

‘They Had to Relearn How to Live Inside’: Perceptions of Service Providers of Factors to Successful Transition From Homeless to Sustained Housing

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PURPOSE: Transitioning out of homelessness is accompanied by client factors (Marshall & Rosenberg, 2014), system, and process factors that exist within current programming in the United States (Black, 2018). No matter the factors, clients routinely fall through the cracks and are not successful in sustaining housing long-term. Despite use of best practices (Macnaughton et al., 2016; Tsemberis, 2010) current programming may not be effective in meeting the needs of the homeless community during transition and long-term. Therefore, the objective of this study was to understand service providers’ perceptions about factors that matter for successful sustained housing for people transitioning from homelessness (PTH) to housed, to inform development of OT interventions.

DESIGN: This study is part of a larger IRB approved participatory action research project to identify supports and barriers to achieving successful sustained housing for PTH. Qualitative thematic analysis was used to explore service providers’ perceptions. Participants volunteered by responding to the recruitment email sent to local organizations working with PTH.

METHOD: We used semi-structured 1:1 interviews of participants (n=3) to explore what service workers believe provide: 1) the greatest opportunity for successfully sustaining housing; and 2) that create the greatest obstacles.

RESULTS: Overarching themes emerged of factors that support or obstruct a PTH to achieve successful housing long-term. These include relearning housed occupations, knowledge and access to resources, and individualization of services, among others.

CONCLUSION: Multiple gaps are identified in support services for PTH and the findings of this study can be used to inform targeted OT interventions.

IMPACT STATEMENT: Housing transition services rarely include OT, however, the services and skills necessary to be successful in sustained housing for PTH fall within the scope of OT practice.

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