Addressing Contraceptive Disparities among Women Experiencing Homelessness

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Acknowledgements

Funding: NIMHD U54 Pilot Project 2019

Conflict of Interest: The authors have no conflicts to disclose

Human Subjects: Approved by North Texas Regional IRB

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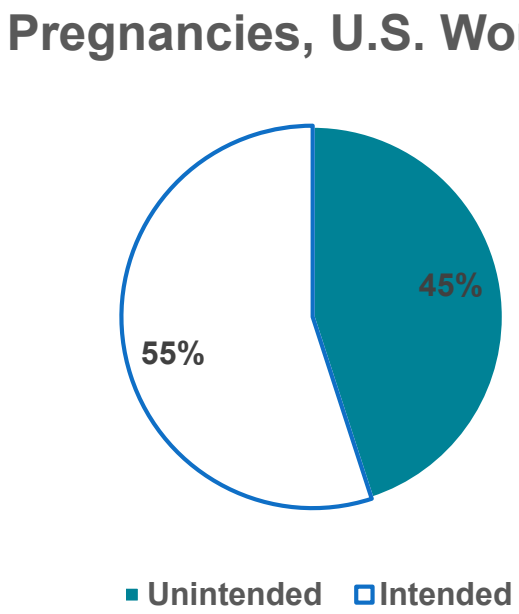
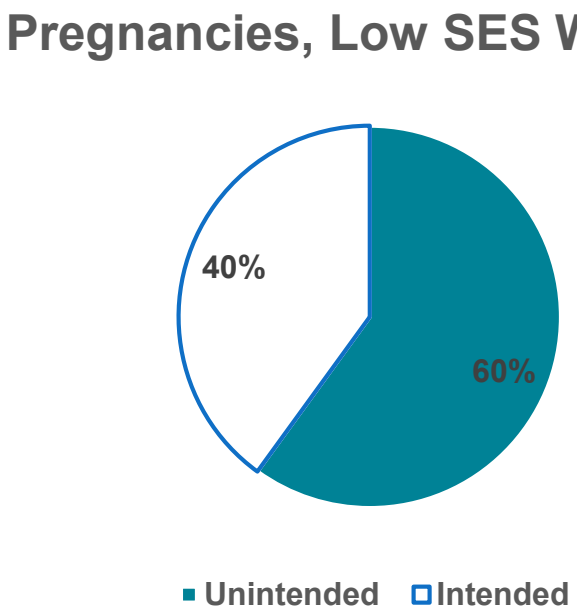
Unintended Pregnancies

Unintended pregnancies are a **public health challenge** with long-term consequences and health disparities for women.





(Finer & Zolna, 2016).

Women Experiencing Homelessness

Women experiencing homelessness are a particularly **vulnerable** population for unintended pregnancy.

This can **perpetuate the cycle of poverty** across the **life course**.

Children born into homelessness are at risk for:

- adverse childhood experiences
- behavioral issues
- academic issues
- mental health issues

