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Mapping Metro Vancouver: Exploring Implementation Possibilities for Housing First

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Background

- Housing First (HF) advocates for the utilization of a systems approach to tackle homelessness in a collective, multi-system, and cross-sectoral manner.
- Sufficient access to support resources is essential for successful HF delivery while the lack of sufficient resources is one of the key barriers to implementing HF.

Background

Need for study in Metro Vancouver:

- No data that describes resource differences between and within communities
- Communities need to be able to identify evidence of needs when advocating for support
- HF resources do not have an in-depth understanding and application of HF service delivery.

Study Aim

- To enhance understanding of how the system of support services necessary for Housing First implementation function across Metro Vancouver.

Community Mapping

- Community-based participatory approach, providing participants an active voice in the research process

13 Community mapping workshops (n=215)

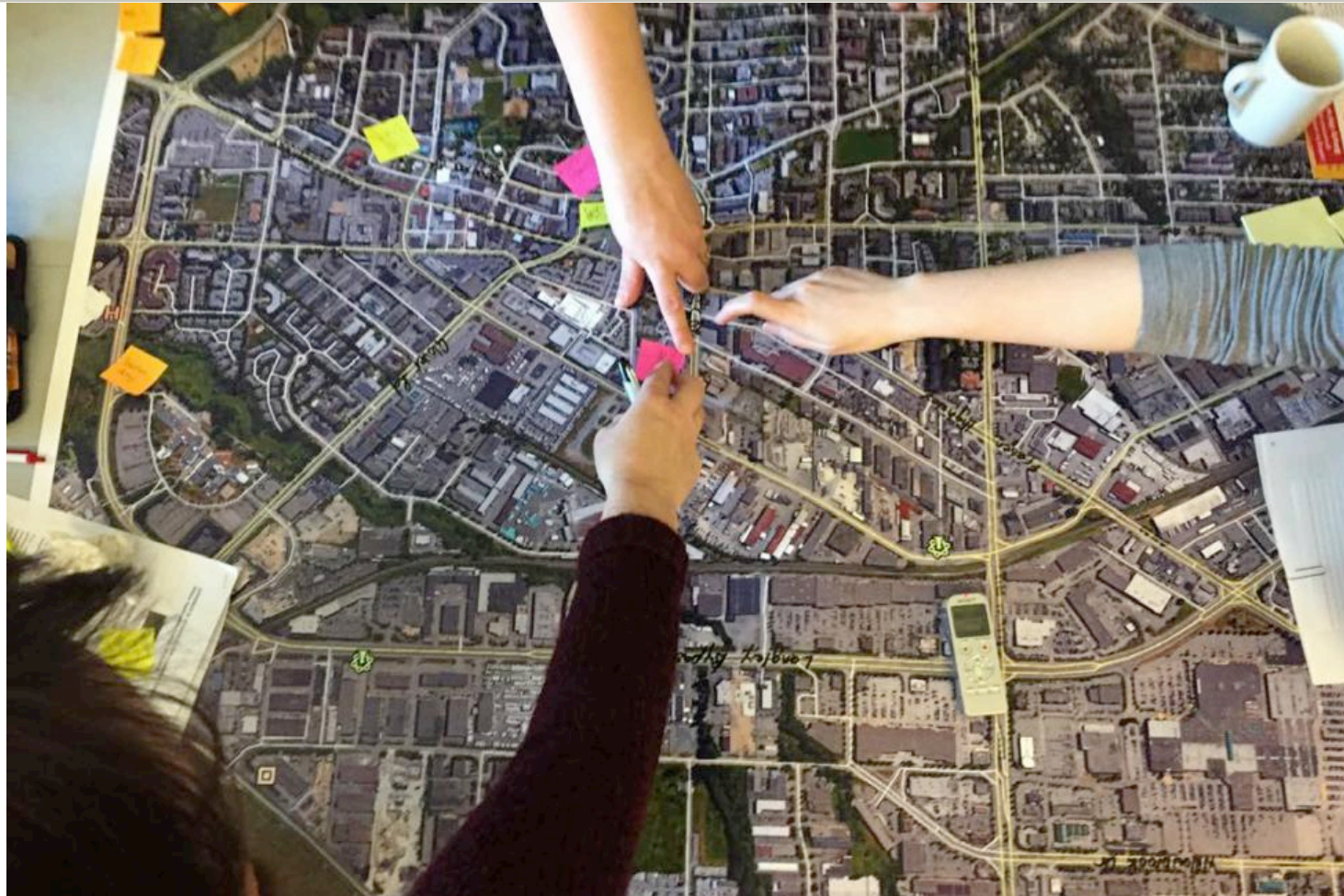
- Langley (n=19)
- Richmond (n=11)
- North Shore (n=10)
- New Westminister (n=13)
- Tri-Cities (n=31)
- Surrey (n=14)
- Maple Ridge (n=14)
- Vancouver (n=17)
- Burnaby (n=14)
- DTES (n=20)

