Response vs. Prevention

Shelter staff perspectives on Shelter Effectiveness

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Agenda

1. Background

2. Limitations

3. Research Question

4. What I asked:
   - Question 1
   - Question 2

5. So What?

6. Moving Forward

Background

- Academic evidence supports the shift away from emergency response towards **prevention**

- But, what about the perspective of emergency response staff themselves (e.g. shelter workers)?

Limitations

- Only **one specific perspective** explored

- Sample representativeness

- Different views of '**effectiveness**'

- Researcher bias

Research Question

*"What are **shelter staffs' perspectives** on the use of shelters to address homelessness?"*

What I asked

Question 1:
What are the **needs** of those experiencing homelessness?

Question 2:
How **effective** are shelters in:

- meeting the **individual's needs?**
- addressing homelessness in the **long-term**?
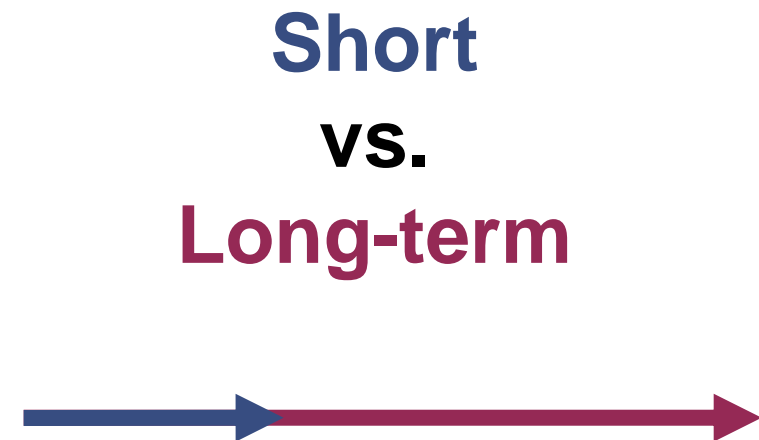
Question 1

"What are the Needs?"

What I found

Analysis

1. Type of Needs

| Materialistic |
| Social |
| Psychological |

2. Timeframe of Needs

Short
vs.
Long-term

3 Types of Needs

Materialistic	Social	Psychological
• Basic necessities* • Housing • Resources* • Transitional housing	• Additional supports* • Integration into society • Life skills • Sense of community	• Safety or security* • Sense of control* • Stability*

Needs that shelter workers believe are being addressed

Short- vs. Long-term Needs

Short-term needs

- Basic necessities*

Long-term needs

- Additional supports*
- Housing
- Integration into society
- Life skills
- Resources*
- Safety or security*
- Sense of community*
- Sense of control*
- Stability*
- Transitional shelters

Needs that shelter workers believe are being addressed

Question 1

Question 2

*"How effective are shelters in **meeting the needs** and **addressing** homelessness in the long-term ?"*

What I found

- **2** out of **13** participants: "shelters are very effective"

- **11** out of **13** participants: "it depends…"

Quote

"The **de-institutionalization** of mental health services 25 years ago led to a lot of those people being inadequately supported… So when things fell apart, they ended up relying on the next institutions that were there, which were shelters. So **shelters had to beef up their resources** to help support these people."
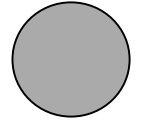
- Participant

Question 2

Analysis

Not Effective	Effective

Not Effective

- Changing use of shelters
- Client invisibility
- 'Comfortable' environment

Effective

- It depends
- Serves its purpose

So What?

Moving Forward

1. Recognize and engage unlikely partner

2. Be on the same page as frontline workers

3. Redefine the role of shelters within the bigger picture of ending homelessness

4. There will always be a need for emergency response; however, it doesn't need to be the primary response