Contraception Barriers

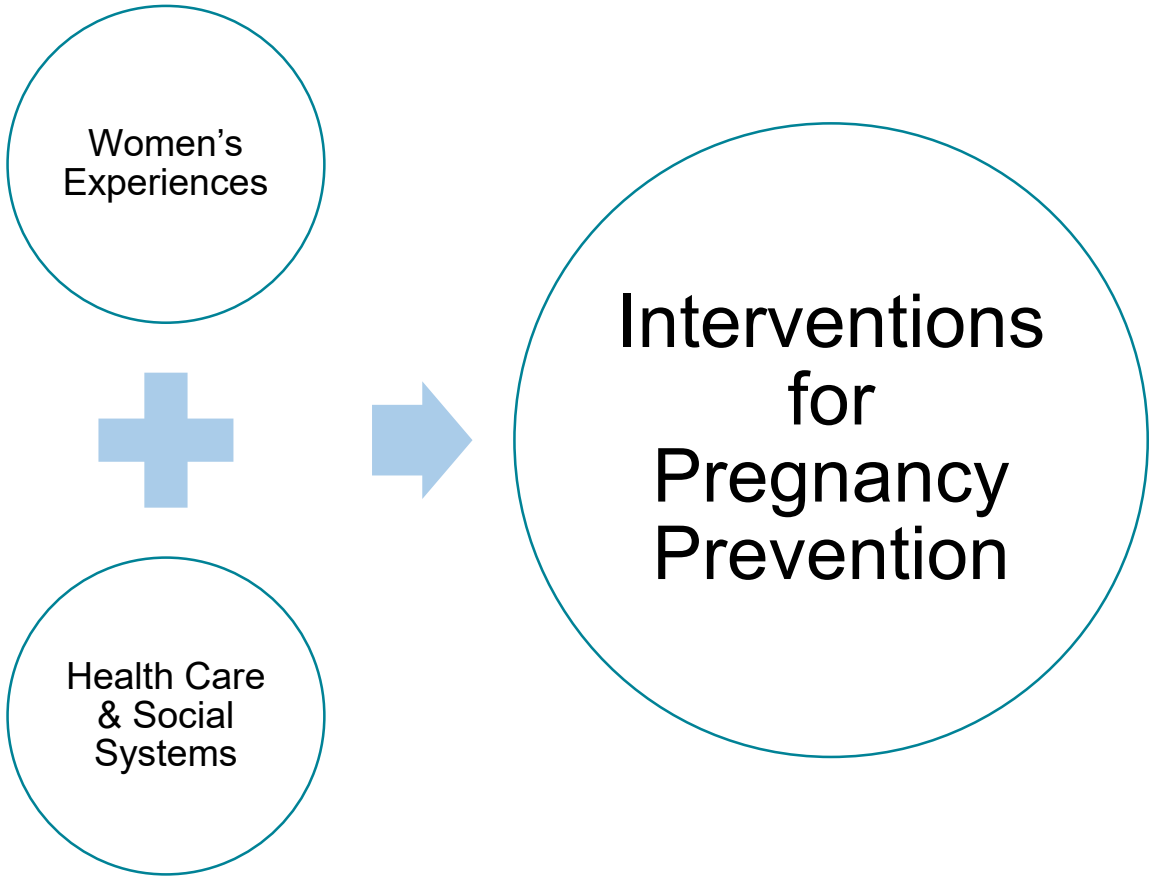
Approximately 95% of unintended pregnancies are attributed to **nonuse or inconsistent use of contraception** (Sonfield et al., 2014)

Women experiencing homelessness report a **strong desire** to avoid pregnancy, but face **unique barriers**:

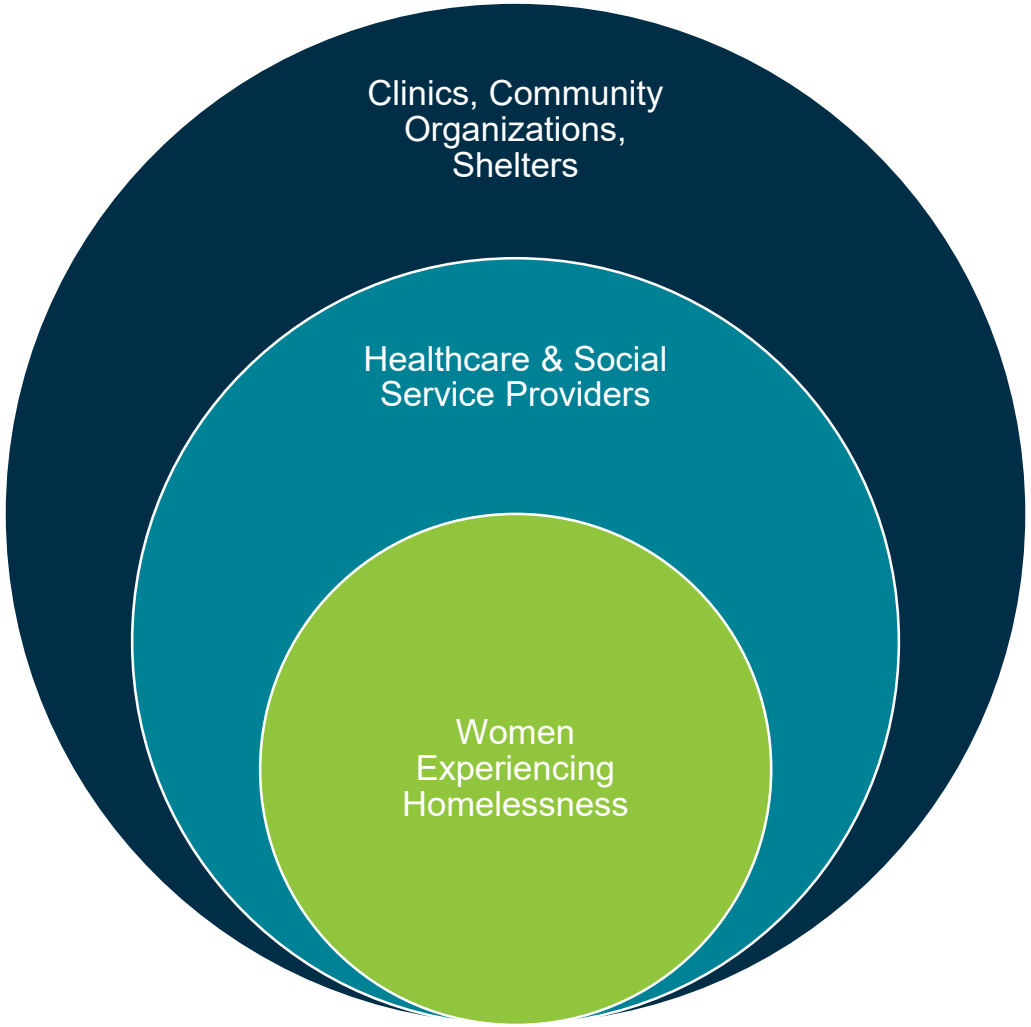
- Competing survival demands
- Shelter-related obstacles
- Survival sex or sexual assault
- Use of low effectiveness methods
- Difficulty accessing services
- Lack of comprehensive counseling

