

Introduction

Martha is a student at College of the Redwoods. She applied for financial aid with help from her high school and received confirmation of her completed application. But when she came here and enrolled at CR she was told the application was incomplete. It could take months to get it resolved.

Martha

I didn't plan to be homeless. My family moved around a lot and struggled financially when I was a kid, but we always had a place to live. Now I am staying at the Eureka Rescue Mission and I am grateful to be there. I have no money and nowhere else to go. I am 18 years old.

PAUSE

I grew up in Los Angeles and realized in high school that I wanted to be a social worker. But many college programs are impacted. My counselor suggested College of the Redwoods and I applied.

My parents actually moved to Humboldt before me and when I graduated from high school, I joined them here. Unfortunately, they couldn't stay and in August they moved back to LA, leaving me here to go to CR as I had planned. They gave me the money they had saved for college- and that got me a week in a motel room. After that I was out of money and had no place to go. I didn't know anyone. I got on the Youth Services Bureau's shelter wait list but it is a *long* (emphasize) list. I was homeless.

I could go back to L.A. but my parents, brother and sister all live in a one bedroom apartment. I know I wouldn't be better off there even if there was room for me—I am 18 and my parents would need to charge me rent. I would have to drop out of school.

My father didn't graduate from high school and used to say 'don't be like me'. He gets up at 4 or 5 a.m. and just works, works, works. He is a plumber and gets one day off if he is lucky. Growing up we hardly ever saw him. He says he doesn't want me to have the same hard life. And I know if I drop out of school and work full time I will just keep struggling. I will never get ahead.

I am thankful to be at the mission but living there is complicated. You have to wake up by 6 .m. and be back by 3 p.m. unless you have an excuse. ON Sundays they wake us up at 5. You are also required to attend chapel every day from 4:45 to 5:30 unless you're excused. I share my room with 7 other women and we have to have our phones off by 9 pm. They require lights out at 10. I have two night classes and it is impossible to stay up late and do homework.

I know my parents don't have any extra money to help me and I would like to get a job but school—and riding the bus back and forth to the mission every day takes a lot of time. When I apply for jobs, places want me to have experience—but how can I get experience when no one will hire me? I will keep trying.

You can stay at the mission for up to 2 months, and then they take it day by day. Extensions are possible, but nothing is guaranteed. I will meet with the Mission director soon to identify goals and develop a plan for employment and housing. The director is really nice to me. I think because I am the youngest one at the shelter. I remind her of her daughters.

The hardest thing is having no support. The women at the mission are friendly, but they are all older. I just go to school and work on figuring out where to live. Sometimes I think about dropping out but I remember how I grew up. I had an unstable childhood and really want to be a social worker. I want to contribute. And so I take it day by day. And will keep doing that until life gets easier.