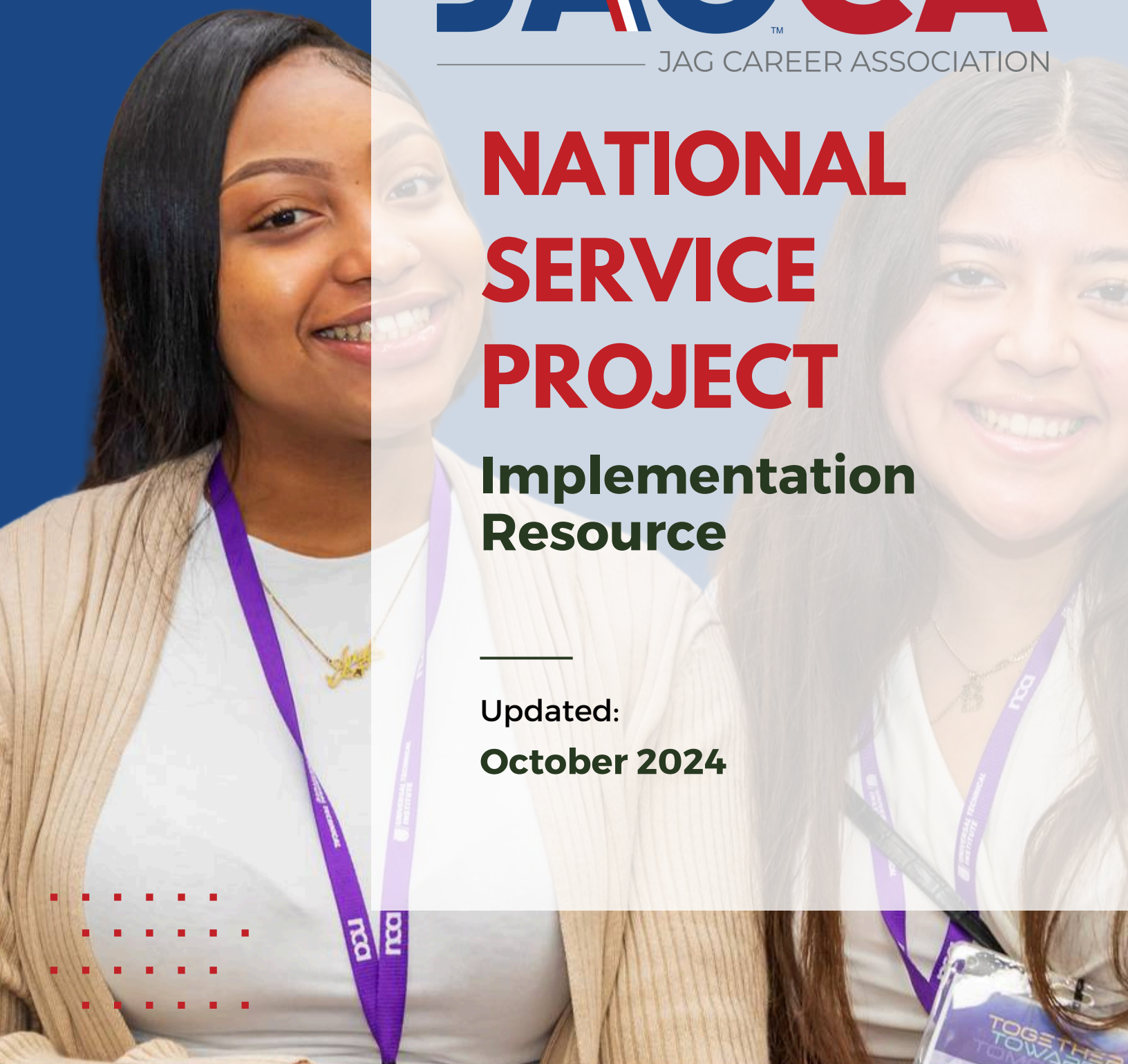




NATIONAL SERVICE PROJECT

Implementation Resource

**Updated:
October 2024**



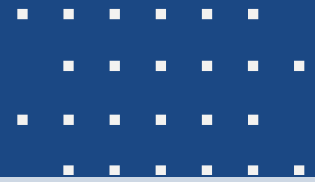
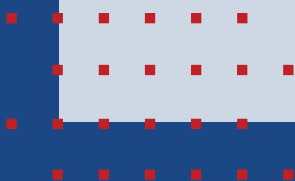