Women's Reproductive Health

Current health interventions for women experiencing homelessness primarily focus on substance use, infection, and chronic disease prevention and treatment (Hwang et al., 2005), **rather** than pregnancy prevention.

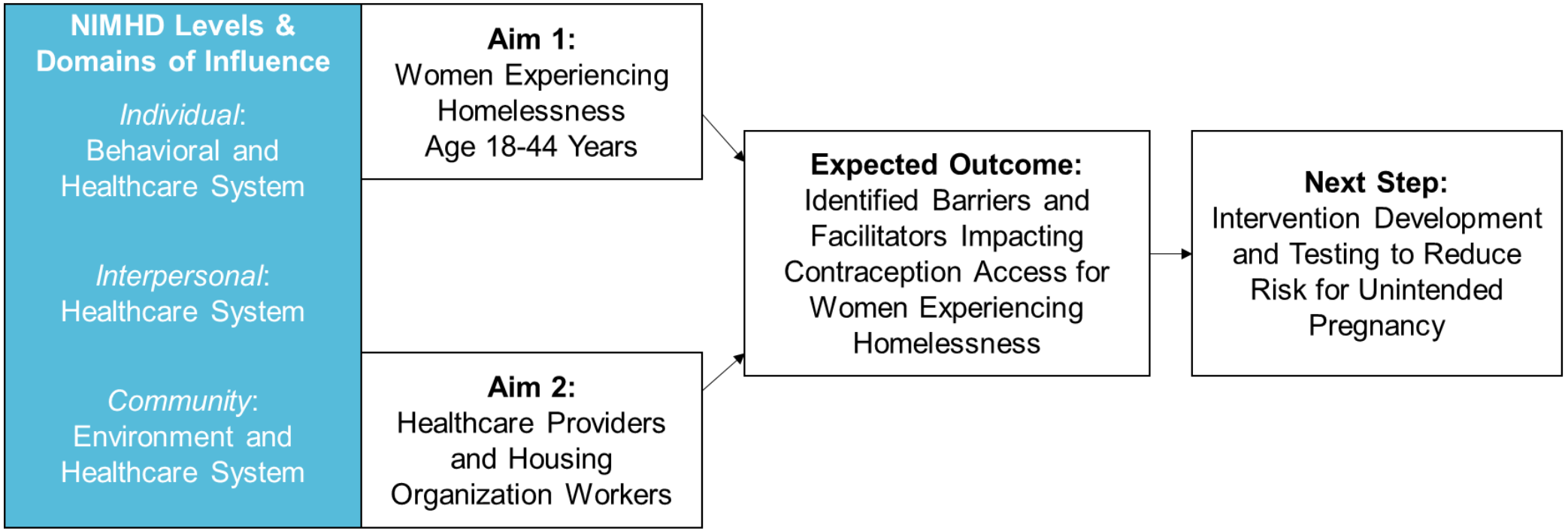


Socioecological Approach



Objectives & Aims

The objective of this study is to **identify contraceptive preferences**, as well as, **barriers to and facilitators of contraceptive access and use** among women experiencing homelessness.



