



artreach
toolkit



How To Start

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Determine the needs in your community. Meet with the appropriate people to find out if such a program is needed. Start small and strive for success. ArtREACH began as a simple, weekly arts program to a local homeless shelter for women and children. Set up as a museum outreach, the art educator would bring a large art box full of materials for the evening's activities. The families enjoyed creating art together in a stable and fun atmosphere.

ArtREACH grew slowly as it served more students and was gaining an exemplary reputation in the community. ArtREACH is now a bustling daily program coinciding with the school calendar. Over 100 students, grades K-8th, attend ArtREACH each year, learning about fine arts, theater, and music, while gaining valuable academic assistance. Serving nine local shelters and reaching students from all of Broward County Schools, the 6th largest school district in the nation, ArtREACH has proved to be an invaluable program helping underserved student populations.

The following information will help your organization decide which program set-up is most suitable to your museum's resources:

Outreaches

Perhaps your organization has not worked with homeless shelters before, has limited funding, or is not located in a central urban center. An outreach-based program can lay the groundwork for the future while benefiting homeless families today.

A Daily Program

Learn about the building blocks of a successful daily after school arts program for the homeless.

How to Start an Arts Outreach Program

Shelter Outreaches

The overall scope and size of your arts program will depend largely on available resources and partners involved. Maybe the museum has little shelter contact, limited funding, or is not located in a central urban center. Your organization can have a positive impact on homeless children through a simpler outreach-based model.

Benefits of an Arts Outreach Program

- Creative self-expression through the arts
- Positive learning experiences
- A stable and safe environment
- Time away from stressful shelter life
- Possible parent and child interaction
- Flexibility in programming
- Less cost for overhead and materials
- Transportation concerns are minimized

An Outreach-based arts program can take on many forms:

- 1) An art educator can visit a shelter on a weekly/monthly basis. The educator brings all materials for the project in a large box. Students create simple projects that can be completed in an hour with basic materials (glue, scissors, construction paper, markers, etc.). The children take home their project at the end of the day. Basic homework tutoring is provided.
- 2) A monthly art outreach may involve parents and siblings of school age children in the art activities. Snacks or pizza can be provided by the museum for a time of family fun and creativity.
- 3) The shelter may provide a locked arts cabinet where the educator can store materials. Complex projects can be continued over several art sessions with more advanced materials. Extra academic resources (calculators, dictionary, workbooks, etc.) can be incorporated into the tutoring part of the program.
- 4) A small-scale daily program can operate if the shelter provides a room available on a regular basis. The room will need storage space and a sink. Close proximity to restrooms and an outdoor play area are also important.

Starting a Shelter Outreach Program

Logistics

An outreach program involves less logistical concerns. You may find that a simple phone call to an area shelter will begin a successful partnership that can last for years. Be sure to review the online toolkit's **Logistics** and **Building Bridges** section for detailed information on developing a partnership with area shelters.

Transportation

By bringing the art to the students, transportation and pick-up issues are minimized. Students should already be at the shelter when the educator arrives. In some cases, an organization may choose to conduct the program in the evenings or on the weekend.

Staff and Organization

Educators should have previous experience with at-risk youth. Limited support means that the educator should exercise excellent classroom management and an ability to handle crises situations calmly and appropriately.

A meeting between organization and shelter staff should cover:

- Shelter and program needs
- Number and ages of children at shelter
- Program times
- Facility overview (bathrooms, playground, etc.)
- Space and storage access
- Pick-up procedures
- Emergency procedures

Once the program has begun, changes can be made based on program needs, available resources, and program growth. This is an excellent opportunity to build trust between shelters and your non-profit organization.

A Daily ArtREACH Program

A Strong Partnership

Launching a full daily arts program at a permanent location requires a strong partnership between your organization, the shelters, the site location, and the school district. Both challenging and rewarding, the ArtREACH program can reach hundreds of homeless children in your community and make a lasting positive impact on needy families. Many issues will arise during the course of the school year which will require full cooperation between all ArtREACH partners. Regular meetings, constant communication, and a positive attitude contribute to the overall success of your program.

Be sure to review all sections in the ArtREACH Online Toolkit's **A Community Partnership** section to learn how to develop a successful interagency partnership.

Transportation

Resolving transportation issues for homeless families removes an economic barrier for homeless students. Partnering with the school's homeless education liaison will ameliorate the transportation process. Work with the homeless liaison to coordinate transportation services for these students.

Shelters may be able to help with transportation concerns. Larger shelters may provide limited van service to shelter clients, or housing ArtREACH at a shelter can mitigate transportation issues. Students may be able to walk to the program. However, evaluate the safety of the surrounding area if children will be walking to and from the program. Young children, especially, are vulnerable to neighborhood dangers such as busy streets and child predators.

Transportation and ArtREACH

Many homeless families have limited access to transportation. Hardships may result from:

- Use of public transportation
- Poorly maintained vehicles
- Reliance on friends/neighbors/relatives
- Walking in dangerous neighborhoods
- Bad weather
- Public transportation break-downs
- Missing a bus transfer
- Working late hours and unexpected family emergencies
- Reliance on shelter transportation

When creating your program, it is imperative that the program is housed within a few miles of the shelter(s) it serves if the arts program is not located within the shelter itself. Depending on your district, public transportation may be reliable with many routes or it may be non-existent or consistently unreliable.

