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“Putting a Face” to Rural homelessness

Rural Alberta Innovation and Learning Commons

University of Alberta

Augustana campus

Camrose, Alberta

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Objectives

- 1) What does homelessness look like in rural Alberta?
- 2) What are the contributing factors to homelessness in rural Alberta?;
- 3) What services are available to people experiencing homelessness in rural Alberta?;
- 4) What are the gaps in services for people experiencing homelessness in rural Alberta?; and
- 5) What is the public's awareness related to homelessness in rural Alberta?

Previous studies

- Environmental scan 2010 (Kovacs Burns & Richter, funded by the Alberta Homelessness Research Consortium)
- Rural Alberta Homelessness study
 - Drs J. Waegemakers Schiff and A. Turner (funded by the ACCFCR)

Why do we need to know about rural homelessness?

- Valid, meaningful research is needed to put a face to homelessness in rural Alberta
- A systematic community approach is needed
- A multiple sectoral approach

- Ethics approval

Defining homelessness

**Homelessness describes the situation
of a person
or family without stable, permanent,
appropriate housing or the immediate
prospect of acquiring it.**

*(adapted from The Canadian Homelessness Research
Network, 2012)*

- “Homelessness encompasses a range of physical living situations, organized here in a typology that includes
- 1) Unsheltered, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation;

- 2) Emergency Sheltered, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as shelters for those impacted by family violence;
- 3) Provisionally Accommodated, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure, and finally,
- 4) At Risk of Homelessness, referring to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards...”
(Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2012).

- Affordability- Spend more than 30% of your income on housing expenses
- Availability - Difficulty finding housing
- Suitability - Housing does not have enough space for the number of people living there
- Adequacy- accommodation required major repairs to meet minimum health and/or safety standards

Mixed method

Surveys

1. Homeless and At-Risk Population
2. Service Providers
3. Business and Industry
4. Property Managers
5. General Public

Interviews:

- Homeless and At-Risk Individuals
- Industry
- Service Provider Focus Groups

Data analysis

- **Community survey**
 - Perceptions
 - Personal experiences
 - Awareness of services
 - Perceived stakeholders

- **Business and industry**
 - Concern
 - Effect on industry
 - Solutions

- Property managers/ landlords
 - Perceptions

- Service providers
 - Perceptions
 - Effects
 - Solutions

- **Homeless and at risk of becoming homeless**
 - Demographics
 - Living situation
 - Effects

Qualitative findings

- Various themes emerged from the qualitative interviews that substantiate and expand on the quantitative findings.

- Contributing factors
- Perceptions of Homelessness
- Barriers to delivering care
- Strengths within
- Gaps in services
- Populations at risk
- Impact of housing issues on Stoney Plain's populace
- Needs
- What keep you in
- Industry support

Contributing factors

- Shortage of housing/effect of industry
- Lack of financial sources/employment
- Affordability and suitability of housing
- Drug and alcohol abuse/addiction
- Poor mental or physical health
- Family struggles (abuse, divorce, conflict)
- Lack of education/mentoring/life skills

Gaps in services

- Shortage of services
- Lack of Transport
- Shortage of long term affordable housing/shelter

Strengths within

- Quality of services
- Availability of resources
- Resilience of the people/community involvement
- Accommodating Landlords

Barriers to delivering care

- No place to go
- Hidden problem
- Coordination of services
- Unpredictability of the population at risk
- Lack of time, crisis mode, urgency of needs
- Funding

Needs

- Centralized services
- Education/Awareness/Information sharing
- Need for different types of housing
- Improved resources/supports
- Building Relationships/Partnerships
- Employment opportunities

- *I think the biggest thing is the feeling of helplessness for them, which again if you [at] look brain research, if you feel unsafe, if you do not have your basic needs met, if you feel unable to affect your life, you cannot make it safe, you cannot focus on any other problems. That's part of our instinct for survival, right.*

Community 1: Strategy Development:

- Immediate Goals (3-6 months)
 - Awareness, Education & Engagement
 - Emergency Sheltering Plan
 - Expand capacity-building programs for low-income individuals and families
 - Advocacy

Strategy Development:

- Short Term Goals (6-18 months)
 - Create a Housing Link
 - Central access point for services
 - Develop relationships with landlords
 - Work with Business and Industry HR departments to develop housing plans as part of recruitment/ welcome packages
 - Critical Review of current Low-Income Housing program
 - Advocacy

Strategy Development:

- Mid Term Goals (18 months-3 years)
 - Community Housing Fund
 - Facilitate the development housing cooperatives
 - Emergency Shelter/Hostel
 - Advocacy

Strategy Development:

- Long Term Goals (3-5 years)
 - Affordable and Low-income housing (increase supply)
 - Supportive/Social Housing program
 - Transitional Housing program
 - Housing Plans for Business and Industry
 - Advocacy

Next Steps

Community 2: Building a Community Response Strategy through Community Engagement

- Effectively communicate the results of the study to community stakeholders
- Formalize the ad-hoc housing committee to clarify purpose and vision
- Prioritize issues identified in the study
- Conduct a literature review of various community models and action plans
- Develop a formal Community Action Plan Communicate this Action Plan

Questions

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