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Defining Housing First for At Home/Chez Soi: Balancing Standardization and Adaptation

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At Home/Chez Soi Project Overview

In 2008 the Federal government allocated \$110million

At Home/Chez Soi is:

- the largest study of its kind in the world
- providing evidence about what services and systems best help people experiencing serious mental health issues and homelessness
- Housing First model
- implemented in: Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Moncton
- Funding – 85% services / 15% research

Target Population

- Adults (age 18 (19 in Vancouver))
- Homeless (absolutely or precariously housed)
- Presence of a serious mental health issue w/ or w/o co-occurring substance use disorder
- Over-sampling to ensure sufficient number of women (min. 20%)
- Total planned sample size 2205 (1255 exp and 1080 TAU)



Research Design

- Pragmatic, multi-site, randomized, mixed methods field trial
- Effectiveness and cost effectiveness of Housing First Model in Canadian contexts
- Model being tested at two levels of intensity
 - High needs = ACT
 - Moderate needs = ICM

Research Design (cont'd)

- Randomized to Housing First (HF) or TAU
- Each site has third arm
- Comparisons to care as usual in all cities
- Outcome data collected at baseline, 6, 12, 18, & 21 months
- Two fidelity assessments and formative evaluations
- Qualitative data collected on subgroup of participants at baseline and 18 months

What are complex interventions?

- Housing First is a complex intervention (CI)
- Complex interventions have multiple, interacting components
- CI's are implemented within and adapted to shifting contexts
- Given complexity of process and context, a different, mixed methods, approach is needed for ascertaining fidelity and making inferences



Housing First in At Home / Chez Soi

- Housing is immediate and permanent
- Choice emphasized
- Housing is primarily scattered site, private market
- Supports include guaranteed rent subsidies – clients pay 30%
- Additional services (>1 visit) are voluntary
- No readiness/maintenance conditions
- Tenancy rights
- Draws upon Pathways to Housing and Streets to Homes approaches



Characteristics of the innovation

- Compatibility (contextual appropriateness, fit , congruence, match)
- Adaptability (program modification, reinvention)
- programs that can be modified to fit the needs of provider organizations and communities have a better chance of stronger implementation than those that must be conducted “as is”

Durlak, J. and DuPre, E. , 2008

Assertive Community Treatment

- 1:10 staff to client ratio
- Services available 24 hours, 7 days per week
- Specialized multidisciplinary team
- Mobile and provides direct support in community
- Provides a platform for implementing effective practices
- Person-centered individualized goal-planning

Intensive Case Management

- 1:15 staff to client ratio
- Intensive case managers coordinate services
- Available 7 days per week, a minimum of 12 hours per day
- Familiarity with case loads of others on the team
- Brokers access to all necessary services in the community
- Individualized goal setting and case planning



Common Elements of fidelity: Housing & Recovery-Oriented Care

- Housing Choice & Structure
- Separation of Housing & Services
- Treatment Philosophy (Recovery Orientation)
- Service Array

Unique Structural Elements of fidelity

- Direct service vs referral
- Team Approach (ACT)
- Caseloads (ACT vs. ICM: 1:10 vs. 1:20)
- Frequency of Contact (ACT vs. ICM: 3/month vs. 4/month)
- Frequency of Meetings (ACT vs. ICM: Daily vs. Weekly)

***Program in context* evaluation**

- Complex interventions are by definition difficult to standardize
- In complex interventions, the function and process of the intervention should be standardized, not the components themselves.
- This allows the form to be tailored to the local context and could improve effectiveness.

“Investigation of how intervention effects are modified by context is a new methodological frontier in community intervention trial research.”

Hawe, P. et al 2008

How does this shift our approach to fidelity?

- Taking a less prescriptive approach
- Understanding how critical ingredients are adapted to specific context
- Understanding whether critical principles/functions are implemented (vs. specifying specific forms of implementation)
- Understanding “how” and “why” (in addition to understanding “whether”)

Early Findings: Implementing At Home/Chez Soi

- Good fidelity to the Housing First model
- Developing broad understanding of service philosophy - choice of housing and treatment
- Challenges to deliver intensity and breadth of support model
- Need to develop staff capacity
- Importance of housing procurement strategy
- Subgroup requiring multiple re-housing



At Home/Chez Soi Participants working on a farm in Moncton

Early Findings: Implementing At Home/Chez Soi

Housing in Housing First

Characteristics of housing model:

- Similarities: strategies to engage landlords, procure housing
- Variations: number of FTEs, interaction with service teams and participants





Finding the right mix of fidelity and adaptation

“Research that collects good data on aspects of of both fidelity and adaptation that usually co-occur during implementation will be valuable in understanding how interventions work in real world settings.”

Durlak, J. and DuPre, E. , 2008

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Thank you!

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