



Mapping Homelessness in Toronto

CAEH Conference Presentation

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Monica Weber, Carter Tongs & Anna Kopec

School of Public Policy and Administration

Carleton University

Outline

Context

Purpose and motivation of study

Research design & methods

Early findings

Future research plans

Context

Complexity of services

- Leaving many services invisible
- Leaving many services inaccessible without specific criteria being met
- Burden of navigating the system
- Services vary from area to area
- Reliance on Case Managers to be knowledgeable and transfer information about services

Siloed services

- Lack of integration
- Forcing individuals to access multiple services at once – (?)
- Discretionary

Services concentrated in certain areas

- Those outside of those areas less known/visible
- Not accessible for those experiencing deep poverty

Purpose & Motivation

- Map services available
 - Not just immediate services (shelters, drop-ins) but also programming, washrooms, OW offices, etc.
 - Have all the information in one place
 - Recognition of 'holes' in services provided in certain areas
- Create a platform emphasizing transparency for all
 - With concise information – services available, accessibility, hours, barriers to access
 - Service users not relying on Case Managers or Staff for knowledge of services
- Create a platform to make referrals to relevant services easier
 - For service providers to more easily provide referrals



Research Design

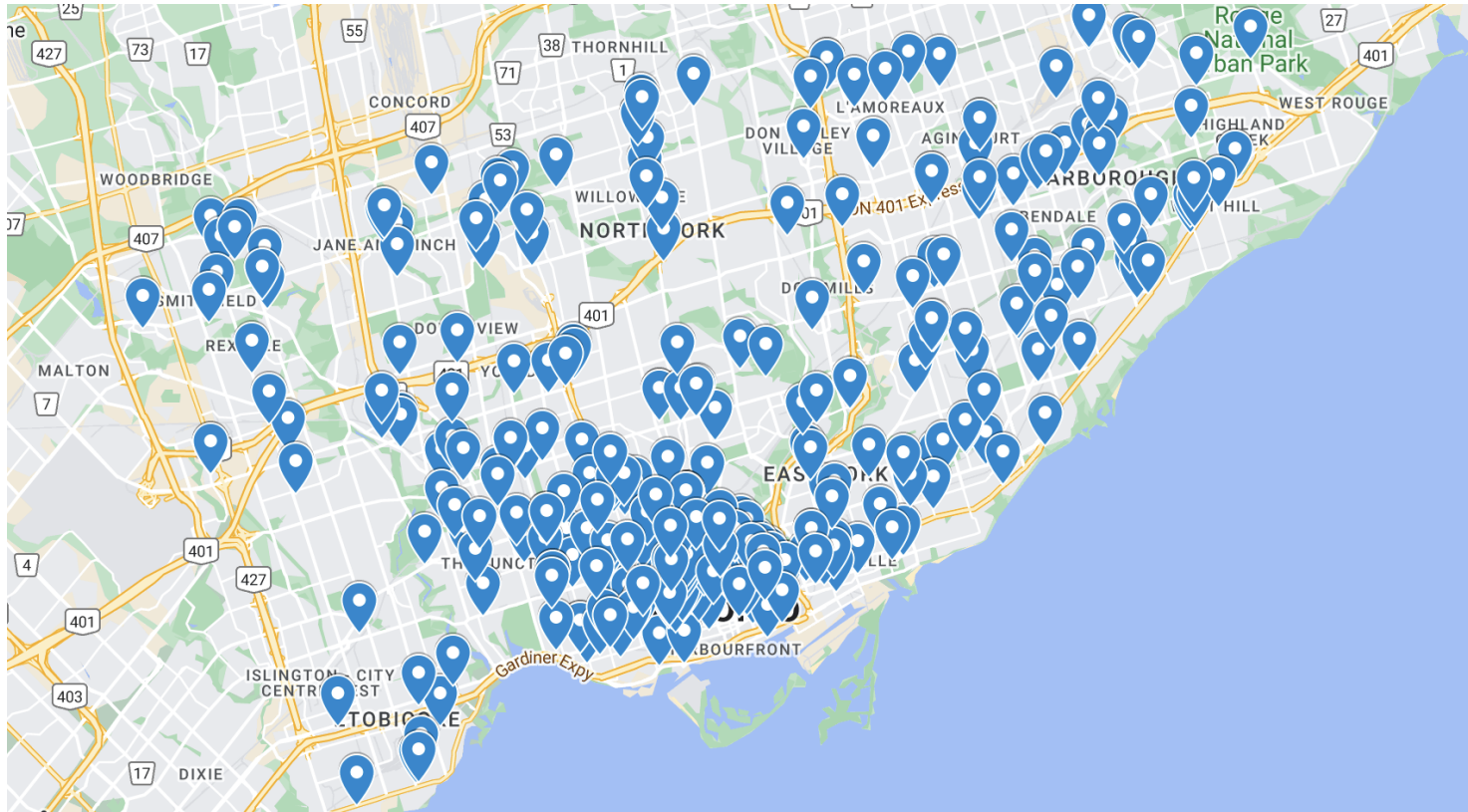
- Online data collection
 - Categorized for consistency
 - Initial list of all services including the name, services offered, contact, address (with longitude and latitude)
 - Mainly from 211, organization websites, etc.
- List of services
 - Creation of tags about the services being offered
 - Tags included:
 - Housing Services
 - Shelters
 - Income Services
 - Nourishment
 - Social Services
 - Mental Health and Addictions
 - And more....




