Housing First: One Road to Recovery

Jino Distasio & Joe Hatch
Today’s Discussion

• What is Housing First?
• What is the At Home Chez Soi Project?
• The Housing First in Winnipeg
• Joe’s Story
• Early Findings and Study Outcomes
Housing First
Pathways to Housing
Source: http://www.psmag.com/business-economics/the-homemakers-3843/
Housing First NYC

- Housing First is a mental health intervention that provides participants with secure housing while making available a range of individualized services and supports.
What is Housing First?

- Housing First began in New York city in 1992 with *Pathways to Housing*.
- P2H supports persons who were homeless with mental health and addictions issues.
- The approach is largely simple “provide housing first, and then combine that housing with supportive services and treatment services” (Tsemberis, 2010 p.5).
Housing First Key Terms

• **Consumer Driven** – clients are their own decision makers (for housing, clinical and other supports)
  • Two requirements (participants must agree to one weekly apartment visit; and second must agree to the terms and conditions of a standard lease).

• **Harm Reduction** – focus is on reducing the negative consequences of harmful behaviors (drugs, addictions or untreated psychiatric symptoms)
Cost of Housing First?

- Psychiatric Hospital: $1185
- Emergency Room $519
- Jail $164
- Shelter: $73
- Pathways Model $57

Estimated Costs of the New York Pathways Model
Housing First Models

ACT - High Need

- Recovery-oriented ACT team
- Client/staff ratio of 10:1 or less and includes a psychiatrist and nurse
- Program staff are closely involved in hospital admissions and discharges
- Teams meet daily and include at least one peer specialist as staff
- Seven days a week, 24 hr crisis coverage

ICM - Moderate Need

- Intensive case management for a minimum of one year once housed
- Client/staff ratio of 20:1 or less
- Integrated efforts across multiple workers and agencies
- Workers accompany clients to appointments
- Centralized assignment and monthly case conferences
- Seven days a week, 12 hours coverage
The National Homelessness Project: At Home/Chez Soi
At Home/Chez Soi

With $110 million* in funding, The At Home/Chez Soi is the largest research demonstration project of its kind in the Canada. The goal is to find the best ways to help those presently living with mental illness and without shelter.

*85% of funding supports housing and services
At Home Objective

- The Act Home/Chez Soi project’s is overall objective:
  - Conduct research that yields relevant evidence about what service and system interventions best achieve **housing stability, improved health and well-being** for those who are homeless and mentally ill
MHCC: Unique Site Focus

• **Vancouver**: people with a mental illness who struggle with substance abuse and addictions issues
• **Winnipeg**: urban aboriginal population
• **Toronto**: ethno-cultural diversity including immigrants who are non-English speaking
• **Montreal**: different mental health services provided to homeless people in Quebec
• **Moncton**: very rapidly growing small city with a shortage of mental health services; pilot has a focus on the rural population
Does Housing First *house* people effectively?

Does Housing First reduce involvement in the *criminal justice system*?

Does Housing First reduce the number of *emergency room visits*?

Does Housing First impact the number of people who can *secure paid work*?
At Home/Chez Soi
Winnipeg Site
Winnipeg Site

- 505 individuals in the project
- 275 in Housing First
- 230 were in Treatment as Usual (i.e. control group receiving existing supports and services)
- Providing housing stability is the most important outcome of the At Home/Chez Soi project
At Home Service Teams

‘Wi Che Win’*  
(From the Cree: “To walk along side”)  
Low to Moderate Needs  
Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata  
Strength/ Growth  
Solution & Trauma Focused  
Choice  
Respect  
Resources

‘Ni Apin’ *  
(From the Cree: ‘I am sitting at Home’)  
Low to Moderate Needs  
Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre  
Supported housing and Day Programs  
Seven Sacred Teachings  
Medicine Wheel

ACT  
(Cree: Wiisocotatiwin “To assist in finding hidden gifts”)  
High Needs  
Mount Carmel Centre  
Shared care intervention  
Team Intervention  
Choice

Winnipeg Site: Recognizing and Celebrating Aboriginal Diversity  
 ► Elders  
 ► Sharing Circles  
 ► Lived Experience
Ongoing Support and Services
The Aboriginal Way
Joe’s Story
Who is in At Home/Chez Soi?

- Basic Demographics
- Average age: 38.5 years old
- 64% Males; 36% females
- 70% single; 47% have children
- 30% have high school or higher
- 70% are Aboriginal
- 37.5% have been homeless for more than 10 years
- 50% lived, at some point, in foster care
- 50% earned less than $300 per month
- 91% were unemployed at the start of the study
Who is in At Home/Chez Soi?

• All participants have one or more serious mental health issue.
• 35% reported symptoms of moderate to high suicide risk.
• Over 90% have at least one chronic physical health condition.
• 46% have substance abuse/addiction problems
• Many participants faced multiple challenges
How Does Homeless Cost: Joe Hatch Case Study (7 month period)

**Homeless Costs**

Emergency Rooms:
10 visits x $519 = $5,190

Jail: 90 days x $164 = $1360

Shelter: 30 days x $73 = $2,190

Total: $8740 for 130 days!