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Every two years the JAGCA National Officers bring forward service learning themes important to young people across the nation. The topics are presented to the National Voting Delegates who vote on the topics during the Business Meeting at the National Career Development Conference.

The National Service Project for 2025-2027 is “Supporting Unhoused Individuals”. The next service project theme will be voted on in April of 2026.

When we talk about people experiencing difficult situations, the words we use matter. The words "homeless" and "unhoused" both refer to people without a permanent place to live, but there's a subtle difference.

- **"Homeless"** is the more common term, and it focuses directly on the lack of a house. It's a simple word to understand, but it can also be seen as a label that defines a person by their situation.
- **"Unhoused"** is a newer term, and it shifts the focus away from the absence of a house towards the fact that these individuals are without housing. It's a more respectful way to acknowledge that their situation is temporary and doesn't define who they are as people.

Think of it this way: someone who's lost their keys is still the same person, they're just temporarily "keyless." Similarly, someone who's unhoused is still the same person, they just don't have a house at the moment.

Using "unhoused" instead of "homeless" reminds us that these individuals are more than their current circumstances. It encourages empathy and understanding, which is a step in the right direction towards helping people find stable housing and support.

Homelessness in the United States:

The Numbers (2023)

The Big Picture

Homelessness is still a major problem in the United States. It's complicated, with lots of different causes and effects. We've made some progress, but the number of people without homes is still really high.

Important Stats

- Total Homeless People: In 2023, **653,104 people were homeless in the U.S.** That's a **12% jump** from 2022 and the most we've ever seen.
- Who's Homeless:
 - **Kids:** 111,620 kids had no place to call home.
 - **Veterans:** Less veterans were homeless in 2023 (down 11% from 2022), but it's still a big problem
 - **Long-Term Homeless:** People who are homeless for a long time and have disabilities increased by 18% from 2022.



Where is Homelessness Worst?

Biggest Increases:

- New Hampshire
- New Mexico
- New York

Most Homeless People (per person)

- New York
- Vermont
- Oregon

Cities

More than half of all homeless people live in the 50 biggest cities in the U.S.

Why are People Homeless?



- **Money Problems:** High rent, not enough cheap housing, losing jobs, and being poor are all big reasons why people end up homeless.
- **Other Problems:** Mental health issues, drug and alcohol problems, family violence, and not being able to get medical care or help from social workers also make homelessness worse.
- **Other Things:** Natural disasters, personal problems, and discrimination can also make people homeless.



More to Think About

- **Shelters vs. the Streets:** Most homeless people don't live in shelters. They live on the streets, in cars, or in empty buildings.
- **Race:** People of color, especially Black and Native American people, are more likely to be homeless.
- **COVID-19:** The pandemic and all the job losses probably made homelessness worse, but we're still figuring out exactly how much.

Where Did This Info Come From?

- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**
- **National Alliance to End Homelessness**
- **U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness**

***Note:** These numbers give us a general idea of homelessness in the U.S., but it's a really complicated problem. It's important to remember that each number represents a real person with their own story.



Unhoused Youth and School: A Double Whammy

The number of young people without homes in the U.S. is a big worry, and the way it affects their education is really scary. These kids face tough challenges that make it hard to succeed in school, and it can trap them in a cycle of hardship.

Key Stats

How many?

About **1.7 million young people experience homelessness** every year in the U.S. This includes anyone under 18 who doesn't have a safe and stable place to sleep at night.

