not in my backyard." This sentiment exemplifies the complex interplay of capability, resources, and NIMBYism that further complicates our approach to homelessness, signaling that the path to solutions is fraught with societal, logistical, and legal hurdles. It's a glaring reality check that reminds us of the intricate, multi-layered nature of the problem we face.

Complexity

"Homelessness is a complex issue that requires compassion, understanding, and meaningful action." ~President Barack Obama

The complexity of homelessness was starkly evident during oral arguments in the Supreme Court case of Grants Pass vs. Johnson in 2024. Justices Kavanaugh and Gorsuch highlighted the intricate policy challenges and critical shortage of resources, such as insufficient shelter beds in neighboring Grants Pass, which starkly illustrate the immediate needs of the homeless population.

The word "difficult" was spoken 24 times during the SCOTUS discussion, punctuating the challenging nature of addressing homelessness through public policy and practical solutions.

New Direction

On June 28, 2024, the Supreme Court delivered a ruling in the case of City of Grants Pass vs. Johnson, addressing the legality of criminalizing homeless individuals for sleeping in public spaces when they lack access to shelter. The Court's decision, primarily authored by Justice Gorsuch, reversed the Ninth Circuit's prior ruling, which had barred such criminalization under the Eighth Amendment's Cruel and Unusual Punishments Clause.

Majority Opinion: Local Government Challenges and Flexibility

The majority opinion highlighted the diverse and complex causes of homelessness, ranging from economic conditions, rising housing costs, and natural disasters to personal circumstances such as mental illness, substance abuse, and domestic violence. The opinion acknowledged that local governments face significant challenges in managing homelessness, including public health and safety issues related to encampments, such as disease, crime, and drug distribution. Justice Gorsuch emphasized that states and cities need flexibility to address these challenges with a variety of policy tools like those included in this book. He noted that many local governments have pursued a range of measures beyond criminalization, such as expanding shelter capacity, investing in mental health and substance abuse treatment, and training employees in outreach tactics.

However, the enforcement of public-camping ordinances still remains an important and critical, legal tool for many cities.

Dissenting Opinion: A Call for Humane Solutions

In a dissenting opinion, Justice Sotomayor, joined by Justices Kagan and Jackson, argued that the majority's decision fails to adequately consider the constitutional rights of homeless individuals. She contended that criminalizing people for their homeless status, particularly when they have no access to shelter, is both unconscionable and unconstitutional. Justice Sotomayor highlighted the damaging effects of criminalization, such as the destabilizing impact on individuals' lives and the perpetuation of a costly cycle between the streets and the criminal justice system.

Policies and Tools for Addressing Homelessness

The Court's ruling and the broader discussions in the opinion and dissent bring to light five key tools and policies that local governments have implemented or might consider in addressing homelessness:

1. Expanding Shelter & Affordable Housing: Many cities are choosing to increase availability of shelter beds and affordable housing units to provide more permanent solutions for homeless individuals. This book shows how to increase sheltering options (see Chapter 5).

2. Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment: Investing in treatment programs can address some of the root causes of homelessness and support individuals in transitioning to stable living conditions. This book shows you specific treatment programs and supportive services that address root causes and result in reliably reducing homelessness (see Chapters 1 & 3).

3. Public-Camping Ordinances: When thoughtfully implemented, public-camping ordinances can be an integral part of a comprehensive strategy to manage homelessness. By prioritizing shelter availability, legal protections, and integrated support services, local governments can create a more humane and effective system. Community engagement and regular review processes ensure these policies remain responsive to the needs of all stakeholders.

4. Outreach and Supportive Services: Training city, nonprofit & faith-based staff and volunteers in effective outreach tactics and building relationships with homeless individuals can improve service delivery and support transitions out of homelessness (see Chapter 7).