Research Design

- Focus groups
 - Asking Service Users about their needs and experiences accessing various services
 - Recognizing that in different areas, experiences of Service Users are profoundly different
 - Outcomes for gaining independence directly related to resources available to Service Users
- Confirmation of list
 - Using data from focus groups to confirm our list of services
 - Consider how the information should be presented
 - How/where individuals are accessing the system
 - How/where Service Users are experiencing gaps to essential services
- Google MyMap
 - Provides visual tool to reference where services are located in relationship to their location
 - Quick reference for availability of services in their area


Preliminary Findings: Google MyMap



>400 services thus far, working with 211 to increase programming



Preliminary Findings (Map)

- Concentration of services
 - Amount of services
 - Lack of information online
 - Accessibility
 - Up to date information
 - Variation in the information (online)
 - Different definitions/terminology
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Focus Group Findings

Experiences with Service Workers

- Potential for gaps in knowledge of Services
- May not have Lived Experience
- May be unavailable due to heavy workload
- May be burned out and have limited amounts of compassion
- Negative interactions with service providers reduce willingness to access services
- Conflicting information
 - May have differing levels of awareness of helpful/necessary services
 - Discretionary access to Services – Services may be available to some and not others
 - Valuable information often more available through word of mouth between Service Users
- Access to information - Newcomers
 - Newcomers to country have specific needs that may not be completely understood
 - Newcomers to area may be disoriented when transferred to new area



Focus Group Findings

Services may be:

- Unknown
- Unhelpful
- Unclear in their presentation
- Unavailable
- Substandard
- Inaccessible
- Retraumatizing
- Service Users feedback regarding gaps in services may not be taken seriously



Focus Group Findings

Lack of understanding the impact loss of control over choice or availability of services may impact in the following ways:

- Forced transferring of locations may mean losing valuable services/resources
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Doctors
 - Dentists
 - Safe spaces
 - Routines
- Need to rebuild a trusted network
- Need to recreate purpose based on different services available
- Physical challenges of transporting belongings
- May lead to emotional impacts that are not fully understood by service workers
 - Disorientation, hopelessness, failure to thrive, or grief
 - May cause Service Workers to interpret Service User as 'not trying'
 - May impact level of engagement/support from Service Workers



Focus Group Findings

Emotional Impact

- No sense of purpose
 - Disorientation
 - Despair
 - Hopelessness
 - Isolation
 - Learned helplessness
- Service Users who could see positive steps towards independence benefited greatly
 - Sense of purpose
 - Oriented towards goals
 - Excited
 - Content
 - Worked as a team with other Service Users

Noticed the dichotomy of hopelessness and 'Won the Lottery' attitudes between Service Users

- With limited access to Services and Resources
- Transparent access to Services and Resources




Focus Group Findings

Transparent access to services and resources leads to self-determination, support, and hope (all necessary parts of the recovery process)



Focus Group Findings

What service users told us about sharing the information they require:

- Pamphlets (district/neighbourhood specific)
 - Map – Printed and colour Coded (district/neighbourhood specific)
 - Website
 - App
 - Multiple languages
 - **THE NEED FOR THIS INFORMATION TO BE MORE AVAILABLE**
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Future Research Plan

- Continue to add to existing list
 - Programming
 - ANYTHING WE GET FROM FOCUS GROUPS
- Send list to service providers for confirmation
 - Transparency around the services offered (and those not offered)
- Reaching out to tech companies
 - Platform



Questions
for you!
(the
audience)

- Any ideas about a platform?
 - Given some pre-existing ones like Chalmers, 211, Toronto Central Healthline
- Any ideas about networks to tap into to share the list of services?

Thank you!

All advice/ideas
welcome!