

Use of Motels as Emergency Shelters in Rural Ontario

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TRENT/FLEMING SCHOOL OF
NURSING



Methods

Qualitative interviews exploring strengths and challenges of motels as rural homeless shelters

Five rural counties in Ontario

- Motels located in small communities with pop'n 6000-22,000

Data collection ongoing

- Interviews with service providers/administrators (n=10)
- Interviews with clients who stayed in motels (n=6)



TRENT/FLEMING SCHOOL OF NURSING

Seeking Research Participants

For a Study on Motels as Rural Homeless Shelters

*Have you stayed in a motel shelter?
Have you helped run a motel shelter?
We'd love to speak with you!*

The study will help us learn more about whether motels are a good option for emergency shelters in rural communities.

You will be asked to share your experience with a researcher during an interview or small group discussion. It will take about 30-60 minutes and you will receive \$20 to thank you for your time.

For more information or to set up an interview, contact:
Ellen Buck-McFadyen
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This study was approved by Trent University's Research Ethics Board, study #28509.

Models Used by the Motels



Model 1



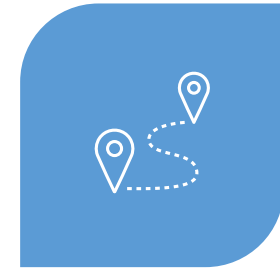
EMERGENCY /
TRANSITIONAL
HOUSING



STAFF VISIT
DAILY



NO ADDITIONAL
SECURITY



MULTIPLE
LOCATIONS

Model 2



TRANSITIONAL
HOUSING



STAFF ON-SITE



ENTIRE MOTEL



INDIVIDUAL
ENTRANCES

Model 3



TRANSITIONAL/
SUPPORTIVE
HOUSING



STAFF AND
SERVICES ON-SITE



ENTIRE MOTEL



CENTRAL
ENTRANCE

Common Elements

Rules:

- No guests, parties, noise
- Stay out of each other's rooms
- No substances (variable)
- Room checks

Units included:

- TV
- Mini-fridge
- Microwave
- Kettle
- Coffee-maker
- Hotplates (some)

Food:

- Meals catered
- Groceries distributed

Locations:

- Outskirts of town
- Less desirable motels

Uniquely Rural Issues



Few specialized services
and often no shelters



Limited/no public
transportation



Few food delivery
options



Clients know one
another and others
know them

“The people we serve are **known to everybody** in the community because we're a small town, right. You know, they're in the newspaper for armed robbery or sexual assault or whatever. And the hotels don't want to rent to them. Landlords don't want to rent to them. The police don't want them sleeping in their front lobby...” (SP – model 2)

“We have **no public transportation**, so we rely on taxi cabs or a friend or family to transport um, and the taxis don't run 24/7 here either... Some of the motel owners only want to be called up to a certain time” (SP – model 1)



Strengths of Motel Models



**RAPID OPTION IN
SMALL
COMMUNITIES**



**STABLE, SAFE, AND
SECURE SETTING**



**BRINGS SERVICE
PROVIDERS
TOGETHER AND
SUPPORTS
INNOVATION**



**CAN HELP CLIENTS
AVOID CERTAIN
SPACES AND
PEOPLE**



**PROMOTES
HEALTH AND SELF-
CARE**



“I know that I had physicians comment about how **improved people’s health** was and, um they attributed that to living at (motel project), having a **routine, good food**, sort of being, not taken care of but supported, and lots of options...there was options for people to get **treatment**, there was all kinds of **craft and cultural things...**” (SP – model 3)

“I came to my senses that I don't go downtown anymore because it causes problems. Like I've had cracked ribs, scrapes on my face, infected arm...cuts and bruises that I would normally not have if I wasn't drinking. Now **I stay away from downtown**, completely.” (LE – model 3)

“The best part was the **relationships between the community partners** - we were always kind of siloed, and now we're all on the same page...that was the best thing that could have happened for our community.” (SP – model 3)

Challenges of Motel Models

Conflict and
disruption for
other guests/
neighbours

Damage to rooms

Finding motel
willing to work
with population

Banning residents
with no other
options

Risk of increased
substance use due
to presence of
social network

Risk of using
substances alone /
OD

Limited controls
over environment

Autonomy versus
safety

“If (a substance) was found, or seen, the motel has almost **zero tolerance**, which is the difficulty when you're working with a third party. Uh, you're at their mercy essentially, right? They would kick them out.” (SP – model 2)

“It was **party atmosphere** for like my whole experience there. When my friend passed away up there, it was a pivotal moment for me. I got sober...but that party atmosphere did not change, right? So it was a lot of me **hiding in my room.**” (LE – model 2)



Recommendations



Develop and maintain relationships (motel owners, neighbours, staff)



Establish rules and expectations early and communicate them regularly



Involve multiple service providers



Take photos

Recommendations



Layout and communal space is important



Offer activities to occupy time



Facilitate transportation



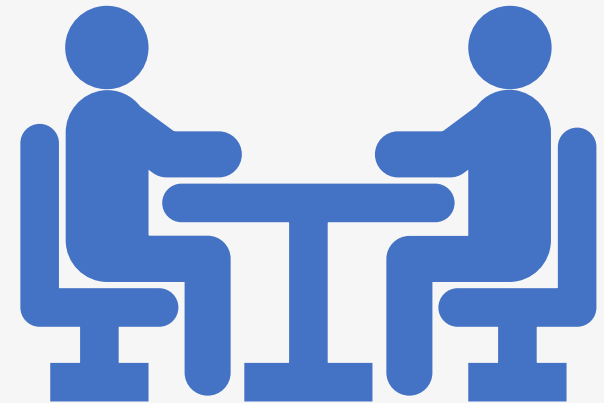
Recognize it won't work for everyone

Thank you!

We'd like to acknowledge the time, expertise, and support of participants and organizations that welcomed us into their communities!

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Questions?



For more information, contact:

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