

Impact of a housing first approach on perceptions of self- determination

Topic Area: Voices of Housing first

Presentation summary

Self-determination, as described by women participating in a supportive housing program, was explored through a qualitative research study. Results showed that how women defined self-determination and independent decision-making were highly influenced by the Housing First structure of the program. This presentation will outline the program model, review the research design, and discuss the implications of the results.

Presenters

- ▶ Andrea Dakin, PhD, MA
 - ▶ Sr. Director of Program Development, AIDS Foundation of Chicago
 - ▶ Role: Lead Researcher
- ▶ Britt Shawver, JD
 - ▶ CEO, Housing Opportunities for Women
 - ▶ Role: Program Administrator
- ▶ Dave Thomas, MSW
 - ▶ VP of Community Partnerships, All Chicago
 - ▶ Role: Presentation Facilitator

Session objectives

Objective 1: Articulate Housing First elements that support women's sense of self-determination.

Objective 2: Identify additional strategies that could be incorporated into a Housing First model to support participant independence and decision-making.

Objective 3: Increase knowledge regarding self-determination and its applicability to Housing First programs serving homeless and formerly homeless individuals.

Background information

Homelessness in Chicago

- ▶ One List: 8,957 (as of 2/27/18)
- ▶ 3,252 Female (includes women & children)
- ▶ 1744 Unaccompanied Females

Permanent Housing

- ▶ 135 Projects
- ▶ 4,832 Units



Background info, cont.

Permanent Housing with Short-term Support

- ▶ Program in which the supportive services are temporary but the housing is permanent
- ▶ At the end of program, the participant assumes the lease and the housing subsidy transitions to another participant
- ▶ Time limited to two-years
- ▶ Implemented as part of Chicago's CoC Program Models Chart prior to the availability of Rapid Re-Housing funding

The word 'HOW' is rendered in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters are composed of overlapping colored shapes: the 'H' is olive green, the 'O' is blue with a green-to-blue gradient, and the 'W' is red. The background features abstract geometric shapes in various shades of blue and white, creating a modern, layered effect.

HOW

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES. REBUILD LIVES.

Housing Opportunities for Women (HOW)

HOW's mission is empowering women, children and families to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness by providing safe, affordable housing and supportive services.

In 2017 HOW served more than 1000 clients in over 400 unites of housing located across Chicago



Harm Reduction and Housing First

HOW is dedicated to finding permanent solutions to the complex needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness, rooting its program and service delivery deeply in the Housing First Model.



Harm Reduction and Housing First

- HOW does not restrict access to its housing based on substance use nor do clients risk losing their housing because of it.
- HOW embraces the Harm Reduction model and encourages clients to explore ways to best manage their addictions.
- Several case managers are CADAC certified, all are trained in harm reduction, and two supervising LCSWs ensure that clinical support and referrals are available.

Measurement and Impact

- Over 95% of HOW households maintain permanent housing annually
- 67% of HOW clients maintained, obtained, or increased their household income last year
- 88% of the children in HOW's Academic Coaching Program maintain a grade point average of 2.5 (B letter grade) or higher
- 89% of clients say, "HOW is helping me make progress toward my goals."

Singles 2 and Families 2

Subsidies support individuals and families for up to two years

In addition to housing a comprehensive continuum of resources is available, including intensive case management, employment and education support, health care navigation, benefits coordination, and essential life skills training.



S2/F2 Program Impact: Long term stability

In the last four years, 107 clients (out of 188 clients) have exited to permanent destinations, which include:

- 3 own unit with no ongoing housing subsidy
- 44 rental unit with no ongoing housing subsidy
- 14 rental unit with other ongoing housing subsidy
- 6 other permanent housing for formerly homeless persons
- 23 staying with family permanently
- 17 staying with friends permanently

Research Study approach

Why examine self-determination?
Why women? Why Singles Two and Family Two?

- ▶ Previously a HUD required outcome
- ▶ More likely to be parents; additional burden of societal gender inequities
- ▶ S2/F2: Considered permanent housing by Chicago's PMC with no requirement of a disability



Approach, Cont.

Conceptualizations of Self-determination

- ▶ Freedom/autonomy: the right to choose
- ▶ Capacity: knowledge, skills and abilities
- ▶ Personal psychology: self-awareness, intrinsic motivation and psychological drive
- ▶ Environment: culture, resources, opportunities, and human service organizations

Approach, cont.

The specific research questions were:

1. How do homeless women in a HUD-funded housing program define self-determination and what does it mean to them?
2. How does participating in a HUD-funded program impact their perceptions of self-determination and their practice of it?
3. What is the applicability and relevance of current conceptualizations as they apply to homeless women?

Approach, cont.

