

Retaining a Sample of Homeless Youth

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Youth Matters In London: Mental Health, Addictions and Homelessness



INVESTIGATORS

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London
CANADA



LAWSON
HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE



YOUTH
OPPORTUNITIES
UNLIMITED



Project Funders

- **Canadian Institute of Health Research**
- **Mental Health Commission of Canada**
- **Human Resources Skills Development of Canada,
Homelessness Partnering Strategy**



The Current Study

Main objective of the Youth Matters in London project:

- **To investigate and better understand the youth and their preferred support over a three-year period**
- **3 primary support options available:**
 - **Housing- as the initial support**
 - **Treatment- as the initial support**
 - **Housing and Treatment**
- **Other (ex. Employment, education, and etc.)**
- **Option of changing choice across study period**

The Sample:

- * **187 participants recruited**
- **age requirement: 16 - 25 years old**
- **self-report of mental health and/or addiction issues**
- **currently homeless, or precariously housed**

Homelessness or Precariously Housed:

“not having a place to stay for more than 7 nights and having little chance of finding a place to stay in the next month”

(Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2012)

Methods

- **cross-sectional, mixed methods approach**
- **Previous experience with the youth showed they preferred interview format**
- **Interviews contained in-depth quantitative and qualitative components**
 - **I.e. demographics, health, housing, quality of life, and social support**
- **Ethics approval granted by Research Ethics Board of Western University**

Baseline Results

Intervention Choice	Number of Participants					Percentage (%)
	Male	Female	Other	Trans-gender	Total	
Housing First	50	23	2		75	40.10%
Treatment First	39	18			57	30.48%
Housing and treatment combined	18	19			38	20.32%
No Selection/Other	15	2		1	17	9.09%
TOTAL	122	62	2	1	187	100%

Results

Service Model Changes at Each Visit

	Visit 2 (n=162)	Visit 3 (n=157)	Visit 4 (n=145)
Service Model Changed	89 54.9%	82 52.2%	65 44.8%
Service Model Unchanged	73 45.1%	75 47.8%	80 55.2%

Results

Consistency of Service Model Choice

Service Model	Same Model at Every Visit		Total (n=144)	χ^2 (p-value)
	No	Yes		
Housing first	37 63.8%	21 36.2%	58 100.0%	12.087 p=0.006
Treatment first	34 82.9%	7 17.1%	41 100.0%	
Both together	28 87.5%	4 12.5%	32 100.0%	
Other	13 100.0%	0 0.0%	13 100.0%	