School Struggles

Homeless kids are less likely to finish high school or go to college compared to kids with homes. In fact, **less than 50% graduate high school, while the average is over 80%.**

Roadblocks to Learning

Homeless kids face a ton of obstacles when it comes to education:

- **No Stability:** Moving around a lot and switching schools disrupts their learning.
- **Basic Needs Not Met:** Not having enough food, not getting enough sleep, and not having access to showers or bathrooms makes it hard to focus and learn.
- **Trauma and Stress:** Experiencing scary things, violence, and instability can lead to mental health problems that make it harder to learn.
- **No Support System:** Many homeless kids don't have stable family relationships or support networks, which are super important for doing well in school.
- **Discrimination and Stigma:** They might be treated unfairly or judged at school, making it hard to feel safe and supported.

How Homelessness Affects Education:

Grades and Attendance

Homeless kids often miss a lot of school, get lower grades, and are more likely to drop out.

Social and Emotional Issues:

They might feel isolated, have low self-esteem, and struggle with behavior problems, making it even harder to learn.

Future Problems

Not finishing school limits their future opportunities, making them more likely to be poor, unemployed, and homeless as adults.

What Can We Do?

- **McKinney-Vento Act:** This law gives homeless kids certain rights, like staying in their original school, getting transportation help, and enrolling in a new school without all the usual paperwork.
- **School Support:** Schools can offer help like counseling, tutoring, and even access to basic needs like food and hygiene supplies.
- **Community Teamwork:** Schools, shelters, and other organizations can work together to provide more support for homeless kids and their families.
- **Preventing Homelessness:** Fixing the root problems that cause homelessness, like poverty, lack of affordable housing, and access to mental health care, is key to preventing kids from becoming homeless in the first place.

Remember: Not all homeless kids are the same, and their experiences are different. But the problems they face in getting an education are huge. By understanding these challenges and helping out, we can make sure every young person, no matter where they live, has the chance to succeed.



JAGCA National Service Project

Supporting Unhoused Individuals Project Plan Example

Project Goal: To mobilize JAG students nationwide to raise awareness about the issue of homelessness and to provide direct support to unhoused individuals in their communities.

Project Timeline (make the lessons work for your timeline)

Project Title: JAG Cares: Making a Difference for Those Without Homes

Project Driving Question: How can we, as young people, step up and help people experiencing homelessness in our community through raising awareness, providing support, and speaking up for change?

Subject Areas: JAG, Social Studies, Civics, Health, English

Grade Level: 8-12th Grade

Project Duration: 12 weeks (4 weeks per phase)

PBLworks Framework: 4-Week Project Lesson Plans

Phase 1: Planning and Getting Ready (4 weeks)

Week 1: Project Kickoff and Team Time!

- *Lesson 1 (45 mins)*
 - We'll introduce the project's big question and talk about homelessness.
 - We'll discuss how this project works and what's expected.
 - We'll form teams and assign roles (researchers, organizers, communicators, etc.).
- *Lesson 2 (45 mins)*
 - Brainstorm ideas on how to help and what we can do.
 - Research how many people are homeless locally and the organizations helping them.
 - Start making a project plan with clear goals.

Week 2: Gathering Resources and Training Team Leaders

- *Lesson 1 (45 mins)*
 - Research and create helpful stuff like fact sheets, volunteer guides, and fundraising ideas.
 - Develop a training plan for our team leaders from other areas.
- *Lesson 2 (45 mins)*
 - Train our team leaders (online or in-person).
 - Talk about staying connected and using project tools.

Week 3: Partnering Up

- *Lesson 1 (45 mins)*
 - Find and contact local groups helping people experiencing homelessness.
 - Create proposals to ask them to partner with us.
- *Lesson 2 (45 mins)*
 - Meet with these groups to see if we can work together.
 - Figure out what each of us will do.

Week 4: Final Touches and Get Ready to Launch!