Setting

In 2018, Fort Worth experienced a 12% increase in the number of persons identified as homeless.

- Meaning unsheltered, emergency shelter, transitional housing
- 0.2% of the total population, or 1,787 persons
- Approximately 37% of persons were women

(Tarrant County Homeless Coalition, 2018)

Sample

Women

- Ages 18-45
- Capable of pregnancy
- Not currently pregnant
- Unsheltered, emergency shelter, transitional housing, or rapid re-housing

Providers

- Ages 18+
- Serving women experiencing homelessness
- Fort Worth area
- Healthcare or social service setting

Recruitment

Women

- Homeless service organizations
- Emergency shelters
- Transitional housing programs
- Rapid re-housing programs

In-person recruitment or flyer from case manager starting Dec 2019 – March 2020

$25 gift card & bus pass

Providers

- Identified by interviews with women
- Local clinics serving homeless clients
- Housing programs

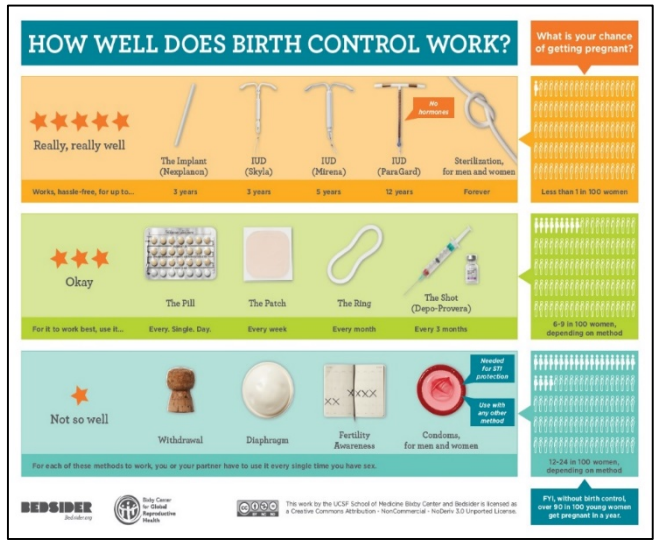
Email recruitment starting April 2020

$25 gift card

Data Collection

Women

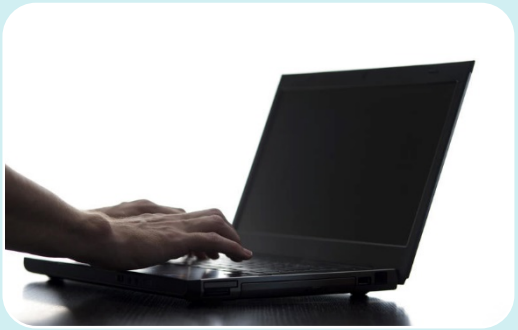
- In-person semi-structured interviews based on IMB Model
- Brief demographic survey
- Audio-recorded



Providers

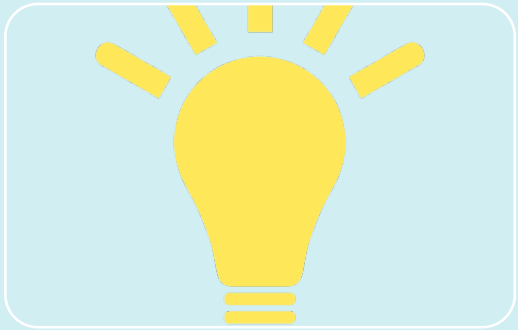
- Telephone* semi-structured interviews based on IMB Model
- Interview guide different for types of providers
- Brief demographic survey
- Audio-recorded

Data Management & Analysis



Transcription

Coding



Thematic Analysis

Preliminary Results: Women (n=16)