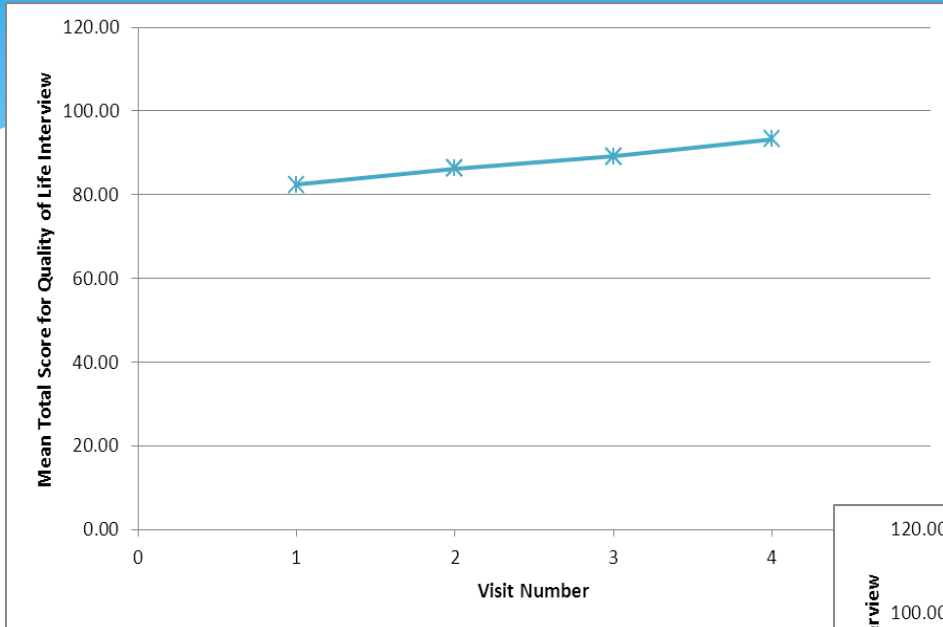
Results

Reasons for Change in Service Model

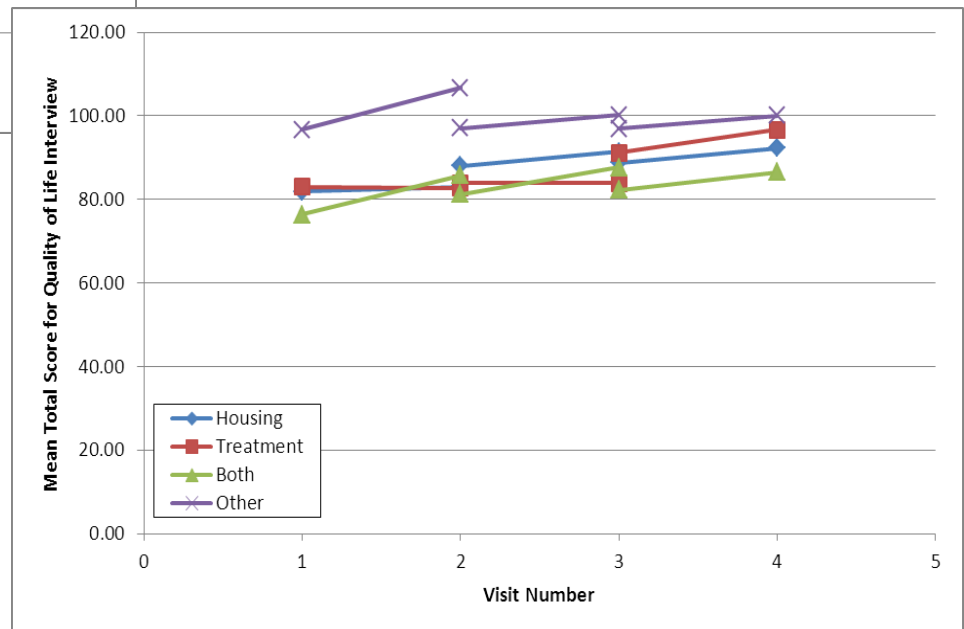
- **Visit 2:** “I need, I have different goals in mind. Same categories but with different objectives.”
- **Visit 3:** “Although it’s overwhelming to do both at the same time, it’s near impossible to stay mentally healthy while homeless and vice versa. One eventually destroys the other.”
- **Visit 4:** “Because you can’t have one without the other. Basically, you wouldn’t be able to get proper treatment if you didn’t have a place to live and you can’t have a stable place to live without having treatment.”

Results

Across All Models



By Service Model Chosen



Quality of Life -
Total Score

Tracking Homeless Youth

* The Challenges:

1. **Addresses and phone numbers frequently changes (Ward & Henderson, 2003)**
2. **Conventional social networks are limited. (Falci, Whitbeck & Hoyt, 2011)**

* *“Hard to reach” populations are crucial in research:*

1. *To ensure the general population is well represented.*
2. *Opens doors to exploring specific needs.*

Strategies to re-contact:

- **Contact information is key**
 - **Encourage for *various types* of contact information**
 - **including collateral contacts**
 - **Email - very effective means of communication for street youth**
 - **The youth were found to have good computer skills and access to the internet ↑sociability**
- **Tracking through social service agencies**
 - **agencies directly involved themselves in the research process**
- **Time frames for re-contacting**
 - **Maintaining contact with participants between interviews**
 - **Begin re-contacting at least a month before the next interview is due**

Strategies in Administration:

- **Document**
 - **Where and when (i.e. time and date) participants were found.**
- **Spread-sheets or Organized Tables**
 - **To easily observe for participants' past and current locations**

Strategies to ↑ retention rates:

- **Immediate incentives**
 - cash
 - **Study identification**
 - participants see value to their involvement to the research
- **Effective use of study logos**
 - participants can recognize the logo among various locations
 - can contact researchers directly

Overall Retention Rates

Interview	N	Lost Contacts	n	%
1 (baseline)	-	-	187 (enrolled)	100
2 (6 months)	187	23	164	88
3 (12 months)	164	4	160	86
4 (18 months)	160	6	154	82

Analysis

- * **Contact list provided by participants**
- * **Field notes compiled by the coordinator**

Successful Contact Strategies

Interview #	Phone – Personal	Phone - family or friend	Email	Agencies	Outreach	Jail / Detention Centre	u/k	Total
2	3	3	4	132	6	1	15	164
3	5	2	6	120	11	2	14	160
4	10	0	16	99	14	3	12	154
Total	18	5	26	351	31	6	41	478

Implications

- **Developing relationships with agencies.**
- **Key characteristics of the outreach team which lead to ↑availability, ↑community presence, and ↑relationships:**
 - **Consistency of research assistants in the outreach team,**
 - **flexibility of time,**
 - **adequate budget,**
 - **and the patience of dedicated research staff.**
- **Importance of multiple strategies**
- **Promotional Items, bags lanyards**



Conclusion

- **Retaining a sample of homeless youth is difficult without strategy, time, patience, and effort.**
- **Relationships with community agencies is key.**
- **strategies such as updated contact lists and outreach allowed for the inclusion of participants not accessing the agencies**

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