

Building Stability



The Transitions to Home Research Study

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Research Disclaimer

The data collected for this report were gathered between September 2013 and January 2014. Therefore, the data do not encompass the recent policy changes associated with the release of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy funding that may alter the T2H program's and shelters' service provision environments. Additionally, the draft of the report was completed in February 2014, which was prior to any announced changes to funding and program structure.



Objective

- The aim of our study was to understand the outcomes and experiences associated with participation in the Transitions to Home (T2H) program
- T2H is a Housing First program run through Wesley Urban Ministries
- The program's mandate is to provide quick access to housing for men experiencing long-term homelessness in Hamilton, Ontario



Housing First Models: Evidence-Based Practice

- The goal of Housing First programs is to provide low barrier access to housing for those who are experiencing long-term homelessness
- The philosophy behind Housing First is that the provision of stable housing will assist individuals in stabilizing other aspects of their lives



Housing First Models: Evidence-Based Practice cont'd

- Research has shown that these programs are successful in promoting stable tenancies
- They are also considered to be cost effective, as individuals begin to use services, such as shelters and health care, differently after they are housed



Housing First Models: Evidence-Based Practice

Components of Program Fidelity:

- 1) Choice in housing & services accessed
- 2) Separation of housing & services
- 3) Philosophy does not require people receive treatment to get/maintain housing
- 4) Comprehensive services are made available for those who choose to use them
- 5) Programs use Intensive Case Management (ICM) or Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams

Source: Tsemberis (2013)



The T2H Program

- Hostels to Home (H2H)
 - Pilot Housing First program: 2007-2009 (City of Hamilton & the Ministry of Community and Social Services)
- T2H: 2009-Present
 - Uses an ICM model of service delivery
 - Cliental are males who have spent as least 30 nights in emergency shelters
 - As of December 20th, 2013 there were 160 active program participants
 - T2H is a collaborative program between all of Hamilton's men's shelters. It is administered by Wesley Urban Ministries



Program Services & Structures

- The majority of participants are recruited through referrals made by men's shelters or by Wesley's day use centre staff
- The program employs a director, manager, supervisor, ICM team, and a specialized supports team (housing, addictions, and therapeutic recreation workers)



Program Requirements

- As a Housing First program, T2H offers low-barrier access to housing
- The only requirements for participants are:
 - They meet with their Case Managers on a regular basis
 - They apply for RGI housing with the City of Hamilton
- Addictions and mental health treatment are not required to obtain or maintain housing



The T2H Research Study

- The data collection for this study took place between September 2013 and January 2014
- The research was overseen by an advisory committee consisting of members of McMaster University, Wesley Urban Ministries, the McMaster Community Poverty Initiative, the City of Hamilton & the Transitions to Home program
- Our research was approved by McMaster University's Research Ethics Board



Methods

- We used mixed methods data collection and analysis techniques
- Qualitative Phase:
 - To better understand the experiences associated with participation in T2H
 - Semi-structured interviews with:
 - 16 T2H participants
 - 10 Individuals experiencing long-term shelter use who had not enrolled in the program [comparison group]
 - 5 Key informants [senior social services workers in Hamilton]
 - 10 Members of the T2H ICM team



