



The Homeless in Evansville: Current Jobs, Skills, Education and Training

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(Master of Social Work students assisted in the collection of data for this project.
Interviews were conducted October –December 2008).

Introduction

According to the most recent Census, Vanderburgh County has the highest percent of homeless persons per capita than any other Indiana county. On an average evening, nearly 400 individuals are in a shelter or transitional housing in Evansville. In addition, at least 40-50 individuals are living in places not meant for habitation due to an inability to find safe, clean, affordable housing (Evansville Department of Metropolitan Development, 2004).

A common misconception is that homeless individuals are people without jobs, income, and /or skills. The present study was conducted to obtain information regarding current, former, and potential members of the workforce in our community who are homeless. The project findings provide a source of data that can help the Evansville Homeless Services Council to dispel such myths in our community through awareness and community education activities.

Purpose of the Study

The present study was conducted to

- discover the job skills, experience, interests and hobbies of those who are homeless
- provide information regarding need for additional services or modification of existing services offered to the homeless
- Provide data to help raise community awareness that many homeless individuals have jobs and job skills and experience.

Method

Seventy-six individuals currently in Evansville without permanent housing over the age of 18 were interviewed. Interviewees were asked open ended questions regarding current and past employment; obstacles for employment; skills, and use of available resources. In addition they were asked to identify and discuss any additional service(s) from which they, as an individual or their family system could benefit

FINDINGS: Currently Employed: 26 (8 Full time; 18 Part time)

Current Positions Held:

○ Factory	4
○ Fast food	4
○ Janitorial	3
○ Machine operator	2
○ Maintenance	2
○ Retail clerk	2
○ CNA	1
○ "Temp" work	6
○ Other	2

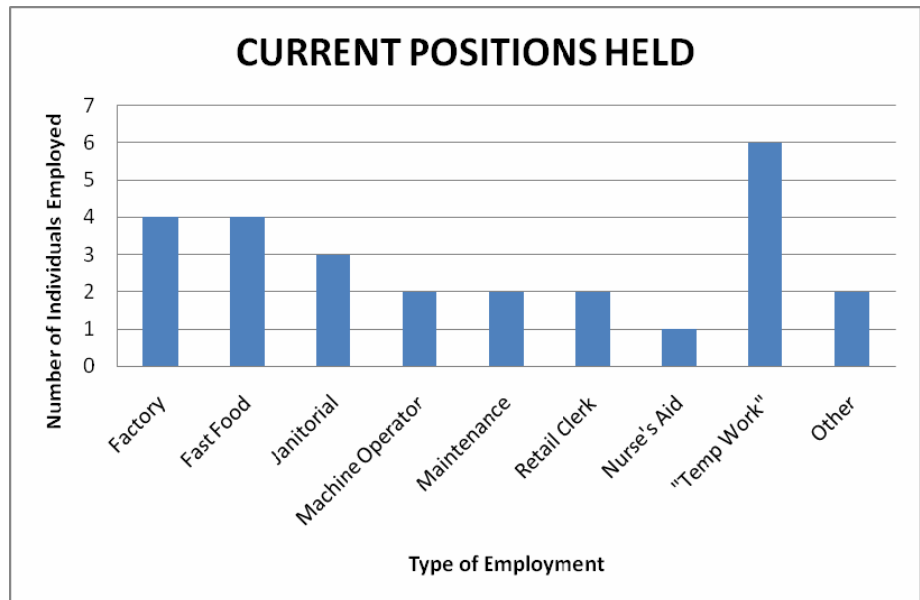
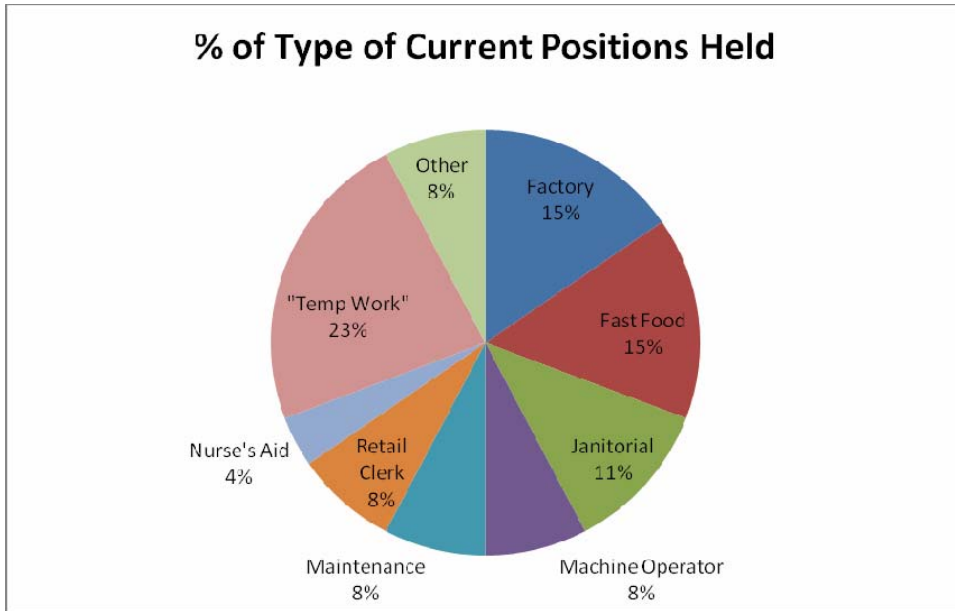


