

Engaging Vulnerable Persons

Calgary Alpha House Society

HOPE. SERVICE. WELL-BEING

2021-05-11

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Calgary Alpha House Society

- Shelter
- Detox
 - Transitional Beds
- Housing
 - Placed Based
 - Community
- Outreach
 - Encampment
 - Needle Response Team
 - Downtown Outreach Addictions Partnership (DOAP)

Goals for EVP Training

- Learn about addictions and mental health and homelessness
- Improve interactions with vulnerable individuals
- Confront personal biases
- Learn tools to feel comfortable taking action: what is your role and purpose
- Challenge comfort levels

Accepting Addictions

- What is addiction?
- Reducing the fear/stigma around addictions
- Understanding drug use and its place in our society
- Why harm reduction?
- Talk about it, ask questions, share stories

System of Care

- Harm reduction is part of the system of care
- Reducing negative consequences associated with drug/alcohol use
- Individuals might be unwilling or unable to stop using at any given time; need options that include support prior to abstinence based recovery

EXAMPLES OF HARM REDUCTION IN OTHER AREAS



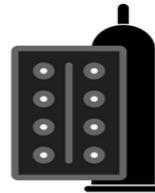
SUN
SCREEN



SEAT
BELTS



SPEED
LIMITS



BIRTH
CONTROL



CIGARETTE
FILTERS

What is Homelessness?



Unsheltered



Emergency Sheltered



Provisionally Accommodated



At Risk of Homelessness

Continuum of Homelessness

Homeless Chronicity: Definitions

Transitional Homelessness

Individuals require emergency shelter for a short time, usually less than 1 month.

Episodic Homelessness

Lacking stability, individuals move in and out of homelessness.

Chronic Homelessness

Continuously homeless for a year or more.

Root Causes of Homelessness

Micro Factors	Macro Factors	System Failures
Traumatic events	Lack of adequate income	Transitions from child welfare
Personal crisis	Lack of access to affordable housing & health supports	Inadequate discharge planning from Hospitals, Corrections, Mental Health & Addiction facilities
Mental Health & Addictions Challenges	Discrimination	Lack of supports for immigrants and refugees

Exiting Homelessness in Calgary

The top 5 challenges to successful exits from homelessness

1. Wait times for housing, subsidies, or benefits
2. Obtaining information
3. Not having a phone or computer/internet access
4. Needing to have identification
5. Coming up with money for a damage deposit and/or first month's rent

94% of study participants felt there was a lack of housing they could afford when they were seeking to exit homelessness

64% of participants said they felt bored and 63% said they felt lonely now that they are housed

Continued

Most study participants estimated that one to three agencies and one to five people (either w/n the agency or outside it) had supported their exit from homelessness

Most valuable attributes of service providers:

1. Being patient and persistent
2. Being caring and listening
3. Letting participants be independent

Trauma Informed

- **Trauma** - lasting emotional response that often results from living through a distressing event. Experiencing a **traumatic** event can harm a person's sense of safety, sense of self, and ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships.
- Coping mechanisms – anger, guilt, shame
- A traumatic event can be:
 - Anything
- Re-traumatization (79% of participants in study referenced earlier) felt re-telling their homelessness story was a difficult part of their experience

Understand the Situation

- Assessing the situation
 - Perceived vs actual danger
- Body language
- Other factors at play?
 - Trauma
 - Survival mode

Understand the Situation

- Concept of Unworthy vs Worthy Poor
- Obligation as a passerby/citizen?
- Best practices for Engaging

Rapport and Engagement

- Cannot force it
- Built up slowly over time
- Tips to help build rapport

Verbal Resolution Model

Person in crisis:

1. Anxiety
2. Defensiveness
3. Intimidation
4. Emotional release

Your response:

1. Supportive
2. Concise directives
3. Disengagement
4. Therapeutic response

Anxiety

- Frustration
- Sleep deprivation
- Feels they aren't being heard
- Hunger or urgent need for something
- Under influence of drugs/alcohol



**Respond with
empathy &
support. Give
options.**

Defensiveness



- Attempting to draw you into a power struggle
- Unable to stay on topic
- Defensive commentary or attacking language
- Ultimatums are used

**Respond with
short, clear and
simple directives**

Intimidation



- Verbal threats of harm
- Damaging property
- Spitting
- Pretending to strike you
- Physically hitting you

**Respond by
disengaging and,
if necessary, call
911 for help**

Emotional Release

- A decrease in emotional intensity
- Remorse or apology
- Regret or shame



**Respond by
validating feelings
and reinforcing
boundaries**

Break the Cycle of Negative Interactions

- You have to be aware, but you do not have to walk on eggshells



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Practice Scenarios

Frustrated he didn't get his usual bed at a shelter, Joe finds a warm spot in your condo building stairwell to sleep. You find him and you have to tell him he can't stay there.

Practice Scenarios

You routinely pass a woman on the street, on your way to your coffee shop in the morning. Today she seems particularly agitated and erratic. What might your response be?

Practice Scenarios

There is a shirtless and shoeless individual standing on the street corner. They appear agitated and are pacing/bouncing on the spot. What indicators might we look for to determine if this person wants to be approached/would be comfortable being approached? What might our first steps be in this situation if we wanted to offer support?

Practice Scenarios

You have developed a rapport with an individual who is frequently on the sidewalk outside your office building. Today they are particularly down and you wish to provide them with the options you know about for social service supports.

However, whenever you bring up the many shelter options (Alpha House, The DI, The Mustard Seed...), they identify that they have tried all of those places and have had bad experiences. How might you respond? What are your options to help?

Resources

Detox 403 234 7388 Ext 2

Shelter 403 234 7388 Ext 1

Outreach

- DOAP Team
 - 403 998 7388
- Needle Response Team
 - 403 796 5334
- Encampment Team
 - 403 805 7388

Questions