5. Legal Protections and Advocacy: In Chapter 2, you will also learn how engaging in legal protection and advocacy, especially in lieu of the Supreme Court ruling, can provide essential and timely support for homeless individuals. This includes helping them navigate the legal system, securing their rights, and ensuring the unhoused have access to necessary resources and services.

Data-Driven Results: Lessons from the Rogue Valley's Success

The “Secret Sauce” Model introduces you to all five key policies and tools and a proven system that has been tested with success in Oregon's Rogue Valley, where it has not only reduced homelessness rates – Jackson County was the only county in the entire state of Oregon to reduce homelessness between 2022 and 2023 – but also showcases the effectiveness of data-driven “best practices.”

Bryan Guiney of HUD recently highlighted the importance of learning the "secret sauce" that contributed to these outcomes so it can be replicated elsewhere:

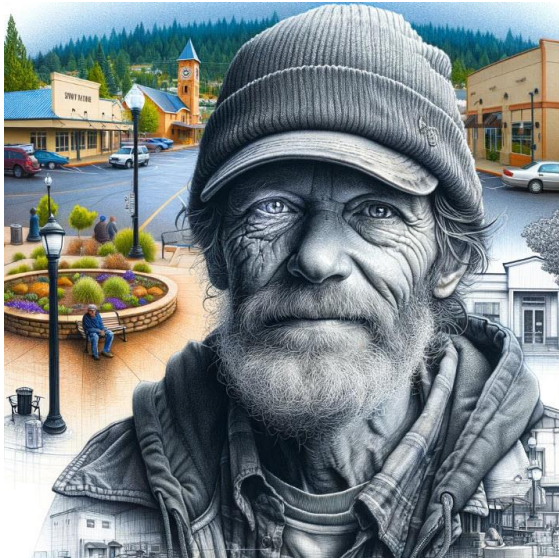
"We want to know more about the SECRET SAUCE of what's going on in the Rogue Valley so we can replicate these successes elsewhere."

~Bryan Guiney, Oregon Field Office Director for the U.S. Department Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (Source: Rogue Valley Times, 2/10/24)

Chapter 1 introduces us to "George," a real resident from Grants Pass, Oregon, who stayed at the “low barrier” Warming Center when the Pandemic hit. While his name and certain details have been altered for privacy, George's story is a composite of the experiences of many homeless individuals in the area, reflecting the complex challenges and triumphs they face on their journeys.

CHAPTER 1

Supportive Services From In-Crisis to Self-Sufficiency George's Story



In the heart of Grants Pass, Oregon, at the age of 50, George's life took a devastating turn. Once a proud worker amid a bustling economy, he found himself suddenly jobless due to a brutal economic downturn. His new reality was the harsh, unforgiving streets.

George, determined to maintain his dignity, hustled daily, seeking any work he could find and relying on the scant public amenities—public toilets, sinks, and water fountains—for basic hygiene.

However, George's already uphill battle was exacerbated by the City of Grants Pass. In an effort to keep warm and find a legal, safe place to rest, he was bombarded with dozens of citations. These weren't just slips of paper; they were heavy chains of despair and mounting fines that he simply couldn't afford to pay. The constant punishment for his state of homelessness only amplified the ridiculousness of his circumstances, sinking him deeper into hopelessness.

Without a mailing address, George never received notices snail mailed by the court. He missed crucial court dates and spiraled into a cycle that led to warrants, jail time, and even a criminal record. This record overshadowed his every attempt to secure employment and housing, as potential employers and landlords viewed him with skepticism.

Caught in this vicious cycle of legal woes and financial strain, George's mental health began to decline. It was a vivid illustration of the complexities of homelessness, where punitive measures only serve to entrench our most vulnerable further into despair.

The Punitive Trap of Homelessness

With each passing day, George's mental health eroded. The constant stress of survival and the looming threat of punitive measures took a heavy toll. He began to experience anxiety attacks, his heart racing uncontrollably at the sound of approaching footsteps, fearing they were law enforcement ready to serve another citation.