Methodology

- ▶ **Design:** Qualitative research study
- ▶ **Sampling:**
 - ▶ Purposive convenience sample
 - ▶ S2/F2 case manager assistance
- ▶ **Data Collection:**
 - ▶ Twenty-one individual semi-structured interviews
 - ▶ One member check session
- ▶ **Data Analysis:** General thematic induction

Characteristics

years homeless

Range: 4 mo to 25 years

Average: 6 years

times homeless

Range: 1- 5 or more

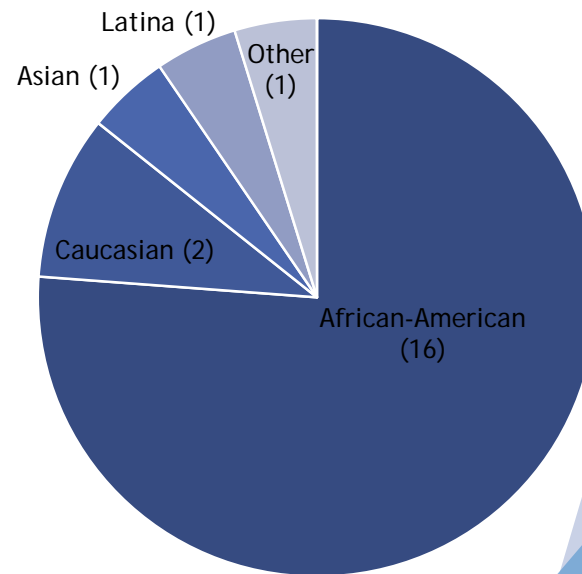
Average: 2.7 times

Age

Range: 21-57 yrs

Average: 45 yrs

Race/Ethnicity

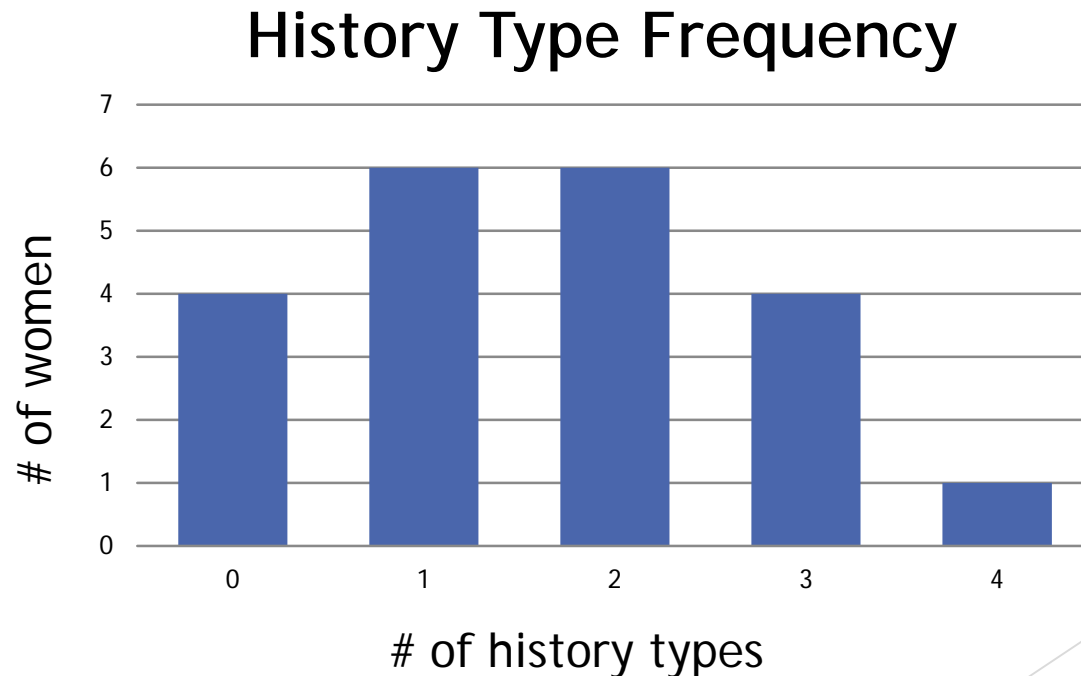


Characteristics, cont.

Identified histories of:

