Homelessness and Mental Health

Many studies have examined mental health outcomes among people experiencing homelessness. Here, we summarize three recent studies.

THE FIRST STUDY, Long-Term Effects of Rent Supplements and Mental Health Support Services on Housing and Health Outcomes of Homeless Adults with Mental Illness: Extension Study of the At Home/Chez Soi Randomized Controlled Trial, examined the effectiveness of a Housing First program in Toronto on housing stability for homeless adults with mental illness. 414 study participants were followed over 6 years after the intervention started.

• The number of days spent stably housed in each of the six years was significantly higher for participants randomly assigned to Housing First than those who had not been assigned to Housing First (aka “treatment as usual”).

• In year six, homeless adults with high mental health support needs were stably housed for 86% of the study time period with Housing First, compared to 60% without the intervention. Participants with moderate health support needs were stably housed for 88% of days in Housing First, compared to 78% without the intervention.

THE SECOND STUDY, *The Physical and Mental Health Effects of Housing Homeless People: A Systematic Review*, was a systematic review of more than 20 studies of housing interventions and their impact on mental health in multiple countries from 1999 to 2020.

- Overall, permanent supportive housing was associated with decreased anxiety and depression.
- In one study, older people experiencing homelessness who received permanent supportive housing had *significant* decreases in reports of depression and use of acute care facilities.
- In another study in this systematic review, *suicidal ideation decreased* by about 50% for homeless adults with alcohol use difficulties after being given housing interventions.


- 53% of homeless adolescents *reported persistent sadness or hopelessness*, compared to 37% of non-homeless adolescents.
- 28% of homeless adolescents *reported attempting suicide*, compared to 8% of non-homeless adolescents.


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