Nights were the worst; sleep became a distant memory as paranoia set in, and he found himself startled awake by nightmares or the simple rustle of leaves.

The legal citations, intended to deter his presence in public spaces, only magnified his feelings of worthlessness. George felt like a ghost in his own city, invisible yet constantly hounded by those meant to protect. The city's lack of empathy was a stark contrast to his once-

hopeful spirit. The accumulation of fines was a grotesque reminder of his growing isolation from a society that didn't want him around.

Unable to cope with the incessant pressure, George's physical health began to mirror his mental decline. Malnutrition, sleep deprivation, dehydration and exposure to the elements weakened his body, making even simple tasks feel monumental. The daily hustle for food, clean water, and a safe place to rest drained his remaining energy and willpower.

George's attempts to navigate the bureaucratic labyrinth were thwarted at every turn. Each incarceration stripped away another layer of his humanity, branding him further with a criminal record that barred any glimmer of hope for employment or stable housing.

When he did manage to land an interview, the glint of hope was quickly extinguished. His criminal record was a scarlet letter, a barrier to reintegration. Employers looked past his skills and experience, seeing only the charges that marked him as unreliable and undesirable. Landlords turned him away, unwilling to risk housing someone with a tainted past. George was trapped in a downward cycle where every effort to rise was met with an equal force pushing him back down.

As George's despair deepened, he became emblematic of a broader societal failure. His life was a stark illustration of how punitive measures against the homeless do not solve the underlying issues but instead exacerbate them. Each fine, each night in jail, each missed opportunity for assistance only served to entrench him further into a pit of hopelessness.

In this relentless spiral, George's story was one of many, a testament to a system that punishes rather than supports its most vulnerable. His life underscored the urgent need for compassionate, comprehensive solutions that address the root causes of homelessness, rather than perpetuating a cycle of despair.

Thankfully for George (and thousands like him), help appeared in neighboring Jackson County which had a "proactive" approach with a solution called "case management" ...

George Starts Case Management



One of the most important supportive services that can help get and keep homeless people like George off the street is “case management.”

Here’s what the initial conversation with his case manager might look like ...

Case Manager: George, I understand you've been facing some tough times with the city's ordinances. Have these legal troubles affected your attempts to find work or housing?

George: Absolutely. Employers and landlords turn me away as soon as they see my record. I can't escape it. It's all for things like sleeping in parks or being in places I shouldn't because I had nowhere else to go. It's really been tough getting a job or an apartment with a criminal record.

Case Manager: That must have been incredibly challenging. It's clear these legal barriers are holding you back. We'll work on connecting you with legal aid to tackle these fines and warrants. And we'll explore programs that might help expunge or lessen the impact of your record. How does that sound?

George: It sounds good, but I don't even know where to start. How do we know this actually changes things for me?

Case Manager: That's a great question, George. We use a tool called the Self-Sufficiency Matrix to assess where you are now in different areas of your life, like legal issues, housing, employment, income, and more. It helps us see what we need to focus on to improve your situation.

George: So, how does this matrix work?

Case Manager: We rate each area from 1 to 5, where 1 means you're "in a crisis" and 5 means "thriving". A 4 means you're "self-sufficient". Right now, in the Legal-Civil and Legal-Criminal domains, because of your interest in addressing these issues by coming in today, you have already moved to "at risk" which is level 2. Our goal is to get you to a "safe" level, which is 3, or even "self-sufficient", which is 4, in the next few months.

George: That sounds great! And how do we do that? How long will it all take?

Case Manager: We'll create an "action plan." For the Legal-Civil domain, we'll connect you with a legal aid service to help manage and potentially reduce your fines. They can help deal with any eviction or foreclosure notices, too.

George: I wish I had known about that when I went through my eviction several years ago.

Case Manager: Sorry about that. Legal Aid can also guide you today in clearing up any misunderstandings due to your lack of a mailing address. This process can take anywhere from 3 to 6 months, depending on the complexity of your case and the responsiveness of the legal system.