Figure 1 Current Positions held by homeless in Evansville, Indiana

Figure 2 Percentage of each type of job position currently held by Evansville Homeless



Note: In addition, 2 individuals reported to selling their blood plasma 2x per week; 1 individual reported to periodically participating in pharmaceutical trials)

Jobs previously held by homeless individuals

- Military 11
- Construction 8
- Fast food 8
- Truck driver 6
- Housekeeping 6
- Waiter 6
- Cook 4
- Factory 4
- Nurse's aid 2
- Security 2
- Beautician 2
- Maintenance 2
- "Temp" work 9
- Other -- (caregiver; electrician; private contractor; teacher; veterinary technician; garbage collector; carnival worker; pastor; painter)

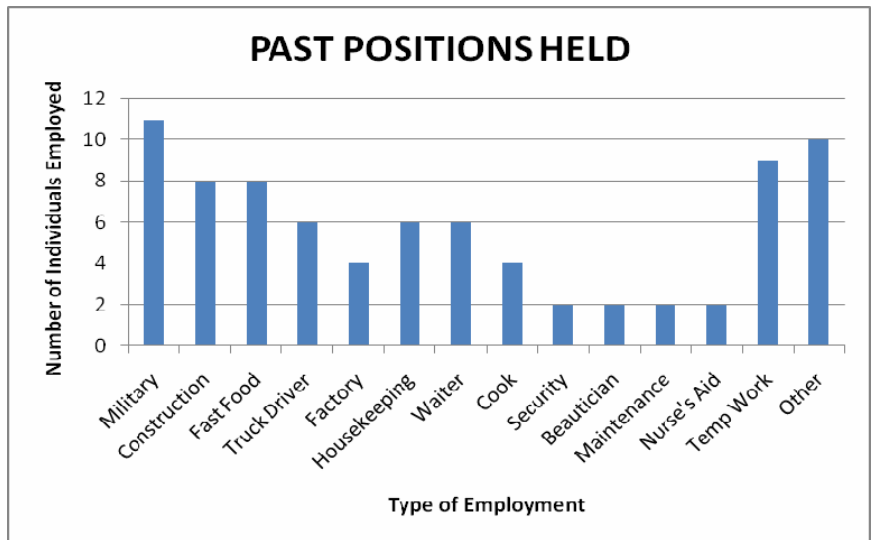
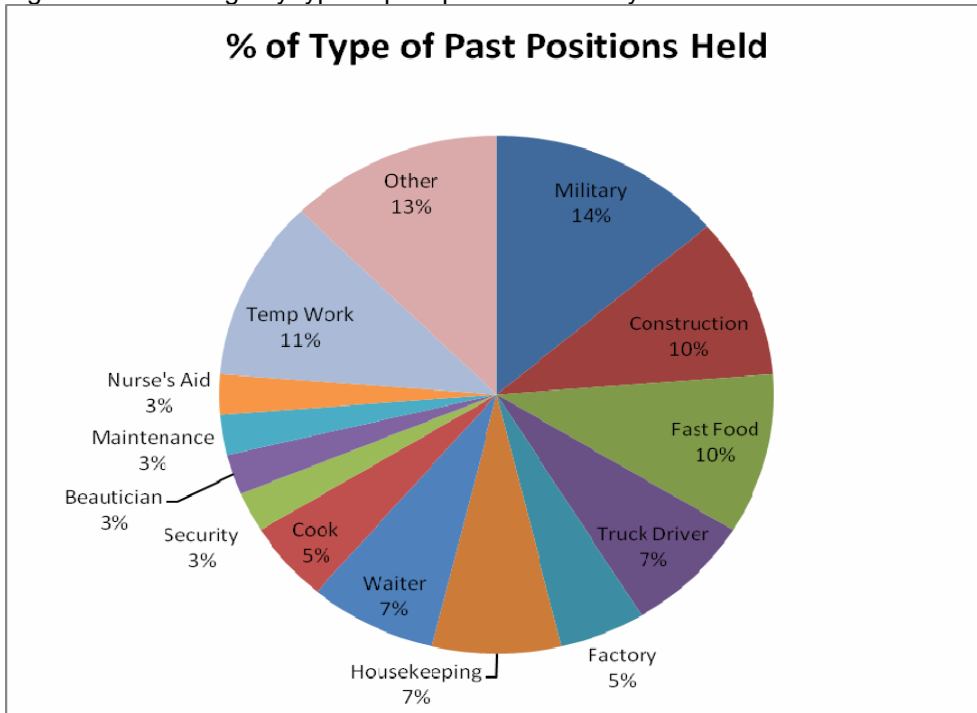