The McKinney-Vento Act (read more online under **Homelessness**), requires school districts to provide school bus transportation for homeless children to guarantee them “equal access” to education and schools, and when applicable, after-school programs. By contacting the local Homeless Education liaison, you can determine what steps are necessary to arrange for students to be picked up from school and dropped off at your site within certain guidelines. Parents or shelters are responsible for pick-up from your program.

While ArtREACH has not experimented with providing its own van services because of the complex logistics and costs involved, this can be another viable option depending on your own organization’s own resources and the scope and size of your program.

Working with Multiple Shelters

A large site will have the capacity to serve multiple shelters in the community. Even if ArtREACH is located in one central shelter, students living in neighboring shelters can possibly attend. Regular meetings between partners and participating shelters will help with organization and logistical issues that may occur.

The program coordinator should keep in regular contact with case managers. A good rapport between the case managers and the program coordinator will help greatly if behavioral issues or other concerns occur with a student. Experienced case managers can have a special insight into each individual family’s situation and may be able to provide additional services to address client’s needs.

Families in transition will often move from one shelter to another over the course of the year. Partners will have to decide if students that have moved away from the shelter can continue attending the after school program. In many cases, your program may be the only form of free childcare available to a family, and ensuring that a student can continue attending the length of the school year regardless of a change in residence can help a family achieve financial stability.

A Daily Schedule

An ArtREACH daily schedule should incorporate the following components:

Sign-in

A staff member should greet students as they arrive at the site and record attendance each day. Class lists should be available to all teachers. The list might have to be updated weekly due to the high flux of students entering and leaving the program. A notebook with student information, allergies, and emergency contact numbers should be readily accessible by staff for emergency situations. The coordinator should also have a list of all agencies providing transportation for students.

Snack

Students will arrive at your site hungry. All homeless students are automatically eligible for free meals at school, but since all children like an afternoon snack, it is important to provide one. Some may have not eaten well for a few days, some may have skipped a meal or are dependent on shelter meals. Providing a healthy snack will help with issues that arise because of hunger.

The registration packet should have a section for allergies and food restrictions. Always have a few alternative snacks for students with allergies. It is a good rule of thumb to avoid any foods with a high instance of allergies (peanut butter, seafood, etc.) or foods with a high sugar or caffeine content (candy, cookies, sugary punch, etc.).

Snack time is also a time for students to socialize. Have students sit in designated seats for snack. Carefully monitor student conversations and actions during snack to avoid any behavior issues that may occur because of name-calling or teasing. Homeless students do not enjoy the privilege of strengthening friendships outside of school. ArtREACH provides an opportunity for them to develop relationships with new friends, and students often use snack time to solidify these friendships.

Recess

Students have been in a classroom all day. Recess is time for them to unwind, preferably outside in a safe playground situation. Although recess might be more effective when children first arrive at your program, recess may have to occur at a later time because of weather, location of playground equipment, the number of students, or other logistical reasons. Rainy day activities (coloring, board games, etc.) should always be available. It is good for each classroom to have a variety of rainy day activities stored nearby for times when students finish activities early, for emergency situations, or as a class reward for excellent behavior.

Bathroom breaks

Ideally, a single person bathroom should be located within the classroom. This eliminates schedule disruptions because of bathroom breaks and lack of supervision in the bathrooms. When bathrooms are located outside the classroom, teachers should designate a part of their classroom time to a bathroom break. Depending on the number of children in each classroom, this may not be a viable possibility. It is not advisable to send students unsupervised, whether alone or with a partner, to the bathroom. Your program will have to seriously consider how to approach bathroom breaks safely and quickly.

Classes

Class blocks should be between 60-90 minutes, with activities broken down into 20 minute mini-blocks. Students should be broken down into groups (based on age) which rotate between classrooms. ArtREACH classes provided could be fine arts, homework, performing arts, musical movement, dance, computer skills, theater, etc. At Young at Art, ArtREACH is divided into three class blocks – fine arts, performing arts, and academics. Although the coordinator develops the arts curriculum, often the arts educator incorporates his/her expertise in the classroom (ex. animation, world music, etc.). Computer skills are taught weekly.

Sign-out

Because of the greater instances of domestic violence and custody issues, a highly structured pick-up procedure is necessary to be sure children go home with the proper guardian. A staff member needs to greet each adult and double check his/her name and identification against the child's pick-up forms. When an unknown adult comes to pick up a child, the staff member needs to contact the coordinator and the child's parent to confirm that the authorized person is picking up the child. The child should not leave class until the adult has been authorized to pick up the child.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE FOR THREE GROUPS:

2:00-2:30 Drop-off and snack
2:30-3:00 Recess and bathroom breaks (by class)
3:00-4:00 BLOCK I (Art, Music, Academics)
4:00-5:00 BLOCK II (Art, Music, Academics)
5:00-6:00 BLOCK III (Art, Music, Academics)
5:30-6:00 Pick-up