

# STREET OUTREACH TO HOUSING

CAEH 2019

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# A Few Short Words About Orgcode

A band of merry misfits hell-bent on ending homelessness, promoting social justice, and living our values.

Work takes us across Canada, the US, and Australia. In a typical year we will work with several hundred communities on social change, practice, and policy.

We believe in being catalysts for better social outcomes, using data and evidence, and training that doesn't suck.





**The Merry Misfits of OrgCode**



**ERIN:** Minnesota based youth specialist; SPDAT; coordinated entry



**DICK:** Ontario based community activist, harm reduction, inclusion



**IAIN:** Ontario based OrgCode leader; CEO; travel & presenting extraordinaire



**TRACY:** Ontario based associate director of OrgCode; master of everything



**KRIS:** California based family specialist; shared housing; SPDAT



**DAVID:** Michigan based data boy wonder; outreach; coordinated entry; HMIS, sheltering



**ANN:** D.C. based leadership wonder woman



**MIKE:** Arizona based landlord guru



**Cindy:** Texas based politics navigator



**AMANDA & ZACH:** West Virginia based rural populations; CoC governance; HMIS; trainers



# Who Am I, And Why Am I Am Talking About This?



- Dick Passmore
- He/him
- Associate, OrgCode Consulting
- 5 years in the Indigenous community in Hamilton, Ontario
- Street Outreach Worker
- Helped design and then led the Housing First program for the urban Indigenous community in Hamilton
- Involved in Coordinated Access and By Name Priority List creation
- Harm Reduction activities in OPS and SCS
- Training and Technical Assistance with CAEH
- Peer Support Worker



# Agenda

- Understanding Outdoor Homelessness
- A Professionalized Approach to Outreach
- The Necessary Service Orientation
- Assessing Encampments
- Working with Local Police, By-Law & other
- Community Partners



# Understanding Outdoor Homelessness







# Overcoming Mythologies

- Evidence focused, not opinion driven.
- Seeing solutions as possible and necessary.
- Focusing on what is similar to the people you are engaged and people that are housed, rather than pathologizing their homelessness or thinking being unhoused is a character flaw, moral failing, or lack of willpower.





# Adaptations To Abnormality

- Understanding presentism
- Resistance to change
- Everything you represent is reason for them to be concerned



# The Rejection Of Shelter

Outdoor homelessness does not happen by accident:

- Rejection of shelter
- Rejected by shelter
- Lack of space in shelter



# Understanding Outdoor Homelessness

- Can be divided into three groups:
  - One and done
  - Tumbleweed
  - Anchor
- More likely to be in a state of presentism



# Sustaining Homelessness Outdoors Is Hard Work

- Requires a state of organization to sustain basic needs
- Is very difficult to be reclusive; very difficult to have considerable human contact
- Has a lot of stigma and stereotype
- If it involves any sort of structure (tent, leanto, quasi-permanent walls, etc) it is even more difficult to sustain
- The weather influences every single day of existence





# A PROFESSIONALIZED APPROACH TO OUTREACH





# Historically...

- Street outreach has often been seen as an entrylevel, low paying job.
- People with lived experience provide valuable expertise as outreach workers but in the past, they were often NOT well supported or trained or paid well.
- The measures of outreach were contacts and/or provision of survival supports.
- In larger settings not uncommon for outreach teams to overlap - sometimes out of ignorance and sometimes because of different mandates.
- Busy outreach = good outreach.



# What It Means To Be A Professional Service

- Planned, structured, documented, and strategic
- Professional boundaries and ethics
- Knowledgeable of main currents of thought and practice, and how to put that into motion
- Open to evaluation and improvement, as well as measured outputs, outcomes, and accountability





# A Professional Outreach Program Vs. Delivery Of An Outreach Contract

- An outreach program has predetermined objectives and practices that are cohesive to achieve outcomes. It transcends contracts and even organizations.
- An outreach contract is focused on the activities and outputs to be completed by a person or organization that is awarded the contract.