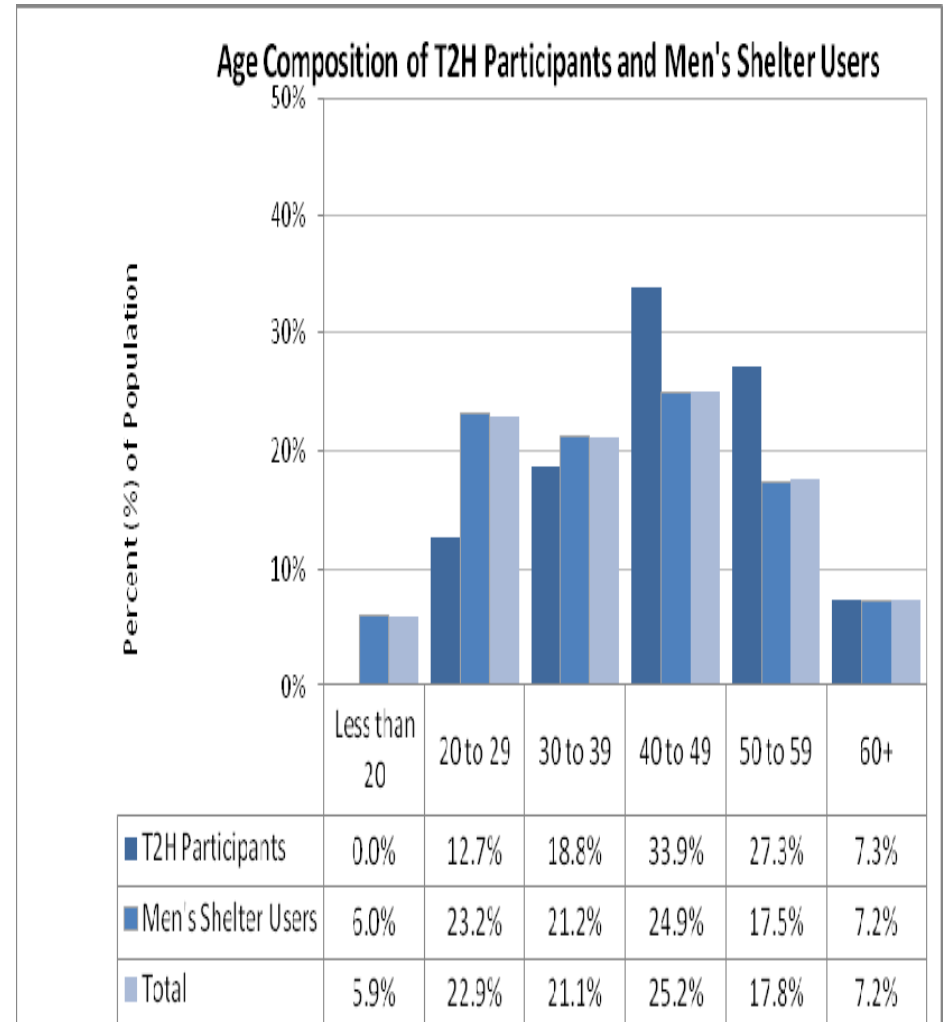
Methods cont'd

- Quantitative Phase:
 - To determine the outcomes associated with participation in the T2H program
 - Secondary data analysis:
 - Data were provided from T2H COTS by an independent corporation hired to manage the database. Descriptive analyses were conducted by the primary researcher
 - A descriptive analysis of the Homeless Individuals & Families Information System (HIFIS) was conducted by the City of Hamilton, in consultation with the primary researcher, to provide shelter use outcomes for T2H participants. HIFIS is protected under MFIPPA and the legal agreement between the research team and the City required that the City preformed all analyses



Population Characteristics

- Our analysis of HIFIS indicated that T2H participants had more shelter use than those not enrolled in the program
- This suggests that T2H is working with the long-term homeless population whom they are mandated to serve



Data Source: HIFIS. Analysis Performed by the City of Hamilton (2013)

T2H Participants' Housing Outcomes

Housing Status (% (N))	Recruitment Year			
	2010 (N=65)	2011 (N=32)	2012 (N=23)	2013 (N=40)
Remained Homeless	1.54% (1)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)
Moved to Temporary Housing	12.31% (8)	18.75% (6)	17.39% (4)	52.50% (21)
Moved to Permanent Housing	86.15% (56)	81.25% (26)	82.61% (19)	45.00% (18)
Unknown	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.63% (1)

- The analysis of HIFIS indicated that use of emergency shelters declined for T2H participants after they enrolled with the program.
- Additionally, the T2H COTS data displayed above indicate that the majority (74.4%) of active T2H participants are residing in permanent, single unit rental accommodations.
- When individuals recruited in 2013 and had less time to work with the program were removed from this sample, the percentage of individuals residing in permanent housing rose to 84.2%



Qualitative Sample Characteristics

- The average age of the T2H participants (50.9 years) was older than those interviewed who were not enrolled in the program (43.4 years)
- In addition to age, we used the Multnomah Community Ability Survey to assess areas of need for study participants:
 - Our findings indicated that both the participants and the non-participants interviewed reported moderate levels of ability and need
 - T2H participants responses indicated slightly higher levels of self-reported physical and mental health, and social skills. Their responses also indicated lower levels of life adaptation skills, and more frequent participation in maladaptive behaviour. However, these differences between were marginal.



