

My Friend's Place Los Angeles, CA

1 Please describe your organization briefly, including mission statement, activities, size, etc.

My Friend's Place Overview

My Friend's Place is the largest drop-in center in Hollywood and the only one open seven days per week serving a culturally diverse array of homeless youth ages 12 to 24 and their children. Founded in 1988, the mission of My Friend's Place is to assist and inspire homeless youth to build self-sufficient lives.

My Friend's Place (MFP) is unique in that the organization is exclusively funded by private sources. The organization does not receive funding from Federal, State or County sources and has sustained its base of private support for the past 19 years. The organization's strong, mission-driven work supports an administrative cost of approximately 13%.

The primary goals of MFP programming are three-fold: 1) build trust with the homeless young people, 2) lower the traditional barriers many youth experience when attempting to access services; and 3) provide a diverse array of services to maximize the psychological, intellectual, and physical capacity of youth in crisis. My Friend's Place offers a comprehensive continuum of care in the following three programmatic areas:

The *Safe Haven Program* provides shelter and drop-in services during the day and engages youth by providing food, clothing, showers, communication services and transportation. These emergency necessities alleviate the demands of survival that often distract youth from participating in educational or health-related activities. Through our Safe Haven Program, staff take the first steps to build trust with youth, encourage them to disclose more serious issues, and make appropriate referrals to case management, mental health services and collaborating service providers.

The *Transformative Education Program* seeks to achieve four goals: 1) equip youth with marketable skills, 2) encourage positive behaviors, 3) teach youth how to connect with resources that improve their self-sufficiency, and 4) create an alternative way for staff to build rapport with youth who are reluctant to access more intensive health and mental health services. The Transformative Education Program achieves many of these goals through its Education Technology Lab by hosting workshops and one-on-one sessions in the areas of academic achievement, life skills, employment and creative arts.

The *Health and Well-Being Program* provides youth with health, medical, and mental health services addressing issues such as pregnancy and parenting, legal issues, sexual health, HIV prevention and emotional well-being. Case management services such as advocacy, goal setting, and public benefits assistance are offered by Master's in Social Work (MSW) clinical case workers who also conduct crisis intervention and therapy to provide support for challenges such as trauma resolution, substance abuse, partner violence, anger management and other mental health issues.

In 2006, MFP saw 1,531 individual youth who visited a total of 28,158 times, an increase of 4% over 2005. Clients divide evenly along gender lines, 50% male, 49% female and 1% transgender. One hundred fifty of the youth served in 2006 were under the age of 18. Thirty eight percent of the youth identify as African-American, 27% as Caucasian, 22% as Latino, 12% as mixed or unspecified and 1% as Asian-American. MFP staff conducted intakes on 1,004 first-time clients.

In addition to our continuum of excellent, professional services, MFP has service agreements with a consortium of 11 local service providers (known as HHYP – the Hollywood Homeless Youth Partnership), and collaborates with more than 50 organizations for services ranging from legal assistance to arts programming to educational opportunities.

MFP's work with homeless youth is supported by a team of 16 service professionals including our Associate Executive Director/ Program Director, 4 MSW-prepared Case Managers, 3 Health Educators, an Arts Education Manager and 8 Direct Service Counselors. The organization gratefully utilizes the services of more than 300 volunteers who provide the equivalent work of three FTE's in supporting our education and drop-in service programs.

MFP's highly individualized service delivery model not only builds trust with young people but addresses the trauma-based causes of homelessness. Examples of traumatic incidences that may cause a young person to leave their home and live on the streets include: the death of a parent or guardian; abuse by a parent or guardian; the discovery of a child's alternative sexual orientation; or chronic substance abuse in the home. In addition, a significant number of clients involved in case management at MFP are aging out of the children's mental health, child welfare, or juvenile justice systems. These youth suffer from a disruptive system of care which has aggravated or neglected health issues. Finally, families living in poverty are more likely to become homeless than those families living above the poverty line. Researchers report that in a city with high poverty districts such as Los Angeles, one in three youth reside in a household that is below the poverty level.

For additional information, please visit our website at www.myfriendsplace.org

2 Describe **in detail** the work or project an intern will do, **please be as specific as possible**.

Cultural Infusion

Provide cultural infusion for the youth at My Friend's Place. Research, write curriculum, run educational workshop, identify and facilitate guest speakers, plan and execute field trips, plan special meals.

The youth at My Friend's Place are as culturally diverse as the city of Los Angeles. Intern will help educate on various world cultures and cultures in Los Angeles through music, arts and crafts, foods, field trips, educational workshops and guest speakers.

Some examples of field trips include museums, visiting various neighborhoods in Los Angeles (Chinatown, little Ethiopia, etc.) and viewing local cultural happenings.

This is a pilot program at My Friend's Place. The Intern will work with the staff at My Friend's Place to develop this intercultural programming to deliver to the youth at the center.

3 Describe any particular skills, background, or qualities you are seeking in an intern

Intern must possess interest in working with homeless youth.

Strong research skills are necessary. Prior experience running educational workshops is helpful.

Intern must possess people skills, gifted in communication with a variety of people. Interested in working with diverse populations.

Passionate about educating marginalized youth.

There are required dates for this internship. Internship must start on _____ and end on _____ or most include the period _____.

Start and end dates for the internship are flexible.

The expected working schedule for this internship:

Begin 9: 00 a.m. End 5:30 p.m.

Lunch break: Length 1 hour specific time 11-12noon