# So What Does Effective Outreach Look Like?

- Outreach teams know just about every person who is homeless and disconnected from other services in their catchment area - to the best of their ability
- Outreach teams work most intensely with people with highest acuity first (about 10 each)
- Two service delivery pathways:
  - resolve homelessness through coordinated access;
  - resolve homelessness independent of coordinated access.



# Outreach Plan

- Effective outreach is NOT ad hoc.
- Study locations (indoors and outdoors) that require attention.
- The plan must coordinate drop-in/appointment times with partner agencies so that people who are interested in accessing assistance have immediate access to supports.



# Outreach Falls Into Two General Camps

	<i>Approach One</i>	<i>Approach Two</i>
<i>Generally Understood As...</i>	<i>Making Contacts, Addressing Immediate Needs and Transportation</i>	<i>Intensive, Assertive and Housing-Focused</i>
<i>Really Useful For...</i>	<i>Locating and knowing every person outside and keeping people alive, as well as responding to crises, and having a visible presence often many hours of the day, most days of the week</i>	<i>Problem solving and ending homelessness</i>
<i>Staffing</i>	<i>Lower skilled, often entry level or trained peers</i>	<i>Highly skilled, usually higher education and many years experience</i>
<i>Struggles With...</i>	<i>Solving homelessness, meeting the needs of people with complex and co-occurring issues, and demonstrating outcomes</i>	<i>Demands of caseload, expectations of others (seen as going slow), and solving issues that require input from other systems</i>



# Camp One

- Greatest challenge is managing follow-up engagement that may be appointment based with new engagement and call-in requests for service.
- Best to carve out specific days of service or specific hours within a shift for different types of activities.



# Camp Two

- Can be delivered Monday to Friday.
- 6am-2pm or 7am-3pm shifts are best.
- Activities and objectives are planned in advance.
- Not uncommon to engage intensely with 2-6 people per day, and no more.
- Some time in any given day will be invested in administration, liaising with other systems, managing communications with other stakeholders, etc.



# Allocated Time Based Upon Typology & Camp Of Outreach

- One and done, and tumbleweeds, can often be served through Camp One.
- One and done, and tumbleweeds are best served through 7 day a week outreach with early morning and evening hours part of the delivery package.
- Anchors are best served through Camp Two.
- Anchors are best served through early morning and daytime availability.



# Intent

- WHO are you?
- WHY do you want to connect with the person?
- WHAT will happen if they connect with you?
- HOW will you make it happen?
- WHEN will you make it happen?



# Value Proposition

Think of this another way:

- What value do you bring to this person?
- What is the currency of your relationship?
- If they trust you and connect with you, is their life enhanced - and if so, how?
- What are the potential biases and your personal values that can interfere with this connection?



# Role Of A Housing Focused Outreach Worker

- Find
- Assess
- Prioritize
- Re-Find
- Solve their homelessness

An exemplary outreach worker is one that does not confuse being busy with being effective; one that focuses on outcomes, not outputs.



# Core Competencies

- Safety strategies
- Cultural competency
- Motivational interviewing
- Assertive engagement
- Mental health first aid
- Harm reduction
- Trauma-informed care
- Person-centered care
- Overdose first aid
- Documentation





# So What Does Professional Street Outreach Look Like Operationally?

- Assigned geographic areas.
- Separation of crisis response and finding new people from sustained contact and resolution.
- Consent and information sharing across relevant parties.
- Assigned “lead” to those working on resolution of homelessness.
- Lower outreach to client ratios in Approach 2.



# So What Does Professional Street Outreach Look Like Operationally?

- Daily tasks and goals are established in advance whenever possible; not ad hoc.
- Engagement plans established for those that have declined service and seem unwell.
- Objective-based interactions.



# THE SERVICE ORIENTATION





# Values & Beliefs

- Our own values and beliefs influence our practice.
- We are wired to have an emotional response to information before a logical response.
- Variations in values and beliefs impact how you and your colleagues can see and respond to the exact same client in completely different ways.



# In Vivo

- Engage people in their most natural settings.
- Attempt to neutralize power dynamic of having program participants come to you.
- Enhances empathy by seeing first hand the realities of living as a program participant.
- Increases likelihood of outcomes being realized when connections and referrals are made.



