BOSS is dedicated to helping homeless, poor, and disabled people achieve health and self-sufficiency, and to fighting against the root causes of poverty and homelessness.
An overview of Alameda County
A view from the trenches

In our work we’ve seen administrative and legislative policies that negatively impact the people we serve – creating a circular system of despair, hopelessness and dependency.

We believe in a distributive justice barrier-less model that is measured in shared wealth and opportunities for personal activity and social mobility, built on a foundation of safety nets and economic justice for individuals and communities directly impacted by poverty!

“When we speak we are afraid our words will not be heard or welcomed. But when we are silent we are still afraid. So it is BETTER TO SPEAK.”

~ Andre Lorde
Backdrop: Alameda County Homelessness

In the last two years alone, Alameda County homelessness has increased 39%. The majority are unsheltered.

The population is diverse – affecting men, women, youth and families – predominantly people of color.

Homeless people face multiple barriers and special needs.
Focus on: Poverty and Violence

In the Bay Area, 4 out of 5 of the poorest neighborhoods are in Alameda County: downtown Berkeley, uptown Oakland, West Oakland, and Alameda Point.

It is no coincidence that poor neighborhoods have the highest concentrations of violence and crime – such as in West and East Oakland (highest incidents in darkest red):

Homicides

Total crime

Foreclosures
**Focus on: Adult Reentry Population**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IN ALAMEDA COUNTY:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Alameda County custody (jail)</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently active PRCS individuals</td>
<td>566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On State parole</td>
<td>1,860</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of felony probationers</td>
<td>12,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of court informal probationers (misdemeanors)</td>
<td>41,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post sentence: National reports estimated that 1 in 4 individuals have criminal records, which include individuals with arrests only, diversions (and deferred entry of judgement, civil settlements, etc.), felony, and misdemeanor convictions.</td>
<td>375,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reentry population: *mental illness is not exempt*

- The population of mentally ill inmates in CA prisons has almost *doubled* since 2000.
- In 2014, there were **over 30,000 seriously mentally ill prisoners confined in California state prisons**, as compared to fewer than 6,000 persons in state psychiatric hospitals, making the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation the de facto mental health treatment provider in the state.

**Impacts on Communities and Families**

Wilson (1987) building on Kain (1968) argued that a lack of available jobs close to where,. unemployed workers live.....contributes to long durations of joblessness, in part because social networks become largely populated by other jobless workers. Persistent joblessness for men is then linked to breakdowns in traditional family arrangements, increased use of public assistance, and...high crime. As long-term unemployment becomes more concentrated, the neighborhood becomes a source of persistent poverty.

- **✓** negative impact of paternal job loss on *infant birth weight*
- **✓** lowers children’s *school performance*
- **✓** **negative shift in maternal time** toward employment, marital dissolution, or residential relocation.
- **✓** affect children’s *grade retention*
- **✓** increased *family stress and reduced incomes*
- **✓** affects the *emotional well-being of mothers*, producing increased cognitive distress
- **✓** *depressive symptoms* in adolescent children
Claudette: A Case Study

At the intersection of inequity and injustice

Claudette is a 32-year old African American single mother of three children ages 4, 9 and 15.

Referred from Parole. Claudette was referred by her Parole Officer to the BOSS Career Training and Employment Center (CTEC) after a conviction of fraud which resulted in a federal felony and diagnosed with bipolar I/depression.

Co-occurring challenges. At the time of entering CTEC, Claudette was homeless, living in motels, on the streets, or wherever she could find shelter. In addition to unemployment, homelessness, and untreated mental illness, Claudette also faced a number of legal battles, including child custody, that would require a solid support team. All of these factors put her at very high risk of recidivism.

Making the decision to change. After watching her children grow up with distant family members and having her peers experience repeat incarceration, Claudette decided she wanted to make a change.
✓ **Strengthened by family.** To start with, Claudette began working to reposition herself and move away from her previous lifestyle. She eventually retained custody of her children—a testament to her material devotion and steadfast focus: these qualities were key to helping make and stick to the decision that it was time for change. **The support and love of family are a key factor in successful redirection/reintegration.**

✓ **Service engagement.** Claudette continued engagement with staff at CTEC to learn which companies were ‘felon friendly, and would be willing to hire someone with a previous felony conviction and was extremely motivated to succeed. She attended workforce development workshops and classes, resume preparation, mock interviews, motivational support and working on inter and intra-personal skills. She attended job fairs and worked with staff to improve her marketability to employers.

✓ **Wraparound services.** BOSS staff also provided transportation assistance to help her get to and from appointments and interviews. BOSS provided referrals to mental health and legal services and helped her seek and secure housing.

**SUCCESS.** Claudette is now living in an apartment with her children, secured two separate employment positions, and she is working to advance her career and increase her income. But it was no easy journey – deep poverty and multiple barriers require a comprehensive response.

**A dedicated team of staff available daily to support her + multiple services to health, legal, housing & related needs + professional staff with lived experience who understood her struggle and provided consistent and continuous encouragement + and her own determination and positive attitude made the difference for Claudette....BOSS is proud to be part of her story, and so many like hers.**
“The best way to predict the future is to create it.

- Abraham Lincoln