

University of Arkansas  
Traditional MSW Programs Case Study  
Addressing Homelessness and Housing Accessibility in a Diverse Urban Community

### Purpose of the Case Study

This case study is designed to assess your ability to analyze a complex social problem, consider diverse perspectives, apply ethical reasoning, use evidence to support your ideas, and communicate clearly in writing. You are not expected to have formal social work training or to already know how a professional social worker would respond to every aspect of the case.

After reading the case, write a 4 to 5 page paper addressing each of the four required areas listed below. Use the four areas as major headings in your paper. Your response should focus on how you would understand the problem, involve affected communities, weigh competing priorities, and develop a thoughtful response. There is not necessarily one correct answer; we are interested in your reasoning, your ability to consider multiple perspectives, and your use of evidence to support your approach.

### Assignment Requirements

- Write a 4 to 5 page paper. The cover page and reference page are not included in the page count.
- Include a cover page with your name, the MSW program for which you are applying, and the title of the case study.
- Use double spacing, 1-inch margins, and either Times New Roman or Arial font.
- Use the four required areas below as major headings in your paper.
- Use at least three peer-reviewed academic sources in addition to the NASW Code of Ethics and applicable Arkansas social work ethics/standards of practice.
- Use current academic literature when possible. Sources published within the past 10 years are preferred unless an older source is especially relevant.
- Cite all sources correctly and include a reference page.
- Write clearly and professionally, with attention to organization, grammar, and usage.

### Original Work

The paper must represent your own original work. It may not be written, rewritten, or generated by another person or by generative artificial intelligence (AI). Follow any additional University of Arkansas admissions guidance regarding the use of spelling, grammar, or editing tools.

### How Your Writing Will Be Evaluated

- Following Instructions: Adherence to the assignment requirements and completion of all four required areas.
- Thoroughness and Organization: A complete, logical, and well-organized response.

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: Thoughtful identification of key issues, competing priorities, and possible responses.
- Consideration of Diversity and Inclusion: Attention to the perspectives of people and communities affected by housing insecurity and homelessness.
- Use of Evidence: Effective integration of scholarly literature, data, and professional ethical guidance to support your analysis.
- Professional Writing: Clear, professional writing with appropriate grammar, usage, and citation practices.

## Case Study

### Background

You are a volunteer with a community organization in a large urban city that focuses on housing insecurity. The organization is part of a coalition of nonprofit organizations, government agencies, service providers, and community advocates working together to respond to a growing number of people experiencing homelessness. You have previously helped organize food drives and community outreach events. Recently, you were invited to join a coalition work-group developing a comprehensive five-year strategic plan to reduce homelessness and improve access to stable, affordable housing.

The city has a severe shortage of affordable housing. The effects of housing insecurity are not experienced equally across the community. Black and Latino residents, immigrants, young people, and other groups may face different barriers related to income, discrimination, access to services, housing availability, and the effects of past and current housing policies. The coalition wants the strategic plan to be data-informed, inclusive of people directly affected by homelessness and housing insecurity, and responsive to the different experiences of communities within the city.

The coalition also wants the plan to address both immediate needs and longer-term causes of homelessness. Some members emphasize expanding emergency shelter, food assistance, and other crisis services. Others argue that the coalition should devote more attention to affordable housing development, income-related policies, access to social services, and changes to housing policy. Resources are limited, and stakeholders disagree about which priorities should receive the greatest attention.

### Ethical and Community Considerations

The coalition must decide how to balance immediate assistance with long-term structural change while using limited resources fairly. It must also determine how people who are currently experiencing homelessness, as well as other affected groups, will have a meaningful role in developing the plan rather than simply being consulted after major decisions have already been made.

You are entering this work as a volunteer without formal social work training. Your role is not to present yourself as an expert, but to think critically about the problem, listen to

affected communities, use credible information, consider ethical issues, and contribute to a planning process that is inclusive and responsive to the people most affected. Your involvement in the coalition has strengthened your interest in pursuing an MSW and learning how social workers address complex community and policy issues.

## Required Areas to Address

### 1. Community Assessment and Inclusion

Describe how you would help the coalition understand the experiences and needs of people affected by homelessness and housing insecurity. Explain how you would include the perspectives of people currently experiencing homelessness as well as groups that may experience distinct barriers, such as racial and ethnic minority communities, immigrants, and unhoused or housing-insecure youth. Identify potential barriers to meaningful participation and describe ways the coalition could reduce those barriers.

### 2. Ethical Decision-Making and Competing Priorities

Analyze the tension between responding to immediate needs, such as shelter and food assistance, and investing in longer-term changes, such as affordable housing, policy reform, income supports, or improved access to services. Explain how you would approach decisions when resources are limited and stakeholders have competing priorities. Apply relevant principles from the NASW Code of Ethics and/or applicable Arkansas social work ethics/standards of practice to support your reasoning.

### 3. Macro-Level Analysis and Strategies

Identify one major community, organizational, economic, or policy factor that contributes to homelessness and housing insecurity in the case. Propose one strategy the coalition could include in its five-year plan to address both immediate needs and broader systemic barriers. Your recommendation may involve policy advocacy, affordable housing initiatives, service coordination, community partnerships, organizational change, prevention efforts, or other macro-level approaches. Explain why the strategy you select fit the problems you identified.

### 4. Use of Evidence, Data, and Community Input

Explain how the coalition should use research, local data, and input from affected communities to inform the strategic plan. Identify the types of information you would want before recommending specific actions. Discuss how scholarly literature and community knowledge can be used together. Describe one evidence-informed intervention or policy approach that you believe the coalition should seriously consider based on the evidence you review.

## Use of Academic Literature

Integrate scholarly literature throughout the paper where it is relevant to your analysis. Appropriate topics may include homelessness and housing insecurity, affordable

housing, disparities in housing access, community engagement, services for people experiencing homelessness, structural causes of homelessness, and policy or program approaches designed to improve housing stability.

Your sources should support your reasoning rather than simply be summarized. When discussing differences among populations, avoid assuming that all members of a racial, ethnic, immigrant, age, or other group have the same experiences. Use research to identify patterns or barriers while recognizing the importance of individual and community perspectives.