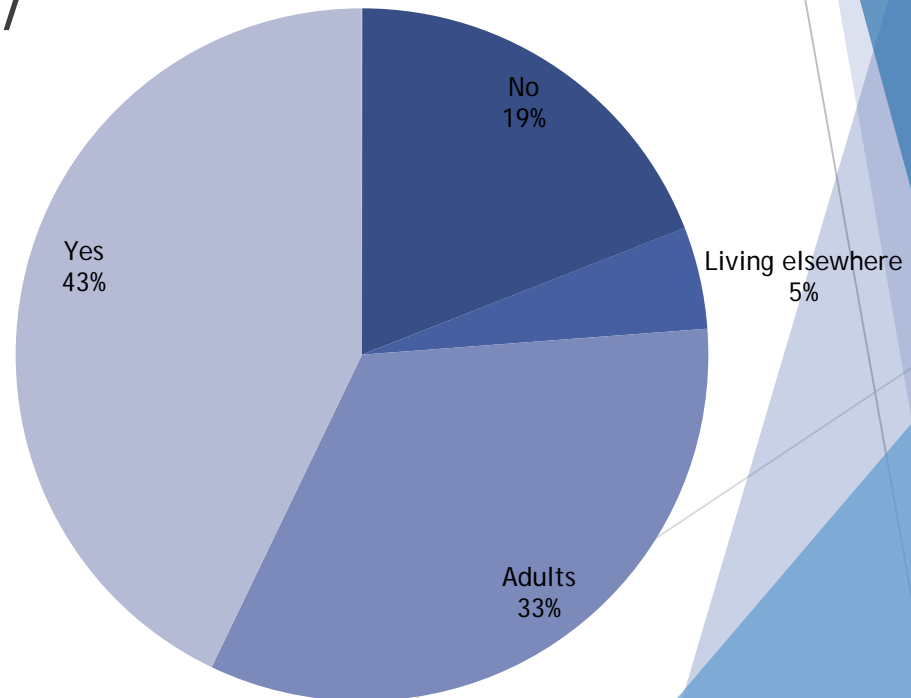
Drug/alcohol abuse: 9 Mental illness: 5

Criminal background: 7 IPV/CSA: 10



Characteristics, cont.

- ▶ Presence of children in the household
- ▶ No: 4
- ▶ No, children living elsewhere: 1
- ▶ No, adult children: 7
- ▶ Yes: 9



Results

- ▶ All women defined themselves as self-determined
- ▶ Prevalent themes of:
 - ▶ Goal Achievement
 - ▶ Independence
 - ▶ Decision-making



HOW clients cooking skills through our Peer Chef program.

Results, cont.

Do not view themselves as homeless

“I remember the day that I got my keys, so I don’t consider myself as being homeless or in a housing program or any of that. I just consider myself as having subsidized housing, low-income housing.”

“Not at all. I love my apartment. I work 2 to 10 and when I get off now I got an apartment to go to. My light is on. My gas is on. I got food. I got a nice apartment. I have nice things. No, even though it’s a housing program-no, that’s my crib.”

Results, cont.

Achieved goal of exiting homelessness

“I always thought homeless was like being on the street, you know what I’m saying? Being on the street and living on the street, so when you say am I any different I’m not on the street.”

“This is not considered being homeless because you’re still paying your own rent. You’re still paying your way. It’s way different from being homeless, much more different than being homeless ‘cause you’re paying rent, you’re paying bills, you’re taking care of yourself, you’re buying your own food.

Results, cont.

Independent and self-sufficient / pay rent and bills

“The difference is I have responsibility now. I’m a reliable person now....I have to pay bills now to keep a roof over my head. You know, I got a roof over my head now... it’s like I’m living productive. It’s like I’m living productive now.”

“My bills are paid. And, if they don’t get paid, they’ve got to [inaudible] it’s gonna get paid. My lights never got shut off, my gas never got shut off, I haven’t got kicked out of an apartment.”

Results, cont.

Personal decisions and goals

"I don't even look at it as a program to be perfectly honest with you. I just look at it as if I just have an extra support system pretty much. They're not haggling over you, knocking on your door every day-what are you doing?"

"I'm just determined not to go back. I'm determined not to go back to where I came from. My goal is to move forward, to go forward. Not to take any steps back."

Results, cont.

Personal goals

“not going back to the shelter. Keeping my job no matter what happens there. Making sure my bills are paid.
Making sure my children are takin’ care of.
That’s about it.”



Discussion

Reflections on what was presented:

- ▶ Is this surprising?
- ▶ Is this useful?
- ▶ Is it in alignment with our expectations of the impact of Housing First?
- ▶ Is there value in studying the psychological impact of Housing First in addition to housing and health outcomes?

Discussion, cont.

Impact of Housing First:

- ▶ Does this support the continued use of Housing First?
- ▶ How do these results influence program design?
- ▶ How can this information be used to ensure that Housing First approaches are consumer focused?

Discussion, cont.

Potential avenues for additional study:

- ▶ What else would be useful to know regarding Housing First and self-determination?
- ▶ Are there ways to incorporate this into program design, advocacy efforts, individual level-interventions, system approaches, etc.?

Thank you

Contact information:

Andrea Dakin, AIDS Foundation of Chicago

Email: adakin@aidschicago.org

Phone: 312-334-0956

Britt Shawver, Housing Opportunities for Women

Email: bshawver@how-inc.org

Phone: 773-465-5770

Dave Thomas, All Chicago

Email: dthomas@allchicago.org

Phone: 312-379-0301