George: What about the Legal-Criminal stuff?

Case Manager: For the Legal-Criminal domain, we'll work on resolving those warrants and exploring if any of your records can be expunged. We'll also see if there is a homeless court, diversion program or community service option that can replace penalties that hinder your progress. This might take a bit longer, potentially 6 to 9 months, as we navigate through the court system and work on getting your records cleared.

George: That sounds like a lot. Can it really be done?

Case Manager: It will definitely take effort and persistence, George, but yes, it can be done. We'll meet regularly to adjust the plan as needed and connect you with the right resources. Your involvement and commitment are crucial to making this work. With the right support and a clear action plan, we can significantly improve your situation within the next 6 to 12 months.

George: Well, I'm willing to try. It's better than staying stuck like this.

Case Manager: That's the spirit, George. Let's get started on this journey together. I'm here to support you every step of the way.

How Legal Resolution Paved the Way for George's Successful Employment and Housing

As George worked through his action plan with his case manager, an unexpected health issue forced him to take a step back from his immediate job search and financial worries. Instead of viewing this as a setback, though, George and his case manager saw an opportunity for deeper personal growth and community engagement.

He enrolled in a local art therapy class, a suggestion that initially seemed unrelated to his broader goals but proved transformative. In these art therapy sessions, George discovered not just a way to manage his stress but a hidden talent for painting.

His vibrant, emotive pieces quickly caught the attention of the class instructor and fellow participants. Encouraged by this newfound expression, George began to share his personal story more openly, connecting with others who faced similar struggles.

His honesty and resilience resonated, turning him into an informal mentor for many in the class, particularly those who were also navigating the challenges of homelessness.

This mentoring role soon extended beyond the art class. George began volunteering at the local shelter, where he frequently stayed and spent many nights, to share his journey and art as a form of healing and hope. His natural empathy and ability to inspire others did not go unnoticed by the shelter staff.

Seeing his potential, shelter administrators offered him a chance to train as a certified "peer support specialist," a role that would allow him to use his personal "lived experience" to formally support others in similar situations. They even paid for his 40-hour training and certification program.



George embraced this opportunity with enthusiasm, diving into the training required to become a certified peer support specialist. He learned about trauma-informed care, various support techniques, de-escalation and crisis intervention, and the importance of empathy and active listening to understand and address the needs and concerns of unhoused individuals accurately.

His art therapy experience became a cornerstone of his approach, allowing him to introduce creative expression as a key tool in the shelter's support programs.

As George's role at the shelter expanded, so did his network. One day, during a community event organized by the shelter, George's artwork and story caught the attention of a local business owner who was there as a volunteer.



Impressed by George's journey and his commitment to helping others, the business owner offered George a chance to live in a newly renovated apartment above his store, at a rate ideal for individuals transitioning out of homelessness. This surprise offer was a turning point, providing George with a stable home.

With stable housing, a fulfilling job, and his weekly meetings with his case manager and legal aid service providers, George's scores on the Self-Sufficiency Matrix soared to 4 in both the Legal-Civil and Legal-Criminal domains.

The legal challenges and uncertainties that once plagued his life were replaced by a secure home and a meaningful career, all emerging from the unexpected pathways of art therapy and community connection.

As he said goodbye to his case manager, George left not just as a client who had overcome immense obstacles but as a beacon of hope and change for others walking the path he once tread.

While he progressed in taking care of his legal issues, measurable improvements appeared in employment, income and housing, all three key domains of the Self-Sufficiency Matrix that George and his case manager had focused on as part of his action plan.

When he started case management, he was “in-crisis” (level 1) in all self-sufficiency domains. Very quickly, though, George's journey with the help of his case manager led to transformative changes in other life domains as well.

In the Income domain, George moved from the uncertainty and irregularity of day labor and occasional work, which barely covered his basic needs, to a steady and reliable income. Through his position as a peer support specialist, he not only earned a consistent paycheck at a higher hourly rate but also gained access to financial literacy training.