# Practical Ways To Deliver Services In Vivo

- Spend more time in community than in your office.
- Ask people where they would like to meet.
- Be visible.
- Schedule times to meet in advance.
- Have clear objectives for interactions.
- Respectfully enter “personal space” with permission only.





# Practical Ways To Serve Compassionately

- Actively live your empathy
- Do not jump to conclusions
- Exercise active listening
- Avoid judgment
- Regardless of how or what the person presents, find strengths



# Fiercely Support Choice

- Choice is paramount to ongoing change and building connectivity.
- Regardless of the housing market, real choice has to be offered in housing solutions.
- Program participant has to have a say on the type of services they want to want to receive, how often they want to receive those service, how long they want services, and how intense they want services to be.



# Practical Ways To Support Choice

- Provide meaningful information – even viewpoints different than your own.
- Teach people how to rate pros and cons of potential actions.
- Avoid providing advice or opinion.
- Use open-ended questions.
- Explore what is likely to occur based upon decisions that are made - transparency.
- Respect people's decisions to decline outreach services, but be respectfully persistent in the future.



# Principles Of A Trauma Informed Approach

- Safety
- Trustworthiness through transparency
- Peer support
- Collaboration and mutuality
- Empowerment, voice and choice
- Cultural, historic and gender issues



# Practical Ways To Serve Those That Have Lived Through Exacerbated Trauma

- Flexible appointments, including bringing appointments to the person
- Write out steps and tasks
- Avoid judgment
- Create emotional safety; reinforce physical safety
- Build connections outside of the program
- Take nothing personally
- Engage in harm reduction
- Provide an active voice in determining type, duration, frequency and intensity of services



# Practical Ways To Serve People With A Brain Injury

- Avoid consequential approaches to reinforcing change.
- Establish transparent objectives for each interaction.
- Be patient.
- Reinforce worthiness through acknowledgment of achievements.
- Break larger goals into smaller tasks that are measurable.
- Normalize, acknowledge and invite ambivalence.



# Understanding The Recovery Orientation

Each person/family holds the possibility of engaging in a unique process of overcoming their history and recover what was lost.

- Rights
- Roles
- Responsibilities
- Sense of purpose
- Identity
- Stability
- Decision-making
- Self-esteem
- Potential
- Well-being
- Capabilities
- Happiness





# Practical Ways To Apply A Recovery Orientation

- Address stigma and model it.
- Provide education opportunities to deeper understanding.
- Build connections to trained peers.
- Appreciate the uniqueness of each journey.
- Be transparent of what community supports (including clinical supports) may be available, waiting times, expectations of those supports, etc.
- Establish crisis plans, safety plan and approaches for gaining and maintaining housing stability.



# Harm Reduction

- Harm reduction is any program or policy designed to reduce drug-related harm without requiring the cessation of drug use.
- Harm reduction further applies to other behaviors that may be considered higher risk such as sex work or actively compromised mental health without medication and/or medical assistance, which impacts the individual and the broader community. As with substances, this is about reducing harm without demands of cessation.



# ASSESSING ENCAMPMENTS





# Encampment Assessment

- Degree of organization
- Number of people & pets
- Acuity of residents
- Ability to meet daily needs
- Reasons for disengagement from other services
- Income & history of housing
- Presence of hazards
- Problem solving and conflict with other encampments, police, by-law, business, neighbourhood, etc.



# Degree of Organization of the Encampment

	Yes	No
<i>Permanent or semi-permanent structure and settling</i>		
<i>Preparation for most weather eventualities</i>		
<i>Trash Managed</i>		
<i>Hoarding Present</i>		

“YES” to structures, weather preparation and managing trash, with a “NO” to hoarding is a positive sign of high degree of organization.



# People and Pets

	Yes	No
<i>Minors living on the site</i>		
<i>If "YES" to minors, is the adult the legal guardian.</i>		
<i>Pets other than dogs and cats</i>		
<i>If animals of any kind are present, do they generally seem to be in good physical condition?</i>		
<i>If animals of any kind are present, do they generally seem to have their food and water needs met?</i>		

Minors onsite is problematic only if the adult is not the legal guardian. Pets other than cats and dogs present unique challenges, but does not mean "unhouseable". If animals are not cared for, proceed with caution.





