Tim Gunderson

**Resume experience:**

*Current:*

* Assistant Manager, Riverbend Community Action, 3 years
* Assistant Organizer, Riverbend City Regional Youth Services Conference (past 2 years)

*Previous:*

* Assistant Director, Lindner Hills Teen Community Haven, 4 years
* Case Worker, Linder Hills Teen Community Haven, 4 years

I have quite a bit of leadership experience in human service leadership and teen homelessness. I've helped to organize the Riverbend City Regional Youth Services Conference for the past two years—working alongside Alyssa Ashmore, which has been a real honor. I'm also enrolled in a human services management doctoral program at Beck University. My dissertation is going to be about developing efficient protocols for helping kids with addictions.

I feel passionate about this issue. Teen homelessness is an epidemic. Once a kid gets trapped in the cycle of homelessness, it's very hard to escape. We need to secure more resources for dealing with this problem so we can help kids break out of this cycle. There are so many issues—from addiction, to prostitution, to PTSD. The public has no idea how much these kids are suffering. Helping these kids get better—that needs to be our priority.

2 hours ago

Shelly Rodriguez

**Resume experience:**

*Current:*

* Assistant Director of the Washington Avenue Crisis Center for Youth (19 months)

*Previous:*

* Intern, Ruby Lake Youth Oasis
* I'm a career changer. I worked as a paralegal for 15 years, and I just didn't feel passionate enough about it. Then I started volunteering at a teen crisis center, and it blew my mind what these kids were going through. I had no idea how many of them wind up in prostitution, or with HIV, and as victims of sexual assault, and how often they struggle with addiction. And for LGBT teens, all of the statistics are even more grim. I kept talking to these kids and couldn't believe what they were saying. As a parent, I still can't believe that there are parents who would throw their own children out on the streets because of their sexual orientation. Or their gender identity. After volunteering for a while, I just knew that I'd finally found my calling. I earned my master's degree in social work and interned at Ruby Lake Youth Oasis, and then I was so honored to land a position as the assistant director of the Washington Avenue Crisis Center for Youth. Being able to work with Alyssa Ashmore as a mentor has been life-changing. And being able to work with such a wide variety of kids who represent all categories of teen homelessness—well, I've just learned so much. I feel that one of the things I've learned from Alyssa and my time at Washington Avenue is the ability to maintain healthy boundaries while still earning the trust of these kids. And I've also learned a lot about the homelessness issue as a whole. It's so important to not look at these kids as broken—the system is broken, not the kids. If I were the leader of this task force, I would want to focus on two interrelated things—finding ways to enable kids to get the help they need now, but also finding ways to collaborate with the community as a whole to make larger changes.Paralegal, various firms, 16 years

2 hours ago

Amir

**Resume experience:**

*Current:*

* Case Worker, Hennsey County Department of Health
* Instructor, Human Services program, Riverbend Community College

*Previous:*

* Case Worker, Linder Hills Teen Community Haven, 5 years
* Case Worker, Caring Heart Center, 3 years

I am so passionate about this issue. It hits very close to home for me. One of my sisters was homeless for almost a year. We had a rough upbringing—there was abuse, there was addiction, much of that because my parents were refugees from Somalia and my father has PTSD because of some terrible war experiences. He passed away last year, and … I'm sorry. It's hard to talk about my father. I was the lucky one though. My sister's experiences on the street—well, it's very painful to talk about, but she fell into prostitution very quickly and became part of a human trafficking ring. She got out of that with her life, but now she's HIV-positive and is dealing with PTSD because of these experiences.

So anyways, as you can see, this issue is personal to me! I've made a career out of doing everything I can to help homeless teens and to prevent others from winding up on the street. I also am working on my doctorate in Human Services Management at Beck University, and I'm a part-time instructor at Riverbend City Community College. I teach a class about issues related to homelessness, and that's been such a powerful experience. I have students crying in my class on a regular basis. And I feel that because of my academic background, I understand homeless issues on both an individual and a societal basis. As task force leader, I want to focus both on helping individuals and trying to affect change in the community.

I love my job at Hennsey County, especially the leadership component of it. I'm a very hands-on leader and go out of my way to talk to my team regularly about how they are feeling. It's so important to keep everybody motivated in a field like this. I encourage everybody to talk about the kids they're working with so that we can all help each other. I was a very hands-on caseworker too– some might say too much so, but frankly, I think case workers need to be very hands-on or these kids won't trust us. I think it's more dangerous to be too distant from these kids than to worry about being too friendly.