

Housing and HIV Project

Purpose

Housing was identified by the Health Promotion and Outreach team as a major social issue impacting Nine Circles clients

- Increase awareness of needs
- Identify existing gaps
- Make recommendation for change

Research Team

- Dr. Rae Bridgman, Department of City Planning, University of Manitoba
- Tara Carnochan, Manager of Health Promotion and Outreach
- Paula Migliardi, Community-Based Research Facilitator
- Tina Sorensen, Research and Evaluation Coordinator
- Jennifer Kozyniak, Research Coordinator
- Kendra Charles, Student Practicum, University of Winnipeg

Funding

- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy
- Public Health Agency of Canada

Data Collection

Two phases:

- Individual Interviews
- Feedback Session

Individual Interviews

- 30 interviews completed
- Most recruited through Nine Circles
- All participants HIV positive
- Excellent response – wait list
- Food bank, posters, friends/others who were interviewed
- Safe, quiet, private room at Nine Circles
- Averaged 45 minutes

Cancellations

- 13 cancelled or rescheduled interviews
- No explanation – 6
- Personal issues – 4 (ie. housing, relationship, caregiver stress and legal)
- Illness – 3
- Arrived late due to illness - 3

Interview Tool

- Questions based on socioeconomic determinants of health:
 - Housing, income, food/nutrition, access to health and social services etc.
- Validated by the PHA Caucus Board

Participants

- 18 men and 12 women
- Average age 44 years old (31-63)
- 21 Aboriginal participants
- All HIV positive
- Years since diagnosis (1-23 years)
- 21 participants on social assistance
- Average grade completed: 10

Cultural Identity

- 21 self-identified as Aboriginal
- 9 either hesitated or seemed uncertain about how to respond

“Native, I don’t know, I don’t even know who I am really... I haven’t really followed my culture.”

Housing Status

- Only one participant did not live in Winnipeg
- 18 downtown/central, 4 west end, remainder live in suburbs (ie. St. Vital, Garden City)
- Majority live in rental properties (20)
- 5 live in the homes of family members
- 14 live alone (majority)
- One third (10) had lived in current residence < 5 months
- 7 in current residence > 5 years

Feedback Session

- Address gaps or inconsistencies from interviews
- 16 participants – 9 men and 7 women
- Four stations facilitated by research team
- Teams of four participants per station
- Fifteen minutes intervals
- Summaries presented by facilitator
- Participants confirmed accuracy

Feedback Session Stations

- Station 1: Difficulties and challenges in relation to health
- Station 2: Solutions and access to services
- Station 3: Food security, health and housing
- Station 4: Related research

Challenges and Difficulties

- Finding appropriate housing (15)
- Unable to afford housing (7)
- Problems with the landlord (7)
- Living in unsanitary conditions (7)
- Bed bugs, insects, rodents (6)
- Experienced being evicted (6)

Note: Categories are not mutually exclusive

Challenges and Difficulties

Quotes:

“I’d be better off living in jail than where I currently live.”

“I'd like to live somewhere else that I can breathe, I can touch the grass I can see the sky... it's killing me being confined in a space like that.”

Impact on Health

- Extreme stress (10)
- Not sleeping well (7)

Mental health is more negatively impacted than physical health. (stressed, depressed, suicidal thoughts, helpless, frustrated and angry)

Physical health secondary: because of living conditions – lack of sleep due to bed bugs, noise, temperature; poor food storage; not taking medications

Impact on Health

"I feel like crying all of the time"

"My sleep is being affected, can't sleep at night can't rest, minds always going. When's my next apartment coming... when's it gonna come. How long do I have to stay here?"

"I stay awake at night worrying about the bed bugs coming to bite me."

"Eating food that is contaminated by bugs is like eating a spoonful of dirt."

Access to Services

- Majority (23) said that they do not have difficulty accessing services from where they live
- 18 reported having moved to be closer to services
- Biggest issues identified were: not having a phone, lack of transportation, limited crisis or emergency assistance, no assistance with finding housing and poor food delivery services.

Suggested Solutions

- A program designed to place individuals in clean, affordable and safe housing
- Rent control
- Social assistance to index housing to inflation
- Social assistance and Nine Circles working more collaboratively

Useful Services

- Most feel that they must deal with issues on their own and have to seek resources themselves.
- Informal sources have been most helpful:
 - Assistance from peers
 - Conversations at Nine Circles front desk
 - Family and friends
 - Pets

Useful Services

- Most participants expressed a need to develop more independence and gain control over their lives
- Formal sources of support
 - Medical services (30)
 - Advocacy services (23)
- Emergent social issues and medical needs are the highest priority
- Fewer reports of accessing counseling or cultural services – less holistic focus identified

Useful Services

"There are more people against you than in support of you."

"I'd rather go without than impose...make myself feel more like shit because I can see it in their eyes that they know my plight and oh they care but you know out of sight out of mind."

"For the most part you just don't try. You just survive and if there is a barrier there you don't deal with it, you walk around... you find an alternative."

Food Security

- Without prompting 8 claimed that they have to give up food in order to afford rent
- 20 said that they have a history of running out of food (generally fresh, perishable food)
- Most participants felt that finding decent housing is a more significant problem than finding food.

Barriers to Nutrition

- Food banks and soup kitchens are helpful – good resources - but they do not provide the most healthy foods.
- No accounting for allergies or specific dietary/nutritional needs
- Lack of produce and meat
- Mental health: often worried, stressed, defeated, fatigued because of food situation.

Quotes

"A lot of folks live on hamburgers and hotdogs and Kraft Dinner."

"Why don't they [the food bank] just send us powdered packs like the astronauts eat... that's probably more nutritious than what we get."

"I mean I'm scraping by the best way I can... because the good quality stuff costs more."

Related Research

What priority do you place on your health when dealing with housing issues?

- Health deteriorates because of other priorities.
- Mental health: fatigue, anxiety, stress, suicidal thoughts
- Miss appointments, forget about meds

Quotes

“I get sick every time”

“It (housing problems) slows you down”

“Your health deteriorates”

Related Research

Do you feel that social assistance understands the issues that you face?

- Those who have disclosed their status mentioned a range of experiences from being openly judged to being patronized by their social assistance workers
- Often have to educate workers about HIV and sometimes do not see the benefit in disclosing their status because it can be detrimental to the services that they receive

Related Research

Has the stigma of you HIV status prevented you from accessing services?

- Mainly have concerns about disclosing status to social assistance workers
- Better not to disclose in order to avoid biases and attitudes from their workers
- Some stated that they have had discouraging experiences with the health care system – particularly emergency services