# Ability to Meet Daily Needs

	Yes	No
<i>Access to potable water within 15 minutes</i>		
<i>Access to toilet within 15 minutes</i>		
<i>Access to shower</i>		
<i>Access to food</i>		
<i>Proper storage of food</i>		
<i>Safe preparation of food</i>		
<i>Access to clothing</i>		
<i>Access to laundry</i>		

All "YES" represents high degree of organization and meeting basic needs. "NO" answers to water and toilet are the most problematic of these to be concerned about moving forward.



# Reasons for Disengagement from Other Services

	Yes	No
<i>Barred or Service Restricted</i>		
<i>Displeasure/ Bad Experience(s)</i>		
<i>Rules</i>		
<i>Avoiding Conflict with Staff or Other Service Users</i>		

If currently barred or restricted would want to understand credibility of reasons. Similar with conflict. However, displeasure and rules present leverage in motivation.



# Income & History of Housing

	Yes	No
<i>Person has an income of \$1,000 or more per month - through any means</i>		
<i>Has had permanent housing in this community for six or more consecutive months at any point in the last three years</i>		
<i>Has had permanent housing in another community for six or more month in the last three years</i>		

Income is necessary in most instances for direct housing from the street without coordinated entry. Some private landlords may want local housing history.



# Presence of Hazards

	Yes	No
<i>Sharps</i>		
<i>Propane Tanks</i>		
<i>Meth Production on Site</i>		
<i>Near the Site</i>		
<i>Exploitive Sex Work on Site</i>		
<i>Frequent Violence on Site, Including Domestic Violence</i>		
<i>Stolen Property on Site</i>		
<i>Abetting Others on Site</i>		

A string of "NO" indicates very low risk in moving toward housing. Meth production, exploitive sex work, frequent violence, stolen property, or abetting others should be explored further.



# Problem Solving & Known Conflict

	Yes	No
<i>A known plan by by-law, police or any other entity with legal authority to remove the encampment</i>		
<i>A known conflict with other encampments with threatening destruction of encampment</i>		
<i>A known conflict with business or neighbours with threatening destruction of encampment</i>		

Knowing there is conflict or a plan to close the encampment can help stimulate discussions about housing, but may or may not inform the approach to housing the person.



# WORKING WITH BY-LAW, POLICE, AND OTHER ENTITIES WITH LEGAL AUTHORITY





# Define Your Role

- If you do not define your role, it will be defined for you.
- The role of outreach can be complimentary to roles that have enforcement capabilities, while still staying “on the side of the angels”.
- Establishing a protocol or memorandum of understanding regarding the roles provides clarity and accountability.





# Contents Of A Good Protocol

- Outlines roles and responsibilities for various entities when dealing with homeless people sleeping/camping in public space.
- Sets out the explicit goal of having any person sleeping/camping in public space that is homeless to access housing or other appropriate safe alternatives.
- Does not suggest any person experiencing homelessness is immune to consequences of not following any law.



# Examples Of Principles In A Good Protocol

- (1) Outreach is committed to working with homeless individuals living outside to respond to their individual needs on a case-by-case basis by assisting them access services and supports, including permanent housing.
- (2) Outreach will use a co-ordinated approach between City departments including police and by-law in responding to the needs and issues related to homeless people camping outside. Activities will also be co-ordinated with community agencies to access a mix of supports and resources, streamline access to services, and avoid duplication of effort.
- (3) Outreach will engage in ongoing proactive communication with homeless individuals, the public, service providers, community agencies and other groups to assist in the successful implementation of the protocol.



# Examples Of Principles In A Good Protocol Cont'd...

(4) The priority is to assist homeless people access safer, sustainable, and healthier alternatives than living outside, not enforcement. Enforcement will occur after all support efforts have been attempted without success, provided that the individual has been notified that he or she is required to vacate a public space. In the event of exceptional circumstances, however, intervention may be required to address immediate public safety concerns.