Figure 3 Jobs previously held by homeless individuals in Evansville

Figure 4 Percentage by type of past positions held by homeless



Positions Desired

- o Truck driver 6
- o Cook 6
- o Security guard 4
- o Construction 4
- o Work w/children 4
- o Own business 3
- o Nursing home 3
- o Beautician 3
- o Janitorial 2
- o Other (work with elderly; landscaping; waiter; fast food; teacher; pediatrician)

Figure 5 Positions desired (as reported by interviewees)



Obstacles to employment:

- child care 6
- child w/ serious illness 3
- transportation 11
- health:
 - physical health 9
 - mental health 5
- education
 - no H.S or GED 11
 - poor reading skills 2
 - poor math skills 2
- past incarceration 7
- drug/ alcohol issues 9
- lack of access to computer 3
- age 2
- long commute to work 2
- not fluent in English 1

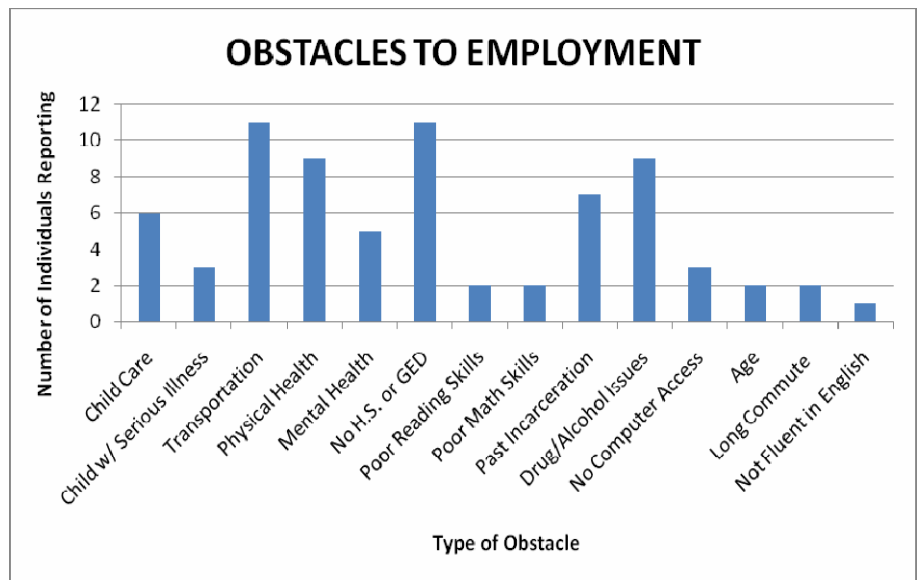
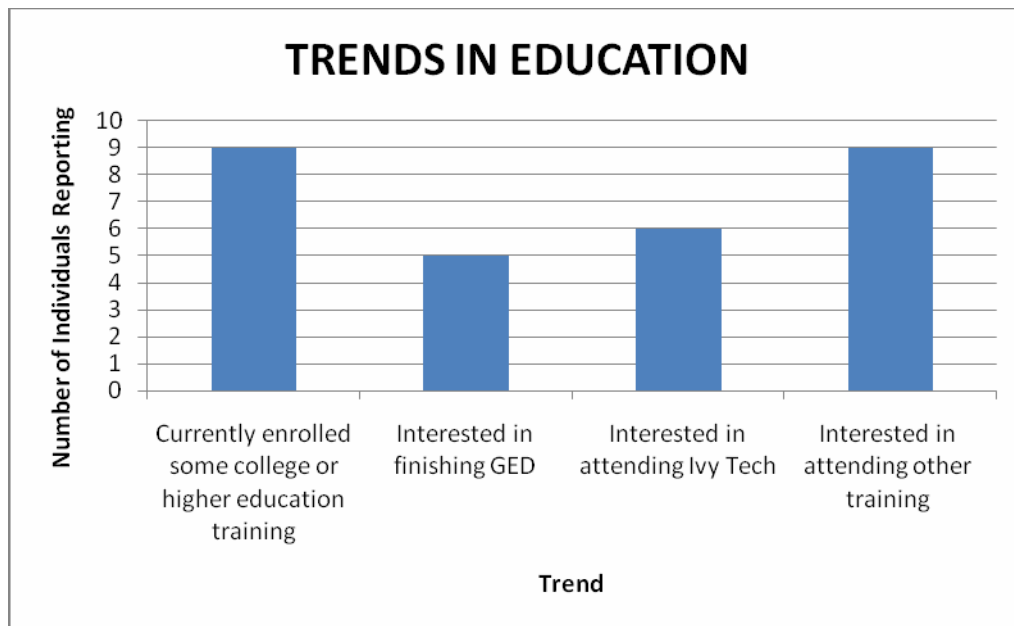