Women (n=19)

Youth (n=16)

Seniors (n=17)

Data Collection and Analyses



Research Questions

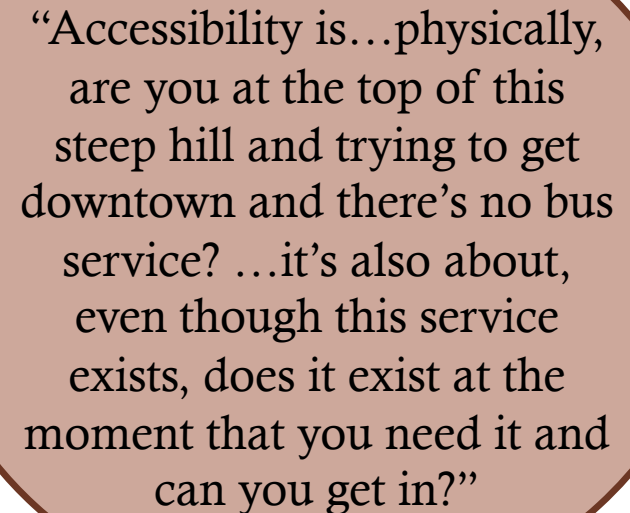
1. What difficulties are there in using these services and supports?
2. What helps you access services and supports in the community?
3. Where are there gaps in service provision?
4. Where do you get these resources that aren't available in your area?

Findings



Access Challenges

1. Long waitlists
2. Unaccommodating service hours
3. Lack of access to telephones or computers
4. Transportation challenges and having to travel to other communities
5. Limited knowledge and misinformation about services and system navigation



“Accessibility is...physically, are you at the top of this steep hill and trying to get downtown and there’s no bus service? ...it’s also about, even though this service exists, does it exist at the moment that you need it and can you get in?”

Individual-Level Challenges

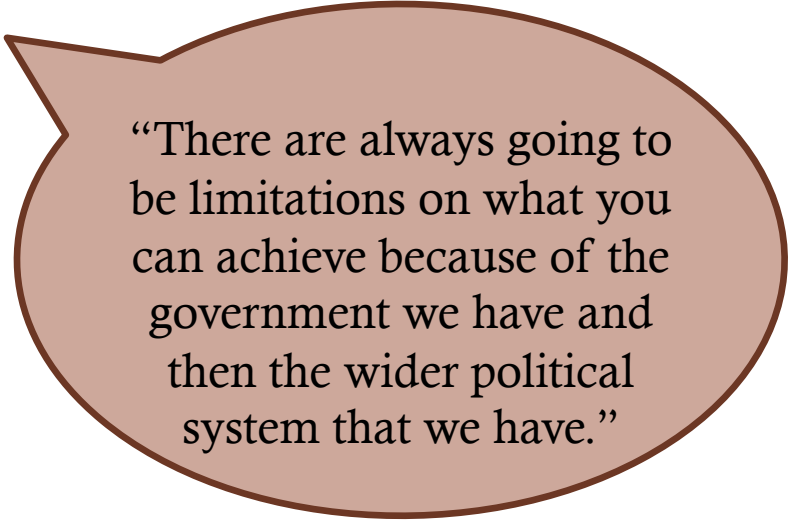
1. Hesitance vs. willingness to seek assistance
2. Readiness to participate in programs
3. Difficulty completing forms
4. Language and cultural barriers
5. Non-normative behaviors

