



Case Study:

The Salvation Army's Pathway of Hope

Using data to **break the cycle** of intergenerational poverty

Community Services

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The Salvation Army has pursued its mission to meet human needs at a scale few organizations can match. Today over 1.5 million Salvation Army members serve in 130 countries. In the U.S. alone, The Salvation Army assists approximately 25 million Americans every year who cope with the effects of natural disasters, poverty, abuse, and many other social ills.

One critical problem The Salvation Army battles is the vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty. In response, The Salvation Army's Midwest region began a program called Pathway of Hope (POH) in 2011. POH was an immediate success and became a national Salvation Army program in 2013.

POH addresses the root causes of poverty — including unemployment, unstable housing, and lack of education — by providing individualized services to families with children. The goal is to break the cycle of crisis and vulnerability that repeats across generations.

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Sabrina Kiser,
National Pathway of Hope Coordinator

Combatting poverty with data

Before the program went nationwide, The Salvation Army's Central Territory chose WellSky Community Services software because of its ability to collect the outcomes data they needed. They were familiar with the system because it is used as the Homelessness information Management System (HMIS) in many communities around the Territory. The central Territory also provided input on a module for the system called FundManager — a tool to track how grants are used and when they expire.

For The Salvation Army, POH diverged from its traditional localized approach to service. National leadership decided that POH program data would be collected and analyzed nationwide, and that all Salvation Army territories would use WellSky because it was able to:

- Standardize data collection across individual plans and aggregate the results into consistent, actionable insights;
- Handle customizations needed for the unique aspects of POH;
- Provide important measurement tools such as the Herth Hope Index and University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA) out of the box;

- Produce meaningful outcome scoring;
- Aggregate data from across the country in a national data warehouse.

The Salvation Army's focused approach in using the WellSky system has helped standardize reporting and quantify the methods that yield the best outcomes for clients.

Moving from actions to outcomes

"WellSky has given us the ability to see much broader than ever before," says Sabrina Kiser, the National Pathway of Hope Coordinator since 2014. "We have a clear view of the work we're doing, the services we're providing, and the impact those efforts are having, measured in quantifiable results."

"Every Salvation Army division participating in POH is using the same assessment tools and consistently tracking outcomes the same way. So, we understand more clearly what it takes for clients to be successful."



Coordinating multifaceted care

A POH client participates in the program from 9 months to 2 years — a longer relationship than The Salvation Army typically has with the people they serve through disaster and crisis relief efforts. During that time, the POH approach to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty consists of three main components proven to create long-term progress and success:

Consistent case management

Clients meet every week with a Salvation Army case manager at first, then less often as progress is made.

Widespread community involvement

The Salvation Army strives to work with other local community organizations, rather than duplicate services.

Spiritual care

The Salvation Army serves people of all faiths and finds that when clients plug into a faith-based organization of their choosing, it strengthens their community engagement and brings new people into their lives.

Here are some of the ways WellSky helps The Salvation Army synchronize these components into a single effort.

Helping clients take control

A key to the success of POH is the consistent case management approach that is repeated with every client across the country. The Salvation Army has documented the process and provided detailed training to the POH program nationwide. Everyone uses the same assessments and tools on the WellSky platform, ensuring consistency regardless of location.

Under the POH framework, the family decides what is important to be successful. The case manager, using a strengths-based approach, provides guidance and support, asking questions like: "How have you been successful in the past?" "What are you good at?" and "What do you enjoy?" This identifies the skills and interests that can be activated to achieve personal growth. This positive approach is also empowering to clients.

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Next, the case manager conducts a series of assessments built into the system, including the following:

- ✓ The **University of Rhode Island Change Assessment Scale (URICA)** assessment measures the client's stage in the change process. Some clients are ready, while others are not quite aware that they need to make changes.
- ✓ The **Self Sufficiency Matrix (SSM)** assesses 15 domains of family stability, including the family's mental health history, substance use, income, and employment.
- ✓ **Herth Hope Index (HHI)** quantifies the hope a family has.

Family members then set their own goals. The top five goals The Salvation Army has identified are: employment, housing, education, child care, and transportation.

The case manager tracks the progress toward these goals in the WellSky system. The Salvation Army then uses that data to determine which elements of the program were more successful. Because the program is relatively new, The Salvation Army continues to refine how methods and results are tracked.

Involving the community

The local Salvation Army conducts a scan of the services already available in a community and identifies needs not being met. Whenever possible, The Salvation Army works with organizations already serving a community, rather than duplicating services. Many divisions use WellSky to track organizations in the community that can provide support to clients.