**Housing First Costs Comparison**

Pathways: 130 days x $57 = $6840
At Home: 130 days x $43.40 = $5642

Savings? $1900 (Pathways) $3098 (At Home)
At Home Housing
Housing in At Home/Chez Soi

Overview

Number Housed

- Around 1000 participants housed
- Of those housed, 68% still in first home; 24% in second home; 8% in third or fourth home
- 142 are unavailable to be housed

Housing First model

- Provides immediate access to housing as the first step
- Based on participant choice; recovery oriented
- At Home/Chez Soi uses rent supplements plus access to Intensive Case Management or Assertive Community Treatment Services
Characteristics of the housing model

• Slightly different housing models used in each site to reflect local context

• All housing teams responsible to engage landlords and procure housing; help manage available housing stock

• Variation in size of teams and organizational structure of teams; interaction with service teams and participants e.g. division between roles (Vancouver) or joint/shared roles (Montreal)
Lessons: Securing Housing

- Rent supplements on At Home/Chez Soi
- Built on principle of housing choice for all participants
- Range of housing types needed
- Project includes: Bachelor, one bedroom, some two bedroom, congregate settings, a few social housing units
- Challenge to find and secure range of affordable, good quality housing
- Our population often faces stigma and discrimination in finding housing
Lessons: Housing Market Primer

Vacancy Rates At Home Cities

Source: Rental Market Report: Canadian Highlights; CMHC Fall 2011
Average One Bedroom Rents

Source: Rental Market Report: Canadian Highlights; CMHC Fall 2011
Lessons: Housing Market Primer

Major Repairs (2006)

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census
Lessons: Housing Market Primer

Percent Needing Major Repairs Built Before 1945

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census
Over 260 private landlords and property management companies involved in the project

Significant work to engage landlords and sustain their involvement over time

Can be challenging to keep landlords engaged when dealing with evictions, damages, etc.

Strategies to engage include:

• offering supports and services to landlords
• holding landlord lunches
• recognizing landlord contributions

Lessons: Engaging landlords
“The At Home clients come with ample support and funding attached, as well as a plan to prevent eviction. Often, they’re less trouble than regular tenants. The At Home people pay their rent on time and they are coached on how to live in harmony with their neighbours.” Comments on At Home/Chez Soi from Paula McDougall, Office manager at a building in Toronto. (Source: Toronto Star Dec 27, 2011)

Wally Ruban, operations manager at a company which once rented 10 suites to At Home participants, said the company has pulled out of the program. "I think it's fallen flat on its face" (Source: Winnipeg Free Press Dec 5, 2011).
Lessons: Sustaining Housing

• Ongoing work to support participants’ transition to housing; involves service and housing

• Successes: over 68% of participants housed still in first apartment; have examples of participants who are re-engaging with their neighbours and community

• Challenges: Vulnerable population (e.g. Apartments taken over; concerns with behaviours)

Living Room: When you're living on the street you can never relax. You never know if somebody is going to try and rob or hurt you. Now I can sit in my apartment and not be afraid. I can watch TV, choose who I want to be with, and basically have a normal life.

Photo from the Focusing the Frame exhibit
Re-housing

- Significant time and effort goes into supporting the few participants that need to be re-housed.
- Re-housing is an expected part of Housing First.
- Across the project, participants have been re-housed 400 times.
- Evictions/risk of evictions common reason for re-housing.
- Teams work with participants when they move to determine what will be different in the new housing.
September 2009

Legend
Participant Addresses by Number of Participants
- 0 - 2
- 3 - 4
- 5 - 6
- 7 - 8
- 9 - 10

IUS Inner City Boundary
March 2012

Legend
Participant Addresses by Number of Participants
- 0 - 2
- 3 - 4
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IUS Inner City Boundary
Time Spent in Stable Housing

Proportion of Time in Stable Housing Year One

- 1Y average
- 12M
- 9M
- 6M
- 3M
- Baseline

Legend:
- HF
- TAU
Time Spent in Stable Housing Over Year One

- 3M
- 6M
- 9M
- 12M

HF: High Functioning
TAU: Treatment as Usual
This is the only tangible thing I have to hang onto. I wear it always and it signifies faith and hope.
In the first year of the study Housing First in Winnipeg cost $15,400 per person.
Overall, Housing First participants used $11,659 less in services than our comparison group.

Housing First Cost $3760
Our High Use Group consumed $25,830 less in services than our comparison group.

Housing First Cost $ -10,435
Less use of homeless related services

Significant differences between HF and TAU in 12 months of service use (per 1,000 people)
- 7,497 fewer nights in institutions (largely residential addiction treatment).
- 42,078 fewer nights in shelters.
- 6,904 fewer nights in transitional housing or group homes.
- 732 fewer emergency department visits.
- 460 fewer police detentions.
- 1,260 fewer outpatient visits.
- 34,178 fewer drop-in centre visits.
This picture tells me that when something gets in your way you can let it or you can move on. It helps me understand that I have a choice.
Summary

- Winnipeg has built an invaluable delivery infrastructure
- At Home staff have been able to reach this population and earn their trust
- Embraces Aboriginal culture in its everyday work
- People with lived experience are engaged
- Legacy of well-trained workers, landlords,
- Valuable research and insight
- Inter-sectorial partners
- This is a Manitoba success story
- The legacy must not include undoing these gains
Thank-you!

• **Meegwitch!**

• **At Home/Chez Soi Project Team:**

  - **National Project Lead** – this position was held by Jayne Barker, Ph.D. from 2008-2011 (formerly with the Mental Health Commission of Canada). The current project lead is Cameron Keller, VP Mental Health and Homelessness, Mental Health Commission of Canada

  - **National Research Lead** - Paula Goering, RN Ph.D., Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and University of Toronto

  - **Project Team** - also includes approximately 40 investigators from across Canada and the U.S. In addition there are 5 site coordinators (in each city where the study is carried out) and numerous lead service and housing providers as well as persons with lived experience.

  - **Local Site Team** – Dr. Jino Distasio and Dr. Jitender Sareen (Co-PI’s); Corinne Isaak, MSc, PHEc Winnipeg Research Coordinator

  
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