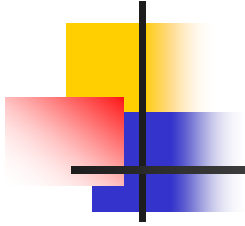




Community as Client

Homeless Families: An
Assessment of Their Assets,
Beliefs, and the Requirements to
Invoke Change



- As a component of our mental health rotation, we have completed an assessment of homeless families. We obtained data from the residents and staff of the shelter to gain a holistic view which allowed us to recognize the assets, beliefs, and the requirements needed to invoke change within this population.



Our Client

- Our definition of a homeless family is a unit of two or more people, one of which is under the age of 18, that are currently without shelter.
- For this presentation, we have focused on homeless families currently residing in a shelter.



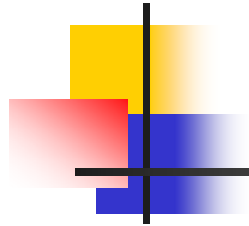
Assets

- The common assets of a homeless family that we encountered include:
- Ability to act as own support network, within each family, as well as between other families in the shelter
- Motivation through family members
- Possibility of shared duties (I.e., childcare, cleaning)
- Resourceful
- Adaptable
- Resilient
- Hope and determination



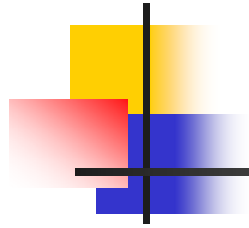
Common Themes

- Stress
- Concerns for physical well-being of self and family members
- The need for a strong support network
- Inability to maintain financial stability
- The need for autonomy
- Difficulty maintaining a positive outlook
- Reduced social interaction with peers outside of the shelter



Health Determinants

- Income and social status
- Social support networks
- Education
- Physical environment
- Biology and genetics
- Employment and working conditions
- Personal health practices and coping skills
- Healthy child development
- Health services



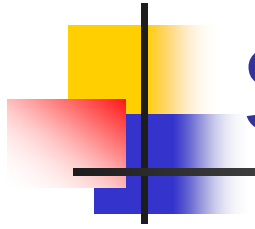
Income and Social Status

- **This is a major health determinant because generally, this is the most common cause of homelessness; therefore, addressing this could possibly alleviate many cases of homelessness.**
- The financial need of the families is greater than the families' income
- Stereotypes and stigmas



Income and Social Status continued...

- The shelter allows its residents to continue to work without having to spend their money on hotels or rent.



Social Support Networks

- **This is an important health determinant because with strong social supports, an individual or family unit is better equipped to cope with their situation and maintain strength and hope during difficult times.**
- While homeless, they feel they have no one to confide in
- Often society disconnects with them, including family and friends
- Social skills diminish from lack of support
- Regular routine is altered



Social Support Networks continued...

- The shelter provided an opportunity for individuals to interact with, and gain support from other families who are experiencing homelessness
- It also provides access to supports and resources in the community
- The shelter caused some residents to reconnect with outside family members because these members comprehended the need of support



Personal Health Practices and Coping Skills

- **This is an important health determinant because through building a strong foundation of healthy coping skills and personal health practices, individuals are more equipped to manage current and future stressors.**
- Homelessness is often a catalyst for low self-esteem
- Personal health practices may diminish due to various factors



Personal Health Practices and Coping Skills continued...

- Although there were no formal coping skills development at the shelter, the staff was available to facilitate personal health practices such as hygiene care, and seeking medical attention
- The shelter facilitated religious practices, which is a positive coping skill
- The residents at the shelter identified that informal conversation with the staff was a therapeutic coping mechanism



Health Services

- **This is an important health determinant because access to health services is necessary to maintain adequate mental and physical health**
- Many of these families are unable to access and/or finance these services independently
- Dental problems were a common concern for several residents
- Many physical and mental health concerns were present among the residents



Health Services continued...

- The shelter afforded many residents information about health services in the community, such as:
 - The Friendship Center
 - Babies Best Start
 - Salvation Army
 - Oasis Church
 - Church of Christ dinners
 - Income Support Program
 - Odyssey House
 - Wapiti Dorm
 - Grande Spirit Foundation



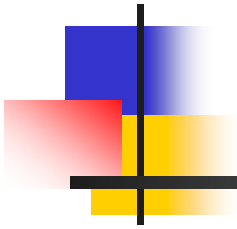
Potential Beneficial Programs for a Homeless Family Shelter

- **Possible workshops:**

- Typing and basic computer skills
- Building healthy coping skills
- Resume building
- Financial planning and budgeting

- **Possible long-term programs:**

- Literacy programs
- Social programs (I.e., bowling)
- Counseling programs
- Health programs (dentist and doctor visits, possible nursing student opportunities)



Scharfstein, D. & VanDerKaa, L. (March 2007).
Grande Prairie Regional College.
NS 3950