(5) All parties acknowledge that homeless individuals cannot be forced to accept services and supports. The refusal of an individual to accept services and supports is not sufficient reason to prevent the enforcement of City by-laws prohibiting camping in public places and erecting structures

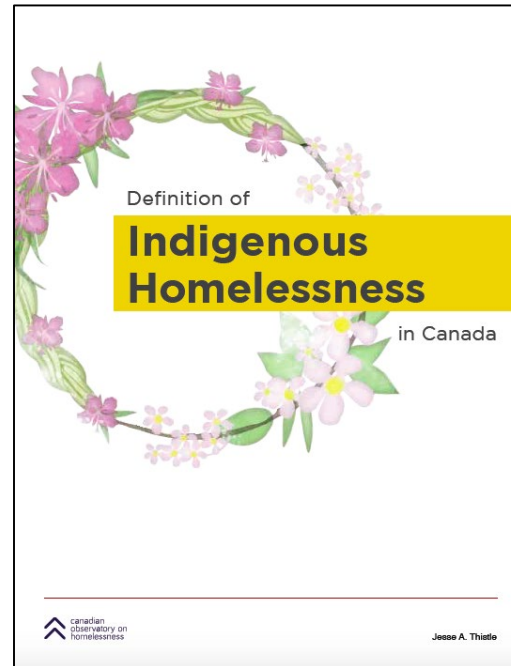


# What Are The Next Steps

Identify key strategies to improve collective activities within your community, identify opportunities to enhance, implement & re-visit successes



# Resources



<https://www.homelesshub.ca/IndigenousHomelessness>



# Resources

Use your critical thinking skills

Any evidence based study\*

Any peer reviewed journal\*

\*Avoid 'pay for play' publishers

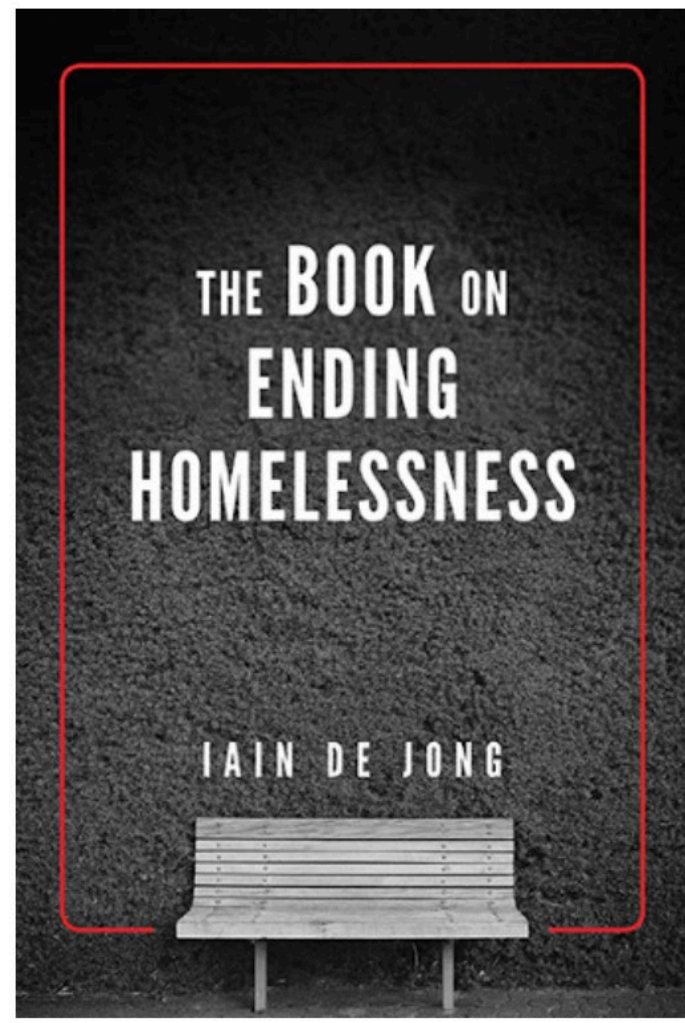
Always go back to primary sources



# Resources



# Iain DeJong's New Book







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