Figure 5 Obstacles to Employment

Trends in education

- currently enrolled or has completed some college or post high school training 9
- interested in completing GED 5
- interested in attending Ivy Tech 6
- interested in other types of training 9

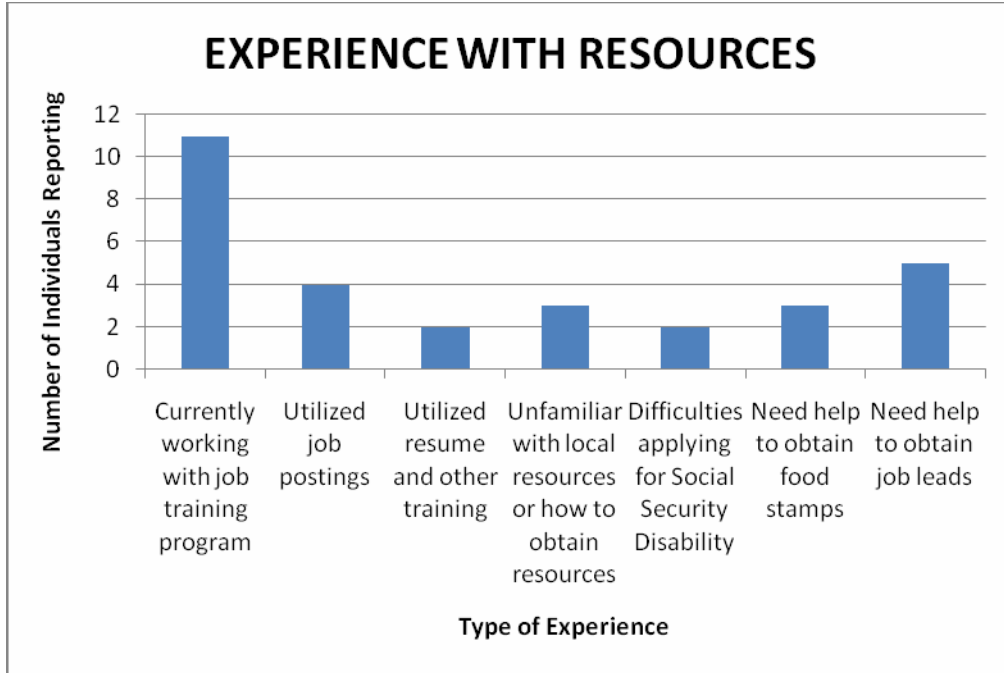
Figure 6 Trends in education



Experience with Resources

- o currently working with a job training program 11
- o utilized job postings 4
- o utilized resume and other training 2

Figure 7 Experience with resources



Discussion of Findings

The interviews were conducted with homeless individuals in Evansville from mid October to the first week of December 2008. It is important to note that the interviews were conducted with individuals who were homeless during this time frame.

One third of the individuals interviewed reported to being currently employed. Most of the individuals holding a job were employed in low wage positions.

Several obstacles to employment were reported with lack of transportation leading the list, followed by lack of education, health issue, drug and alcohol issues, past incarceration and lack of child care. Other obstacles cited included having a child with serious illness, advanced age, and long commute to work.

Many of the interviewees reported that they were of the opinion that their lack of education was in part responsible for their not being able to secure better paying jobs. Fifteen of the individuals interviewed reported current enrollment or having completed some post secondary education. Five indicated an interest in completing GED.

While most of the individuals who were interviewed stated that they had some interest in obtaining additional training, eleven reported to current involvement with a job training program.

Given the recent job layoffs and home foreclosures in the Tri State area, as time moves on, this study has limited generalizability to the entire homeless population in Evansville. However, it does provide information to help dispel some of the negative myths regarding the homeless.