- *Lesson 1 (45 mins)*
 - Make the final project plan and timeline.
 - Assign tasks and due dates to everyone.
- *Lesson 2 (45 mins)*
 - Review all the materials we've created.
 - Get excited for Phase 2: Spreading the Word and Educating!

Phase 2: Awareness and Education (4 weeks)

Week 5: Social Media Blastoff!

- *Lesson 1 (45 mins)*
 - Launch our social media campaign (#JAGCares).
 - Create cool posts, videos, and stories to share.
 - Check comments and messages and reply.
- *Lesson 2 (45 mins)*
 - See how many people are seeing our posts.
 - Make changes to our campaign if needed.
 - Come up with more ways to get people involved.

Week 6: Events (Online and In-Person!)

- *Lesson 1 (45 mins)*
 - Plan online and in-person events like panel discussions or talks.
 - Invite people from the community, experts, and people who've experienced homelessness.
- *Lesson 2 (45 mins)*
 - Host the events!
 - Lead discussions and let people ask questions.
 - Get feedback from everyone who attended.

Week 7: Spreading Awareness at School

- *Lesson 1 (45 mins)*
 - Plan assemblies or classroom presentations to raise awareness.
 - Create presentations and activities that are right for our age.
- *Lesson 2 (45 mins)*
 - Do the awareness activities at school.
 - Have discussions and do activities with other students.
 - Give out information.

Week 8: Reaching Out to the Community and Working Together

- *Lesson 1 (45 mins)*
 - Find more ways to reach out to the community.
 - Work with partner organizations on events.
- *Lesson 2 (45 mins)*
 - Take part in community events.
 - Share information and resources.
 - Get ready for Phase 3: Hands-on Help and Community Involvement.

Phase 3: Direct Service and Community Engagement (Ongoing)

Week 9: Volunteering and Donation Drives

- *Lesson 1 (45 mins)*
 - Set up volunteer opportunities at shelters and soup kitchens.
 - Figure out transportation.
- *Lesson 2 (45 mins)*
 - Collect donations of clothes, toiletries, and food.
 - Organize and give out the donated items.

Week 10: Cleaning Up and Making Our Community Beautiful

- *Lesson 1 (45 mins)*
 - Plan clean-up and beautification projects.
 - Get the supplies we need.
- *Lesson 2 (45 mins)*
 - Do the clean-up and beautification projects.
 - Talk about how it made a difference.

Week 11: Speaking Up for Change

- *Lesson 1 (45 mins)*
 - Research how we can change rules to help prevent homelessness.
 - Plan ways to speak up (write letters, start petitions, meet with officials).
- *Lesson 2 (45 mins)*
 - Take action to make those changes happen.
 - See how things are progressing.

Week 12: Keep Helping and Speaking Up

- *Lesson 1 & 2 (90 mins)*
 - Continue volunteering and advocating.
 - Get ready to reflect on what we've done.

Phase 4: Reflection and Evaluation (2 weeks)

Week 13: Feedback and Checking Our Progress

- *Lesson 1 (45 mins)*
 - Get feedback from our team and community partners.
 - See what we can improve.
- *Lesson 2 (45 mins)*
 - Look at how our project helped the community and people experiencing homelessness.
 - Use numbers and stories to show our impact.

Week 14: Share Our Success and What We Learned

- *Lesson 1 (45 mins)*
 - Make presentations, reports, or videos to share our success and lessons.
 - Use social media, the school website, and community events to share.
- *Lesson 2 (45 mins)*
 - Present our findings and ideas to important people.
 - Celebrate what we achieved and talk about future plans.

Ways You Can Help: Ideas for Student Groups

1. Lending a Hand at Shelters:

- ASK the shelter what is needed. (Do this first!!)
- Help prepare and serve meals.
- Sort and organize donated clothes.
- Help out with office work.
- Collect and donate personal care items.
- Do a coat, blanket, or clothing drive.
- Spend time talking and listening to people staying at the shelter.