This combination helped him manage his finances more effectively, transitioning his Income score from a precarious 1 to a stable 4. He learned to budget, save, create a spending plan, marking a significant turnaround in his financial independence.

Similarly, in the Employment domain, George's initial status was marked by sporadic jobs that offered little security or growth potential. However, his legal freedom and new role at the shelter brought not just stability but also professional development and personal fulfillment.

This (Employment) transition reflected a leap from a 1 to a 4, as he became a valued member of the team, using his life experience and training to support others. His job became a source of pride and a key factor in his overall self-sufficiency.

Lastly, in the Housing domain, George experienced a dramatic shift from living on the streets, where he faced constant insecurity and exposure to the elements, to residing in the transitional shelter that provided the stability he needed to begin restoring his life, to finally moving into his own apartment. This change represented a move from a 1, characterized by crisis and instability, to a 4, denoting a stable, secure home environment.

His new apartment was a personal space where he could recuperate, reflect, and continue his path of growth and recovery in even more life domains like education, health care coverage, mobility/transportation, and community involvement. This secure housing was the cornerstone of his newfound stability and a critical factor in maintaining his other achievements.

George's significant improvements across the Income, Employment, and Housing domains were fundamentally enabled by his resolution of the Legal-Civil and Legal-Criminal challenges, a process guided by the unwavering support of his case manager and Legal Aid staff. The lifting of these legal obstacles unlocked opportunities for George to secure a stable job, manage a consistent income, and live in a safe, stable home.

His journey highlights the critical role that overcoming legal barriers plays in enabling broader life changes. The strategic and empathetic support from his case manager was key, ensuring George had the tools and resources to transform each challenge into a foundation for success and long-term empowerment and self-sufficiency.

Through case management, George's scores on the Self-Sufficiency Matrix improved by a remarkable 3.0 points in five domains: legal-civil, legal-criminal, employment, housing and income. All in less than 12 months!



This is symbolic of the transformation that’s possible with “supportive services” like case management.

NOTE: Also, it is helpful to know when and how George and his employer might have done things differently. In Appendix A, you will learn about proactive mitigation strategies that George and even his previous employer might have put in place to lessen the impact of his job loss and perhaps even keep him from becoming homeless in the first place.

Self-Sufficiency Matrix & Poverty/Homelessness Reduction

The Self-Sufficiency Matrix (SSM) and its various domains such as legal, employment, housing, and income are key ingredients in the "secret sauce" recipe used in Jackson County to help homeless individuals progress towards self-sufficiency.

Research on using the SSM to reduce homelessness is closely linked to research on ending poverty, as both issues share many underlying factors. The SSM provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing the multifaceted nature of poverty and homelessness.

Holistic Understanding of Poverty and Homelessness

Research consistently shows that poverty and homelessness are not solely about income deficiency but involve a range of factors affecting individuals' and families' overall well-being. The SSM captures this complexity by including domains such as housing, education, employment, health, and social connections.

This comprehensive view aligns with studies indicating that addressing multiple areas simultaneously leads to more effective and sustainable poverty and homelessness reduction. For instance, providing stable housing has been shown to improve health outcomes and educational attainment, which in turn can enhance employment prospects and financial stability.

By having access to stable housing, individuals can then focus on other areas such as improving their employment situation or addressing health issues, creating a virtuous cycle that reduces both poverty and homelessness.

Targeted Interventions

The SSM allows for targeted interventions by identifying specific areas where individuals are struggling. Research on poverty and homelessness alleviation highlights the importance of tailored support that meets the unique needs of individuals and communities.

For example, if a single mother scores low in the domain of childcare, interventions can focus on providing affordable and reliable childcare solutions, enabling her to work or pursue further education. Similarly, if an individual is struggling with legal issues, providing legal aid can remove barriers to employment and housing stability. This targeted approach ensures that resources are used efficiently and effectively, addressing the root causes of both poverty and homelessness rather than just the symptoms.

