Housing First, Harm Reduction, and Trauma Informed Care

Learner Guide: Heartland Housed January 2024

Housing First

What is a Housing First Approach?

- Quick access to housing
- Voluntary and robust supportive services
- Centered on tenant choice and education
- Low barrier and targeted
- Promotes housing stability
- Embraces a Harm Reduction approach

Understanding the Impact of Racial Disparities and Culture
- Across the United States, the percentage of people of color experiencing homelessness is greater than their percentage of the overall population
- It is important to **acknowledge the racial disparities within the homeless system** and how it impacts the individuals we work with; this is also important in understanding who we are engaging with and how their experiences may differ
- An important strategy is utilizing *cultural humility*, which incorporates a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique to redress the power imbalances in a given relationship. This includes understanding historical and current context.

Barriers to Housing

Structural/Institutional Barriers:
- Transportation
- Limited housing inventory
- Lack of culturally appropriate services
- Restrictive application requirements
- Complex processes
- Limited opening hours (9-5 M-F)

Factors that can contribute to Individual Barriers:
- Language
- Literacy
- Behavioral health
- Physical health
- Justice involvement
- Eviction history
- Poor Credit

Strategies for Addressing Structural Barriers

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Provide Culturally Appropriate Services
- Ensure program staff reflect the community served
- Know the language needs of your community – do your policies and practices reflect those needs?
- Provide multiple ways for households to access services and communicate needs
- Meet people in community when possible (go to them vs come to us)

Simplified Application Process
- Minimize the hoops (how many steps in the process)
- Be clear and consistent with process
- Use Plain Language
- Provide multiple access points
- Be clear about prioritization

Housing Search
- Housing navigators
- Connections to landlords /landlord pools
- Tools/resource for housing search
- Transportation assistance
- Access to computer/phone
- Training on Fair Housing
- Partnership with tenant rights and/or legal aid

Housing Stability Strategies

- Lease Education
- Renter Skill Building
- Connections to community
- Eviction Prevention Plans
- Crisis Response Plans

Promoting Housing Stability: Questions to Ask

- How do you approach wants vs needs- and how do those factors into choice?
- How do we support people when issues come up?
- How do we get comfortable asking people what skills and support they need?
- How can we provide structure- without being rigid, and while allowing for flexibility?
- Identifying ways to reduce barriers in your community and program(s): what are you doing now- and what can you do moving forward?

Fundamentals of Harm Reduction

The philosophy of harm reduction promotes and supports the right of people who use substances and engage in other risky behaviors to be treated with dignity and respect; their right to exercise self-determination related to use; and their right to a collaborative approach in therapeutic relationships. – Midwest Harm Reduction Institute

Harm Reduction Principles
- Understands that most people change gradually and experience ups and down
- Emphasizes self-determination, is person-centered, and encourages honesty
- Non-judgmental, non-coercive provision of services and resources
- Individualized; no two people are the same or have the same journey
- Builds upon once success at a time
- Empowers individuals to choose their own goals
- Fosters individual growth, discovery, and decision-making

What Harm Reduction Is Not:
- Means of Enabling – affirming behaviors are ok to continue
- "Anything Goes" – ignoring consequences or shields
- Path to traditional treatment programs – "hooking" people into care
- Passive – avoiding hard conversations

Harm Reduction in Practice

Harm Reduction is an approach to working with individuals and families that, if used effectively, can:
- Help people open up and be honest about their substance use/relapse
- Help you to find out more information about someone's drug use while keeping them safe, which helps tailor the intervention and strategies
- Reduce the impact of stigma
- Increase trust, foster engagement, build a relationship
- Improve public health with individuals as well as community-wide
- Recognize how the complexity of poverty, racism, class, isolation, trauma, sex-based discrimination (and other inequalities) affects peoples' vulnerability and capacity for effectively dealing with behaviors related to harm
- Empowers individuals to choose their own goals
- Fosters individual growth, discovery, and decision-making

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What can Harm Reduction look like?