2. Reaching Out on the Streets:

- Give out water, snacks, and socks to people who need them.
- Share information about places they can go for help.
- Connect people with shelters or healthcare services.

3. Speaking Up for Change:

- Write letters to local leaders.
- Meet with officials to share your ideas.
- Join peaceful rallies or protests.
- Use social media to spread awareness.
- Create a social media campaign to promote statistics on unhoused individuals.

Ways You Can Help continued...

4. Sharing Stories Through Art:

- Create art projects or performances that show what it's like to be homeless.
- Organize events like talent shows or concerts to raise money.
- Use your artistic talents to brighten up shelters or community spaces.

5. Learning and Sharing Knowledge:

- Conduct surveys or interviews to understand the needs of homeless people in your community.
- Create brochures or infographics to share information.
- Present your findings to local leaders and community groups.

Important Things to Remember:

- **Safety First:** Make sure everyone stays safe, both you and the people you're helping. Get proper training, follow the rules, and work with experienced organizations.
- **Be Kind and Respectful:** Remember that everyone deserves to be treated with kindness and respect. Don't make assumptions or judge people based on their situation. Focus on building relationships and helping people feel empowered.
- **Keep it Going:** Make connections with community organizations so that people experiencing homelessness continue to get support even after your project is over.
- **Teamwork Makes the Dream Work:** Work together with other student groups, schools, and community partners to make the biggest impact possible. We're all in this together!

JAGCA's Sample Guide to Raising Money to Help Those Experiencing Homelessness

TITLE:

Make a Change: How JAGCAs Can Raise Money to Help

Introduction:

This guide is here to help you and your group raise money for people who don't have a place to live in your community. By following these tips, you can make a real difference in their lives.

Section 1: Setting Your Goals

- **Why Are You Raising Money?** Be clear about why you want to help people without homes. What specific problems will your money solve?
- **Set Goals You Can Reach:** Make goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART). For example, try to raise \$500 in three months to help a local shelter buy warm clothes for winter.
- **Find Groups That Can Help:** Look for organizations in your area that already help people experiencing homelessness. Think about working with them to make an even bigger impact.

Section 2: Ways to Raise Money

- **Social Media:** Make interesting posts on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to get people excited and encourage them to donate.
- **Events:** Organize fun events like bake sales, car washes, or talent shows. Ask local businesses to sponsor your event or donate things you need.
- **Donation Drives:** Collect important things like clothes, toiletries, and food that won't spoil to give to people in need.
- **Grants:** Look for grants from organizations that want to help solve homelessness. You might be able to get some extra money for your cause.
- **Crowdfunding:** Use websites like GoFundMe or Kickstarter to reach more people and tell your story.

Ideas for Student Groups continued...

Section 3: Working with Others

- **Team Up with Local Businesses:** Ask stores or restaurants if they'll give discounts to people who donate to your cause.
- **Get Your School Involved:** Talk to your principal or teachers about your fundraising efforts. They might even match the money you raise!
- **Connect with Community Groups:** Work with other student groups, churches, and community leaders to make an even bigger difference.

Section 4: Sharing Your Success

- **Be Honest:** Let people know exactly how their donations are being used and how they're helping people without homes.
- **Post Updates:** Share updates on social media about how much money you've raised, stories about the people you're helping, and the positive changes you're making.
- **Say Thank You:** Send handwritten thank-you notes or emails to people who donate. It shows them you appreciate their support.

Section 5: Helpful Resources

- National Alliance to End Homelessness: <https://endhomelessness.org/>
- The National Coalition for the Homeless: <http://nationalhomeless.org/>
- Local Shelters and Organizations: Find and connect with groups in your area that help people experiencing homelessness.
- [The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report \(AHAR\) to Congress](#)
- Annie E. Casey Foundation: [Preventing and Ending Youth Homelessness in America](#)

By using this guide, your group can make a real difference in the lives of people who don't have a home in your community. Remember, every little bit counts, and together, we can create a kinder and more supportive world for everyone.