WellSky helps many organizations to track service providers and automate referrals. This includes 60% of the Continuums of Care (CoCs) that report into the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), as well as many 2-1-1 social service directories, Aging & Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), and crisis hotlines.

The Salvation Army often connects families with school counselors or homelessness liaisons. They also identify local businesses willing to hire clients with criminal records or community colleges that can help with job training.

One inspiring aspect of POH is the effect it has on the community at large. When people discover the goals and accomplishments of POH, they are often excited to support the program. POH national coordinator Sabrina Kiser cites many examples: the local gas station that provides gift cards on a monthly basis, the pizza shop that donates food to drop-in classes, and the local community college that provides free tests and books for any POH client trying to pass the GED.



Providing compassionate spiritual care to people of all faiths

At its core, The Salvation Army is a church, and POH does contain a ministry component. A study conducted by Loyola University of early POH data in the Central Territory demonstrated that clients who participate in faith-based activities tended to have better outcomes.

While The Salvation Army has its own worship services, they gladly refer clients to other places of worship. For example, one Salvation Army corps in a predominantly Muslim community works regularly with the local Islamic mosque to meet the needs of its Muslim clients.

A Salvation Army officer or soldier will act as the spiritual extension of The Salvation Army, praying for and with a family if they choose. If families are not interested, the officer or soldier always respects a client's wishes.

As the data continues to identify a strong connection between spiritual care and progress toward economic and psychological self-sufficiency, The Salvation Army continues to refine the spiritual care piece. They are configuring WellSky to track pastoral care, after-school programs, religious services, and related activities.

Increasing dollars with data

Beyond refining the successful methods used by POH, data has made an incredible impact in another area — fundraising. The Salvation Army is able to report not just the good deeds it is providing through POH, it's also demonstrating measurable changes to the health of communities. Over \$17 million in grants have been raised through this data-driven approach.

One anonymous donor that first began working with The Salvation Army after a natural disaster latched on to the POH concept quickly. The focus on data and outcomes was a powerful draw. The Salvation Army worked with this organization to develop a proof of concept for funding that was approved in November,

76%
of Pathway of Hope participants **increased their monthly income** after six months.



2018. This led to a three-year, \$5 million grant to support national expansion of POH to every Salvation Army location.

The Lilly Endowment was also so impressed that they gave \$4.9 million to build out the staffing and infrastructure of POH in The Salvation Army's Central territory. The research and results that were achieved has already led to a second Lilly Endowment grant of more than \$8 million with potential for matching an additional \$2 million.

Outcomes data and improvements in self-sufficiency scores give funders the confidence to invest in POH. To date, 76% of families participating in the program have increased their financial stability, and 60% of everyone going through the system now have increased levels of hope.

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Confirming success

Loyola University surveyed participants in the POH program at 3-, 6- and 12-month intervals.

- Monthly income at the 3-month follow-up either increased (13%) or stayed the same (42%)
- Monthly income at the 6-month follow-up increased (76%) or stayed the same (8%).
- Monthly income at the 12-month follow-up increased (67%) or stayed the same (33%)
- 60% of families reported increased levels of hope

In addition, participants who achieved all goals tended to see greater improvement in Herth Hope, URICA, and SSM scores than those who had not completely achieved their goals. Interestingly, the number of goals set was positively correlated with change rates of hope and self-sufficiency.

The Loyola study also uncovered important qualitative results through a series of focus groups. Three important components of the program were found to generate hope, overcome barriers, or change views of self:

- A non-judgmental approach
- A trusted relationship
- Pastoral care

Participants consistently highlighted the critical importance of supporting the spiritual journey through pastoral care. The focus groups also found that participants' future success were closely tied to improving physical, emotional, and relational stability.

WellSky is used by **60%** of the nation's Continuums of Care and **50%** of all Area Agencies on Aging.



Always building and adjusting

As both quantitative and qualitative data comes in, The Salvation Army continues to adapt, enhance, and grow the Pathway of Hope program. One lesson learned is the importance of income data. When The Salvation Army began the program, the focus was on self-sufficiency and hope, rather than raw income numbers. However, experience has shown that income statistics are vital to funders. Additional training has been added to the POH onboarding process to help case managers track income consistently.

The Salvation Army is also just finishing work with WellSky on a data repository that will greatly improve the insights and range of data available for analysis.

In the future, The Salvation Army may one day expand POH, which currently serves only households with children, to include similar programs for single individuals or those without kids.

Conclusion: Data is the means, not the end

"Data can only tell part of the story," Kiser says. "It's compelling, and it guides our work, but we measure impact in personal stories of how lives have changed. No two families define success the same way. A family may have a low SSM index, but if that parent just got a degree or a job, they may feel like the most blessed people on earth."



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Solutions for realizing care's potential

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