

Serious Mental Illness and Homelessness: Supplemental Information

Actionable Takeaways

- Lean into Housing First policies with robust supportive services
- Understand and address criminalization efforts in your community
- Prioritize structural, high-level coordination and cooperation amongst legal, mental health, and homelessness systems
- Build sustainable wellness and trauma support for staff into program budgets as opposed to one-time benefits or interventions
- Build outreach and flexibility into program structures to meet the needs of people who aren't able to seek services inside an office setting
- Seek funding streams to sustainably support outreach services that are not tied to brick-and-mortar delivery
- Build substance use supports into outreach by collaborating with emergency response systems and healthcare providers
- Incorporate lived experience in program development, including feedback from those who have participated in currently offered services
- Build awareness of our own individual internal biases to provide better care
- Ensure that staff are trained in conflict resolution and motivational interviewing
- Incorporate ongoing Trauma-Informed Care training
- Provide long-term engagement that is tailored to the needs and setting of the individual

Tips for Working with People with SMI

- Approach with patience and empathy first
- Understand that skills that may seem obvious to you regarding living in a home of your own are not taught to everyone
- Focus on baby steps instead of beginning with the biggest goals
- Understand that every behavior is based in the perception of the person experiencing SMI and their experience of homelessness
- Incorporate active listening and motivational interviewing
- Conduct outreach in pairs and include delivery of basic items like socks and food
- Assess the intent behind the contact: should the focus be our goals as a service provider or the goals of the individual? Where can we shift our perspective?

Additional Training and Resources

- [Intentional Peer Support Model](#)
- [Collaborative Problem Solving](#) – traditionally used with children but recently expanded to adults
- [Lived Experience Training Academy](#) – rolling out in September 2022!
- [Corporation for Supportive Housing](#)
- [Harm Reduction Model](#)