Measurement and Evaluation

Effective strategies for reducing poverty and homelessness require robust measurement and evaluation frameworks to assess progress and outcomes. The SSM’s detailed 1-5 scoring system provides a quantifiable means to track changes over time in each domain. This aligns with research methodologies that emphasize the importance of data collection and analysis in designing and refining interventions.



Self-Sufficiency Matrix Rating Scale:

1 = In-Crisis / 2 = Vulnerable / 3 = Safe / 4 = Self-Sufficient / 5 = Thriving

By regularly assessing individuals' progress across the SSM domains, policymakers, funders, and service providers can evaluate the impact of their interventions and make evidence-based adjustments to their programs. This ongoing evaluation ensures that the interventions remain effective and can be scaled or adapted as needed.

Promoting Self-Sufficiency and Resilience

Research emphasizes the importance of empowering individuals to achieve self-sufficiency and resilience as a sustainable solution to both poverty and homelessness. The SSM focuses on moving individuals from states of crisis or vulnerability to self-sufficiency across various domains. This progression mirrors findings in poverty research that stress the importance of building capacities and providing opportunities for individuals to improve their circumstances independently.

For instance, improving education and job skills (as captured in the adult education domain) enhances employability, leading to better job opportunities and higher incomes, which are crucial for long-term poverty and homelessness alleviation. By addressing these domains, individuals are better equipped to maintain stability and avoid falling back into homelessness or poverty.

The Self-Sufficiency Matrix provides a practical and research-aligned tool for understanding and addressing both poverty and homelessness. By encompassing the diverse factors that contribute to these issues and allowing for targeted, measurable interventions, the SSM supports a holistic, evidence-based approach to ending poverty and homelessness.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Question 1: What are the main “legal” challenges that George faced and how did they impact his life?

Answer 1: George faced numerous legal challenges, including receiving dozens of citations for activities related to his homelessness, such as sleeping in public spaces. These citations led to fines, missed court dates due to lack of a mailing address, and eventually warrants and a criminal record. This criminal record hindered his ability to secure employment and housing, exacerbating his cycle of homelessness.

Question 2: How does case management play a role in helping individuals like George transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency?

Answer 2: Case management is crucial in supporting individuals like George by providing personalized guidance and resources to address specific challenges. For George, his case manager helped him tackle legal issues, connected him with legal aid, and used the Self-Sufficiency Matrix to assess and improve his situation in areas like legal status, housing, employment, and income. This structured approach allowed George to overcome barriers and gradually improve his life.

Question 3: How did George's involvement in art therapy and becoming a peer support specialist contribute to his recovery and self-sufficiency?

Answer 3: Art therapy provided George with a creative outlet to manage stress and discover a hidden talent, leading to personal growth and community connections. His role as a peer support specialist allowed him to use his experiences to help others, gaining professional development and a sense of purpose. This combination of artistic expression and community service facilitated George's overall recovery, leading to stable employment and housing.

Question 4: What measurable improvements did George experience in his journey towards self-sufficiency, and how were these achieved?

Answer 4: George experienced significant 3.0 improvements in several domains of the Self-Sufficiency Matrix, including legal issues, employment, income, and housing. These were achieved through a combination of legal resolution, professional development as a peer support specialist, and consistent support from his case manager. The lifting of legal barriers enabled him to secure stable employment and housing, leading to an overall improvement in his life and a move towards self-sufficiency.

Chapter 2 will shine a light on the hidden costs of criminalizing homelessness and the broader economic impact of doing nothing.

Stories such as *Million Dollar Murray* by Malcomb Gladwell reveal how these approaches drain public resources without addressing the root causes of homelessness.

By recognizing these financial burdens, we can advocate for more sustainable and humane solutions that benefit both individuals and society.

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