Implementing Housing First:
Interim Findings from a Mixed Methods Fidelity/Implementation Evaluation of
At Home/Chez Soi

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Background

Housing First (HF) Model
Housing First merges the evidence-based practices of Supported Housing and case management -
Case management delivered in one of two formats, Intensive Case Management (ICM) or Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), depending on level of need: moderate for ICM and high for ACT
Supported Housing - Basic Program Elements/Critical Ingredients:
- Choice: housing based on consumer choice
- Availability: (6 access) housing is made available to participants relatively quickly and housing stock is
  pressed through a housing agency that works for the program
- Affordability: rent supplements are provided to access housing in the private market and participants pay
  30% of their income on rent
- Permanence/commitment to re-house: participants have standard leases and tenancy protection that
  comes with this

Separation of treatment and support: minimum expectation that participants meet with team member at
least once per week but no requirement for participation in mental health services or abstinence and there
are no requirements for “housing readiness”

Assertive Community Treatment - Critical Ingredients:
- Recovery-oriented ACT team (provides crisis management, supported education/employment)
- $team provides all (or most) services within team
- $client/staff ratio of 10:1 or less and includes a psychiatrist and nurse
- $program staff are closely involved in hospital admissions and discharges
- $teams meet daily and include at least one peer specialist as staff
- $seven-day a week, 24 hr crisis coverage

Intensive Case Management - Critical Ingredients:
- $team provides some services, but brokers or refers most
- $client/staff ratio of 20:1 or less
- $workers accompany clients to appointments
- $centralized assignment and monthly case conferences
- $seven-day a week, 12 hours per day coverage

Research Questions

Quantitative Fidelity Assessment:
- Are the “critical ingredients” implemented?
- Does interventions numerically using scale

Qualitative Process & Implementation evaluation uncover:
- Are the intervention implemented as planned?
- What are the barriers and facilitators of implementation?
- What is the process of adapting the intervention to different contexts?
- How do the critical ingredients achieve expected outcomes? (logic model)

Mixed Methods: A Definition

At its basic elements, mixed methods research involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data (in response to quantitative and qualitative research questions) at merging, looking, or combining of the two sources of data, and then conducting research as a single study - we also add into this... a need for the mixed methods project to advance our understanding of this form of inquiry. Authors need to position their study within the on-going discussions about mixed methods research.


Cross Cutting Themes

Choice: Expanding Notions
- The teams’ commitment to choice over treatment should be complemented by opportunities for persons with lived experience to take ownership of the project as a whole
- Providing “choice” over treatment does not mean being “passive fail”: teams should provide motivational approaches to engage participants
- While many, if not most, prefer “their own place”, choice for some might mean places with built-in support, or with opportunities for congregation
- Cultural factors may shape whether individuals choose private apartments or social housing

Staff Capacity Issues

Challenges:
- Shortage of staff to the HF model is a great asset
- Complexity and intensity of providing support is presenting burnout and staff turnover issues
- Site visits by the fidelity team using HF fidelity tool
- Focus groups with service providers (case management teams, and housing teams)
- Key informant interviews with Site Coordinators, and Site Principal Investigators (HP)
- “Criitical Ingredients” implemented?
- Housing procurement strategy is important, yet tacit, aspect of the HF logic model
- Housing procurement strategy can be crucial in providing rapid access and choice to participants

Need for Clearer Governance

Challenges:
- Critical lines of communication between multiple agencies
- Local committees structures while effective in the long run are unwieldy for making short-term decisions
- Networking with specialist providers to address complexity
- Integrating specific illness management and recovery practices into practice, e.g. Ridgway’s “Recovery Journey”

Knowledge Exchange: Feeding Back Data to Teams

- Each site responsible for developing plan to address recommendations
- Challenges in feeding back information to busy service providers
- How initial defensiveness re fidelity ratings from a few teams
- Despite some challenges, teams are generally open to receiving feedback
- Feedback presented as “developmental” vs. “a test”
- Second round fidelity visits/Implementation evaluation in progress

Data Gathering

- Fidelity team provides rating to each team (on implementation of critical ingredients, including qualitative summary and recommendations)
- Theme analysis using constant comparative coding consistent with grounded theory (GT)
- Practically, approach follows Charmaz’ (2006) constructivist GT
- Key site analysis: data and produces site reports
- National Qualitative Research Team produces cross-site report

Data Analysis

- Cross-cutting themes: housing readiness
- Cross-cutting themes: implementation
- Cross-cutting themes: cross-cutting themes

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