

## Bridging the Transition From Homelessness: A Social Justice Framework to Guide the Practice of OTs

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**PURPOSE:** A growing number of occupational therapists support individuals who experience homelessness in their traditional occupational therapy roles in community and inpatient mental health, or in direct service positions dedicated to working with this population. In recent years, occupational therapy research related to homelessness has increased significantly. An occupational lens has the potential for supporting housing stability and community integration for individuals who are leaving homelessness. Resources to support research and practice are needed. In this workshop, we will present the Bridging the Transition Framework (BTF), developed to support occupational therapists in their research and practice efforts across the trajectory of homelessness to housing.

**DESIGN:** The BTF was developed from the findings of empirical research conducted by our team with persons who were unhoused, and housed following homelessness (Marshall, Gewurtz et al., 2022). Themes from this qualitative study were translated into a draft framework, which was presented to occupational therapy researchers and practitioners in middle to high income countries internationally. Feedback generated from these consultations was used to refine this framework (Marshall, Cooke et al., 2021). A refined version of this framework was released in 2020 in the form of a practice guide, and has been since distributed broadly (Marshall, Cooke et al., 2020). From this, our team developed a one-day workshop, which has been disseminated to occupational therapists and students in two provinces in Canada. In this pre-conference workshop, we will present the BTF using video case studies with persons with lived experiences of homeless to illustrate each framework component. Attendees will be engaged in activities that will help them to understand the components of the framework, and how they might be applied across a range of research and practice scenarios with individuals who are unhoused, housed following homelessness, or living in housing precarity. Once all components of the framework have been presented and applied in workshop activities, attendees will be engaged in discussions regarding future applications of the BTF and possibilities for collaborating on research and practice efforts in this area.

**RESULTS:** The findings of research generated during the process of developing the BTF will be presented throughout this workshop. Implications for future research and practice will be explored.

**CONCLUSION:** Homelessness is growing in high and middle income countries internationally. In response, a growing number of occupational therapists are conducting research and practicing in the area of homelessness. Research and practice tools are needed to support these efforts to improve the lives of this population from an occupational perspective. The BTF has the potential to inform future research in this area, inform policy by describing the unique contributions that occupational therapists can make in the lives of persons who experience homelessness, and provide guidance for occupational therapists who are supporting this complex population. Since the BTF has been disseminated for the first time in 2020, it has been used to structure fieldwork placements, hire occupational therapists in new positions, and has been used to educate occupational therapists new to this area of practice. We anticipate that this framework will continue to influence research, practice and policy in the future as it is disseminated further. Mostly, we hope that it will continue to be used to describe the unique and important contributions that occupational therapists can and do make in the lives of individuals across the trajectory of homelessness to housing.

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