



Minneapolis / Hennepin County Office to End Homelessness
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Housing First Program Evaluation

Housing First

In the Spring of 2009, a capstone class of students from the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs evaluated Hennepin County's Housing First programs that target single adults who are long-term homeless. Led by Professor Maria Hanratty from the Humphrey Institute, the class conducted both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of participants in Housing First programs.

Housing First is a nationally recognized model for addressing the needs of people who are homeless. The model provides permanent "housing first" along with case management to address each individual's barriers to maintaining housing. The model does not require people to move along a continuum of transitional or temporary housing programs while they work on barriers to permanent housing before being placed into permanent housing.

Through the end of 2008, there were 444 single adults placed into Housing First programs. This evaluation examined a sample of those 444 adults along with a matched comparison group. Added to the data were Minneapolis police contacts, Medical Assistance enrollment, publicly funded shelter usage, and interviews with a sample of the Housing First participants.

Housing First Evaluation Key Findings

- Housing First participants' shelter use dramatically decreased after housing placement.
- The program increased the number of days and the continuity of health care coverage.
- The Housing First program contributed to a decreased in arrests in the 12 months pre- and post-placement. The decrease was not seen after only 3 or 6 months.
- Housing First participants experienced a decline in their average incidents of victimization in the 12 months pre- and post-placement.
- The Housing First program did not reduce the percentage of long-term or frequent shelter users.
- Placement into housing had a positive effect on participants' feelings of safety and well-being.
- The transition to housing posed challenges related to new daily activities and a changing social environment.
- The location of initial placement for many participants was not the last.
- Participants noted their respective case managers provided a great deal of support before, during, and after the move into housing.
- Transportation was a significant challenge that affected prospects for jobs, access to health care, and general well-being for participants after placement.

The evaluation was conducted as a collaboration between Hennepin County and the University of Minnesota through the Hennepin University Partnership (HUP). Programs involved in the evaluation included COHR program (SARAP, Hearth, WHP, and GRH), Hennepin County Housing First (COHR, Cabrini, People Inc, St. Stephens' Youth Link, Catholic Charities-ELHIP), Secure Waiting-Housing First, Street Case Management, and FUSE. The authors of the project were Tim Barry, Naima Bashir, Mitra Esmaeili, Kerstin Larson, Tim Reneau-Major, and Julie Trupke-Bastidas.