Histories of Trauma

- The majority of T2H and comparison group respondents interviewed had experienced some form of childhood trauma
- Individual experiences varied greatly and for some respondents, experiences of trauma were multifaceted
- Early life trauma and instability appeared to have a lasting impact on all participants' ability to maintain a stable home environment



Health, Mental Health & Substance Use

- Many of the respondents interviewed for this study experienced difficulties with physical health, mental health, and substance use, regardless of whether or not they were actively enrolled in the T2H program
- Mental health and substance use were problematic for many of the participants in this study. Some of the individuals had experienced mental health concerns since childhood



Health, Mental Health & Substance Use cont'd

- Histories of drug and alcohol consumption were present in both participant groups in this study
- Despite chronic histories of substance use and mental health concerns, some individuals reported successfully beginning treatment and employing harm reduction strategies to minimize the impact of mental health and addictions on daily life. The use of harm reduction techniques appeared to be more prevalent in the T2H respondents



Pathways into Homelessness

- The situations surrounding loss of tenancy or permanent residence captured in this study were diverse
- Some of the situations captured included marital or relationship breakdown, economic hardship, injury resulting in job loss, inability to maintain a familial home after parental death, excessive spending on drugs, alcohol, hotel rooms, and the sex trade, incarceration and subsequent enrollment in halfway houses, and inability to manage physical or mental health concerns
- The diverse pathways experienced by respondents represent the level of diversity in needs experienced by these individuals



T2H Referrals & Engagement

- For those who had qualified for the T2H program but had not accessed it, the following reasons were provided:
 - They had not heard of the program or were unaware of the types of supports provided
 - They did not know how to connect with a T2H case worker
 - They were accessing supports through a different service provider
- Our key informant and case manager interviews indicated that there have been ongoing struggles with performing client engagement. These included:
 - Competition and miscommunication amongst programs and service providers, leading to ineffective client engagement and outreach
 - That more engagement and client outreach is needed to connect with all homeless individuals



Experiences with Housing

- The T2H participants who were involved in this study appeared to experience fewer barriers in accessing housing than those who were not engaged with the program
- Many of the T2H participants spoke of the enjoyment, feelings of relief, and safety they experienced from having their own homes
- Respondents noted problems with housing quality and pest management



Program Supports & Services: Case Management

- All of T2H participants we interviewed were happy with the case management support that they received
- The only concern expressed related to changing workers because of turnover, vacation, and maternity and sick leaves



Program Supports & Services: Specialized Supports

- Program participants have the option of accessing addictions support and therapeutic recreation programming
- For those who participated in recreational programming, they found it to be beneficial to:
 - Forming social relationships, their mental health and addictions concerns, their overall experiences of health and wellbeing, and as a way to occupy time,
- Similar to recreational programming participants are not required to access addictions supports those who did also reported positive experiences with the types of supports they received. Some participants accessed these supports for detox location assistance, abstinence assistance, or to work on harm reduction goals



Perceptions of the Program: T2H Participants

- Some T2H participants were unable to think of recommendations, whereas others provided multiple suggestions, including:
 - Assistance with accessing healthy food, the provision of additional support groups and access to a clinical psychologist, the provision of resources for starting cooperative work projects, and increasing resources to provide quicker access to single site apartment units.



Perceptions of the Program: Case Managers

- The case managers' recommendations and future goals for the program included:
 - The provision of additional supports and resources, expanding the clinical team to include other specialized workers, and expanding program capacity by providing more housing allowances



T2H Study Recommendations

1. There appears to be a need for more affordable private and social housing stock in Hamilton, particularly housing that is clean, in good repair, and pest free
2. There is a need to increase housing allowances and rent supplements in Hamilton
3. Most participants had experienced some form of childhood trauma which suggests a need for increased counseling supports, as well as a need for governments and agencies to continue to with preventative strategies that provide adequate support to low-income and at-risk families and children



T2H Study Recommendations cont'd

4. There is a need for innovative ways to continue to increase collaboration between agencies and sectors, both those with a direct mandate to serve those experiencing long-term homelessness and those that regularly encounter this population
5. Creative solutions for engaging with this population are needed



Study Information

Find the full study online at:

www.crunch.mcmaster.ca &
www.wesley.ca

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Acknowledgements



This research was funded by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the government of Canada.

