Clinicians' Network Coffee Chat:
Providing Care in Encampments

Wednesday, July 25, 2018
POLL QUESTION
HOW TO SHARE A QUESTION OR COMMENT

• Make sure your computer speakers are turned on

• Select “Raise Hand” to ask for a chance to speak; we will unmute you

• If you don’t have a microphone on your computer or don’t want to speak out loud, use the “Chat” box for comments or questions
• **Barbara DiPietro, PhD:** Senior Director of Policy, National HCH Council

• **Brian Bickford, MA, LMHC:** Central MA PATH Team Leader, Eliot Community Human Services, Worcester, MA
TODAY’S DISCUSSION

• Discuss the context of encampments and the environment we’re working in

• Identify the principles of care that guide service delivery for people living in encampments.

• Name several benefits and drawbacks to delivering care in encampments.

• Identify several strategies for creating safe spaces in encampments.

• Create open space to talk about care delivery in encampment settings
UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS IN THE U.S.

Of 192,875 people counted:

- 70% male
- 53,175 with SMI (28%)
- 42,471 with SUDs (22%)
- 15,366 veterans (8%)
- 3,170 with HIV/AIDS (2%)
- 38,252 victims of DV (20%)
- 22,257 unaccompanied youth (12%)

RISE OF ENCAMPMENTS

• Dearth of both permanent housing and shelter beds
• Shelter policies that screen out most vulnerable
• 1,342% increase in media reports since 2007
• Half had 11-50 residents; 17% had 100+ people
• 2/3 been in place 1+ year; 1/4 for 5+ years
• 4% legal; 20% semi-legal (tacitly sanctioned)

Great new report!
COMMON RESPONSES TO ENCAMPMENTS & OUR ROLE

• Criminalization: camping & food bans, arrests & citations

• Sweeps/clearings
  • No notice required in most places
  • Discarding of belongings, medications, etc. (few areas require storage)
  • Few have requirements for alternative housing

• Growing public anger & “compassion fatigue”

• Pressure for public officials to “do something”

HCH COMMUNITY ROLES:

• As health care providers
• As community partners
• As champions for change
ENCAMPMENTS: DIFFERENT FROM TRADITIONAL CARE ENVIRONMENTS

- Engaging in a much less formal environment
- Less structure and support from other employees
- More open Substance Use at times
- More or less comfortable environment for some individuals
- Less access to clinical accouterments and need items
BENEFITS TO DELIVERING CARE IN ENCAMPMENTS

• Engaging with individuals in the place where they feel most comfortable

• Less authority figures

• Appreciation for venturing into the community

• Respects autonomy, allow service providers into there home/space and can ask them to leave at anytime

• Less stigmatizing and/or traumatizing for many individuals
DRAWBACKS TO DELIVERING CARE IN ENCAMPMENTS

• Privacy and confidentiality

• Cleanliness for medical engagements

• Active substance use at times

• Less support

• Safety
CREATING SAFE SPACES

- Respect and recognition of the space we are being welcomed into
- Always be trauma informed
- Organizational policies and Procedures for entering and providing care in the community
- Be aware of your surroundings and listen to your intuition
CLINICAL STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER

- Follow the residents lead
- Be aware of when things are not working for the resident or provider
- Use your relationship as needed
- Confidentiality, confidentiality, confidentiality
- Supervision and team support
RESOURCES

U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness

→ Advancing the Dialogue (August 2015)
  • Preparation & Time for Planning & Implementation
  • Collaboration across Sectors and Systems
  • Outreach & Engagement
  • Low-barrier Paths to Permanent Housing

→ Quick Guide, Planning Checklist, Case Studies

→ Caution Needed When Considering Sanctioned Encampments or “Safe Zones” (May 2018)
QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION

- Issues/barriers to providing care?
- Approaches that work well?
- Needed training or skills development?
- What training or materials can the Council help provide?
- Other questions?

Request: Help us create a clearinghouse for best practices in encampment service delivery. Send us your policies, procedures, guidance, position statements, etc.

https://www.nhchc.org/homeless-encampments/