Organizational Challenges

1. Program capacity
2. Service provider workload and turnover
3. Service provider willingness to work with certain clients
4. Service providers working in silos
5. Organization mandates
 1. Clients are not in crises or needs are not severe enough
 2. Clients are required to be attached to mental health teams
 3. Limits on shelter stays

Socio-Political Challenges

1. Funding for services and supports
2. Denial of the existence of homelessness
3. Community pushback and Not-in-my-back-yard (NIMBY) ideologies
4. Stigma toward clients



“There are always going to be limitations on what you can achieve because of the government we have and then the wider political system that we have.”

Gaps and Needs

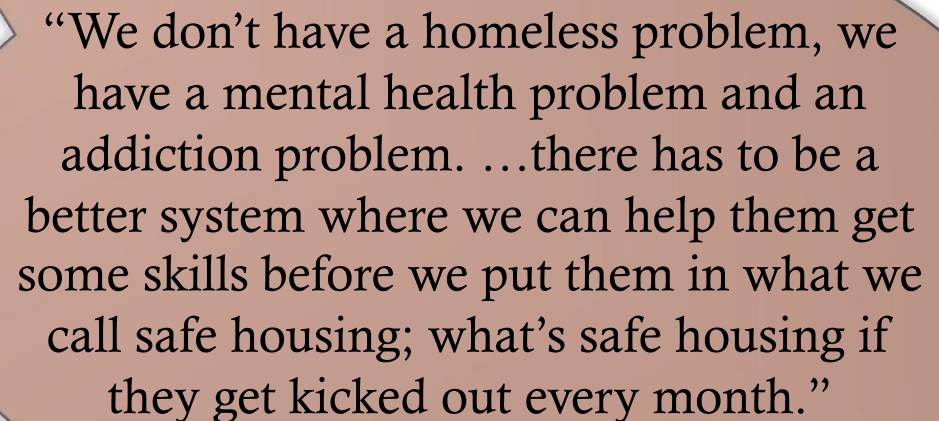
- HOUSING: permanent, affordable options
- HOUSING: for families, that allows pets, supportive of clients learning to live independently, for youth aging out of care
- HOUSING: culturally appropriate, accessible for persons with mobility challenges, safe, clean, and non-judgmental

Need: Support Workers to “Walk Alongside” Clients

1. Outreach workers, who go out into the community to identify persons who need support and housing;
2. Housing navigators, who assists clients locate and obtain housing;
3. Case management workers, who assist clients maintain their home once housed;
4. On-site staff for housing projects, who support tenants as needed.

Gaps and Needs: Mental Health & Addictions

1. Addictions services (detox, daytox, residential treatment...)
2. Concurrent disorder services
3. Harm reduction services
4. Counseling
5. Hoarding



“We don’t have a homeless problem, we have a mental health problem and an addiction problem. ...there has to be a better system where we can help them get some skills before we put them in what we call safe housing; what’s safe housing if they get kicked out every month.”

Gaps and Needs: Education

1. Informal social and life skills education for clients
2. Low-cost or free formal education
3. Education for frontline workers on how to work with persons with mental illness, including emergency personnel and healthcare providers
4. Education for the community to reduce stigma

Needs: Inclusive Communities

- Reintegrate socially excluded persons into communities throughout Metro Vancouver
 1. Recreation and community centers
 2. Peer support

Gaps and Needs: Funding

1. Increased income assistance rates
2. Individual subsidies for household goods, utility bills, tenant insurance, transportation, etc.
3. Increased rent supplements

Discussion

- **Findings revealed:**
 - Housing First supports available throughout Metro Vancouver; functioning variably in different regions
 - Barriers faced in obtaining and maintaining Housing First occur at multiple levels
 - Significant service gaps reported and needs were identified; varying from one community to the next
- **Recommendations developed and outlined in Tables 1 and 2 (see handouts)**
 - Profile of residents & needs varies throughout Metro Vancouver
→ *Notably, one size does not fit all*

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