

Supportive Housing for Addicted, Incarcerated Homeless Adults

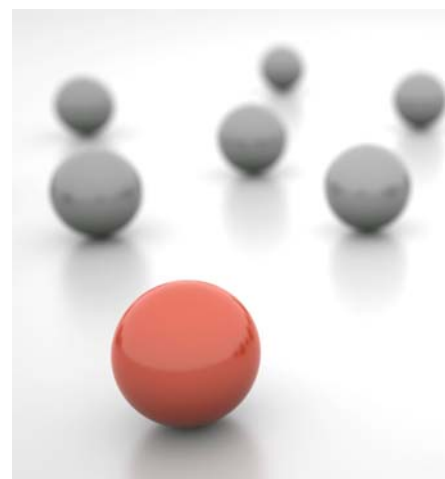
What you need to know

Studies have shown that at least half of the homeless population suffers from mental health issues, almost half of homeless people have substance use issues, and inmates who have a mental health problem are twice as likely as those without to have been homeless in the year before incarceration. Taken together, these factors make it extremely difficult for homeless persons with multiple needs to maintain housing. Housing services for homeless people often focus on only one need and rarely address the multi-need realities of people who are homeless. However, supportive housing interventions that include rental assistance, case management services and medication support have been found to be effective in providing housing options for homeless people suffering from more than one issue.

What is this research about?

This research examines the success of HARP (Homeless Assistance Rental Program) on housing stability for homeless people with multiple needs. HARP provides case management and rental assistance for homeless persons who were either struggling with mental illness, in jail, in criminal justice programs, in substance abuse programs, or aging out of foster care. HARP partnering agencies provide additional support,

such as substance abuse and mental health treatment, and alternatives to incarceration programming. This research investigates whether supportive housing reduces use of jail and/or residential treatment for the participants and to what degree supportive programs improve their reintegration into the community. It also identifies individuals who may need support in addition to that which HARP provides to meet their unique needs.



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KEYWORDS

Homeless, addiction, substance abuse, mental illness, supportive housing, case management, jail

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HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

This research provides a detailed description of a supportive housing program that reduces the strain on the judicial system and expensive residential treatment services. It can therefore be used to inform policy makers of the benefits of offering supportive housing intervention programs to homeless individuals suffering from multiple issues affecting their housing stability. Its findings suggest that additional supportive housing services may also be needed for females, minorities, persons with disabilities and younger adults to better address their particular housing needs.

What did the researcher do?

The researchers analyzed data regarding the housing stability of 102 HARP participants. The data were collected through the Housing Authority, the Substance Abuse division, jail records, and self-reports completed by HARP

participants along with assessments provided by their case managers. The researchers then compared HARP participants' housing experiences and service use in the year prior to HARP intake to their experiences in the year following the HARP intake.

What did the researcher find?

Participation in HARP was associated with a decrease in jail involvement, both in terms of new charges and warrants related to past criminal activity. Researchers found that HARP participation also corresponded with a decrease in the percentage of participants using residential substance abuse treatment facilities. Regarding reintegration into the community, participants reported improved housing stability, increased income, and better access to food after participating in the HARP program.

Although HARP improved the income and employment situations for participants, they still remained the two top obstacles affecting participant success in maintaining housing. One year after entering HARP, 63% of HARP participants remained stably housed. However, within the stably housed group, the researchers noticed a pattern of fewer females, minorities, young adults and disabled participants being represented than in the overall HARP participant composition.

“Participation in HARP was associated with a decrease in jail involvement, both in terms of new charges and warrants related to past criminal activity.”

ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Audrey O. Hickert is a Research Assistant Professor with the Utah Criminal Justice Center in the College of Social Work at the University of Utah. Her research interests include juvenile and adult alternatives to incarceration, substance abuse, justice system policy, behavioural interventions, and disproportionate minority contact in the justice system.
