

The Alex Housing First Programs

Get Rec'd!

Client engagement strategies for
recreational programming and
the benefits for housing stability

By Sebastian Benavides and Megan Coben

What is The Alex

The Alex – Housing First Programs:

HomeBase, Pathways to Housing, Prelude and Abbeydale
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Guiding Principles:

1. Housing First
2. Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) and Intensive Case Management
3. Harm Reduction

Our population:

- 400 individuals across 3 ACT, 2 ICM teams and placed based housing
- Criteria: minimum of 6 months homeless and mental illness and/or addiction
- Ages 18 and older
- Scattered site housing or permanent supportive housing

Learning Objectives

Goal: To highlight the value of recreational programming to frontline staff and agency administrators, and to frame this value in terms of healthy social connections and housing stability.

Learning Objectives:

- What is recreation
- How to facilitate a successful group
- How to engage clients with programming
- Reducing barriers
- Benefits of recreation and social connections

Recreation at the Alex

Programs

- Peer Support
- Art Therapy
- Bowling
- Positive Attitudes Toward Healing (PATH)
- Wellness
- Give Back Tuesday
- Illness Management Recovery (IMR)
- Community Lunch
- Fun and Fitness
- GED Study Hall
- Smudging
- Cultural Supports
- Lunchbox Collective
- Money Management
- Computer Class
- Lifeline 2 Literacy
- Fishing
- Healthy Living
- Yoga
- Music Group
- Thanksgiving Dinner, Christmas Party, Family Events
- Baseball Games

Example of a Successful Group

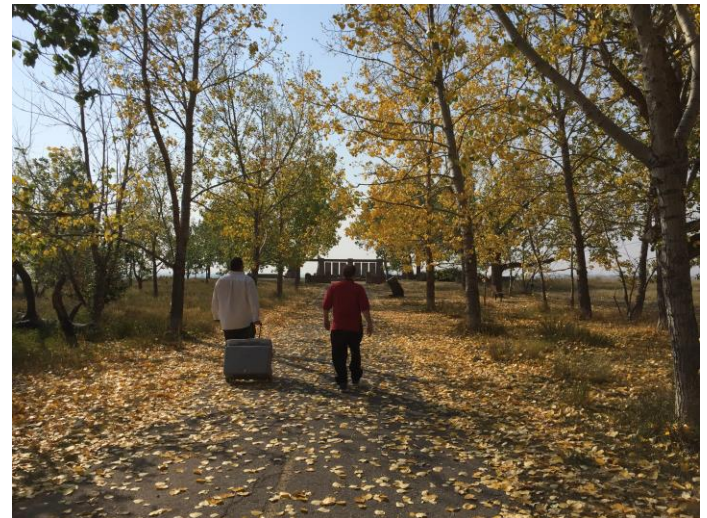
Lunchbox Collective

- Accessible
- Fulfils basic needs
- Community
- Routine
- Autonomy



Other Types of Recreation

- Going to a park
- Festivals
- Shopping
- Farmers markets
- City programs
- Fee assistance passes
- Prescription to Get Active



How to Facilitate a Successful Group

- Assess, plan, implement, evaluate
- Strengths based
- Client centred
- Client driven
- Opportunity
- Resources
- Empowerment
- Staff and client buy in



Client Barriers

- Isolation / anxiety
- Mental health / physical health
- No buy in
- Willingness to participate
- Substance use
- Transportation
- Shame and vulnerability
- Money



Agency and Staff Barriers

- Budget
- Time restrains
- Not enough staff
- Resources
- Willingness to participate
- Client boundaries
- Balance between clinical work and recreation



Solutions

- Meet people where they are at
- Case managers attending groups / introducing people to recreation team
- Rec team can check in on mental health
- Harm reduction approach
- Facilitate initial transportation
- Free / low cost events
- Attendance without participation is still a success
- Use groups as an opportunity for casework visits

Benefits

Physical health

- Reduce cardiovascular and respiratory risk
- Reduce the risk of physical complications secondary to disability
- Improve the general physical and perceptual motor functioning of individuals with a disability



Benefits

Psychosocial health

- Capacity for HAPPINESS
- Reduce depression and anxiety
- Improve coping behaviour
- Reduce stress level
- Improve self-control
- Increase self-concept, self-esteem, and adjustment to disability
- Emotion regulation
- Improve social skills, socialization, cooperation, and interpersonal interactions
- Reduce self-abusive and inappropriate behaviours



Benefits

Cognitive functioning

- Increase or maintain general cognitive functioning
- Increase or maintain short and long term memory
- Decrease confusion and disorientation
- Increase or maintain communication and language skills



Benefits

Personal and Life Satisfaction

- Increase life and leisure satisfaction and perceived quality of life
- Increase social support
- Increase community integration, community satisfactions and community self-efficacy



Stats

But what does all this have to do with housing stability?

We compared a sample of our clients who are consistently involved in recreation programs, defined by attending at least one group a week for a period of at least one month or more.

We found that these individuals experienced **half as many instances of eviction and non-renewal of leases**, compared to those who were not engaged with the programs.

Recommendation and Encouragement

- Be person centered
- Utilize community programs and low cost events
- Be prepared groups might not always work
- Incorporate recreation goals into case plans
- Don't give up!



Thank You!

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