Promoting Healthy Habits Through Education for Women in Addiction Recovery

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About First Step Home

First Step Home is an addiction recovery facility in Cincinnati serving women with substance use disorders. They provide treatment and housing for pregnant and non-pregnant women and their children. Their mission is to empower clients with the skills to succeed in their recovery and provide a nurturing environment for their children. First Step Home offers services such as group and individual therapy, medication management, an employment program, and recovery groups (Alcoholics Anonymous & Narcotics Anonymous).

Each summer, First Step Home welcomes an intern from the Urban Health Project to support the medical team. Urban Health Project’s mission is to immerse medical students into a service-oriented experience working with underserved populations in the local community.

Internship Responsibilities

- Teaching group education sessions on health topics including nutrition basics, benefits of exercise, and contraception methods
- Taking vitals during appointments with the physician
- Assisting the nurse with coordinating healthcare services for clients
- Compiling a roster of COVID-19 vaccinated clients

Project 1: Healthy Meals Workshop

I designed a Meal Planning Guide for clients to use when grocery shopping. It includes steps for planning meals for the week ahead, making a grocery list, using coupons, and preparing meals.

I taught a cooking class with the clients where we made stuffed peppers using produce from their community garden.

Project 2: Health Education Materials

I created easy to read handouts with information on a variety of health topics tailored to the needs of the client population.

- Healthy beverage choices
- Adding exercise to your daily routine
- Sleep hygiene
- Dental health
- Constipation prevention
- Add healthy fats to your diet
- Avoid processed foods
- Stay hydrated
- Add physical activity to your daily routine
- Enjoy a variety of fruits and vegetables
- Use natural remedies

Reflection

This partnership between Urban Health Project and First Step Home facilitates a valuable learning experience for medical students while making a positive impact on the community. My experience at First Step Home introduced me to substance use disorder treatment, furthering my understanding of addiction as a complex chronic disease. Working with this underserved population taught me the importance of treatment programs like First Step Home in supporting people through the challenging recovery process. I intend to use the lessons I learned this summer to be an outspoken advocate for people with substance use disorders.

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