- Low tar cigarettes
- Helmets
- Seat belts and airbags
- Narcan

Getting Buy-In on a Harm Reduction Approach

- Consider who can help to lead the effort to implement a harm reduction approach in your organization. Who needs to be on board and in the know?
- What can you do to communicate a harm reduction approach?
    - Formal training
    - Lunch and learns
    - Informal opportunities
- Make sure everyone is on the same page
    - Directly address questions, concerns, and misconceptions
    - Use real examples and case studies, role playing
    - Utilize a specific team, task force or committee for ongoing engagement and feedback

Implementing Harm Reduction Policies

- Get staff input
- Create opportunities for discussion on what harm reduction looks like for the organization and how the approach will be applied
- Provide training and support on the application of harm reduction
- Provide opportunities for discussion and coaching for staff around harm reduction
- Have a plan for training & supporting property management and other non-services staff
- Be clear and consistent with staff on what is expected and how harm reduction principles will be applied
- Communicate regularly

Trauma-Informed Care

Types and Impacts of Trauma

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. *-Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)*

Types of Trauma
- <u>Large-Scale Events</u>: The things you see in the news. This might include things like war, or natural disasters.
- <u>Interpersonal Events</u>: This category might include things like assault or interpersonal violence- and also includes things that aren't physical, such as divorce, or loss of a loved one.
- <u>Historical Trauma</u>: Includes planned violence or segregation, or prevention of cultural or spiritual practices designed to deculturate and assimilate an entire group of people.
- <u>Systemic Trauma</u>: Something that creeps into the fabric of society. It can be overt or covert- and builds up over time.
- <u>Racial Trauma</u>: Complex trauma resulting from the ongoing experience of oppression and subordination. Mental and emotional injury caused by encounters with racial bias

Three "E's" of Trauma
- <u>Events:</u> may include actual or threat or harm; may occur once or repeatedly over time
- <u>Experience:</u> how the individual assigns meaning to an event; may be traumatic for one person and not another
- <u>Effects:</u> may occur right away or have a delayed onset; a key component of the experience of trauma. Connection between event and effects may not be realized

Examples of the Effects of Trauma
- Hypervigilance
- Inability to cope with everyday stresses
- Everyday experiences may have negative associations
- Lack of trust/poor relationships
- Challenges in cognitive processes (memory, attention, regulating behavior)
- Limited ability to rationalize

SAMHSA's Six Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC): adoption of principles and practices that promote a culture of safety, empowerment and healing.
- Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery.
- Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system.
- Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices.
- Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.

Six Key Principles:
1. Safety: This isn't just physical safety – but also emotional safety. Examples include:
   - Rules for when someone can enter a unit
   - Security features
   - Good connections with service providers (mental health services, human services)
   - Own keys, locks

2. Trustworthiness and transparency: People feel safe when they know what to expect, and also that people will follow through. Examples include:
   - Tenant leadership/Input
   - Quality improvement
   - Hiring peers
   - Tenant education

3. Peer support: By connecting those we work with to peers; it can help folks to flourish and gain support in a way that we are unable to provide. Examples include:
   - Tenant leadership/Input
   - Hiring peers

4. Collaboration and mutuality: walking with a person side-by-side, instead of walking behind or in front of a person. Your clients' goals should be exactly that: theirs! Examples include:
   - Co-creation of goals (driven by client)
   - Seeking and implementing input

5. Empowerment, voice and choice: By providing even the smallest of choices, we can help to bring back some dignity as well as agency to people. Examples include:
   - Self-care
   - Adopting Trauma informed policies

- Shared decision making/tenant leadership
- Policies that support staff

6. <u>Culture, history and gender</u>: Culture, gender identity, and what's happened in our past shapes who we are; it's important to be sensitive to these things and incorporate them so that people feel comfortable.
   - Commitment to diversity and inclusion
   - Anti-racist approach
   - Adopting policies and protocols
   - Community events and programs

Resources

- www.csh.org
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpyYPscNzLw&list=PLn2dcn1mdW4oAhzNDrCrI0AGx11FJ_ukC&index=3 (Principles of Housing First)
- http://www.samhsa.gov/medication-assisted-treatment/treatment#medications-used-in-mat SAMHSA Harm Reduction and Substance Use Interventions
- https://www.orgcode.com/free-resources/p/honest-monthly-budget-worksheet (A Harm Reduction resource that supports conversations about finances and substance use)