- **Race/Ethnicity**
  - 38% Black, Non-Hispanic
  - 62% White, Non-Hispanic
- **Average Age** = 34 years
- **Education Attainment**
  - 56% High school of less
  - 44% Some college
- **Insurance**
  - 56% JPS Connection
  - 44% Medicaid
- **Marital Status**
  - 62% Single
  - 19% Married/Partnered
  - 19% Divorced/Separated
- **Sexual Orientation**
  - 69% Heterosexual
  - 31% Bisexual
- **Pregnant In the Next Year**
  - 18% Yes
  - 38% Don’t Know
  - 44% No

Preliminary Results: Women (n=16)

3

Average # of Pregnancies

2

Average # of Unplanned Pregnancies

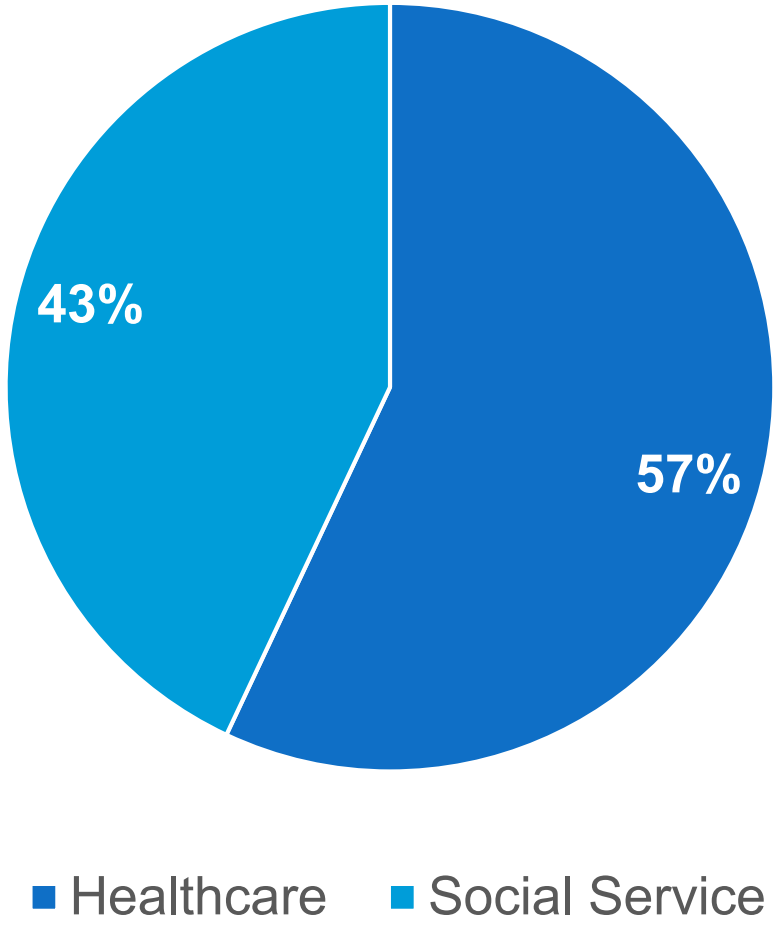
2

Average # of Births

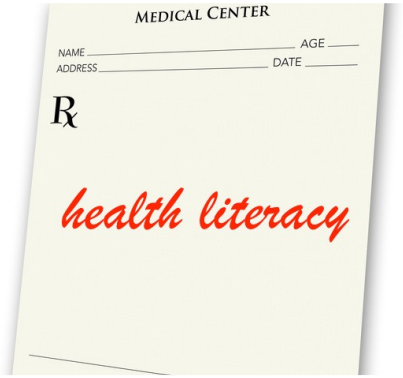
1

Average # of Unplanned Births

Preliminary Results: Providers (n=7)



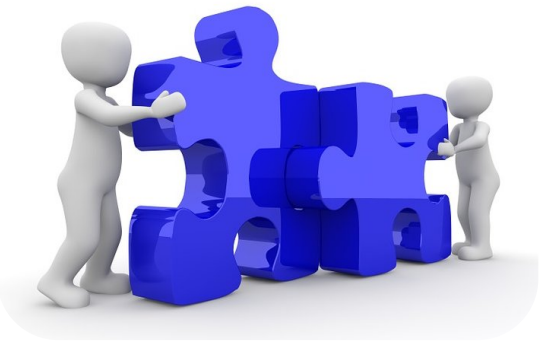
Preliminary Results



Information

Motivation

Behavioral Skills



Macro Factors

Next Steps

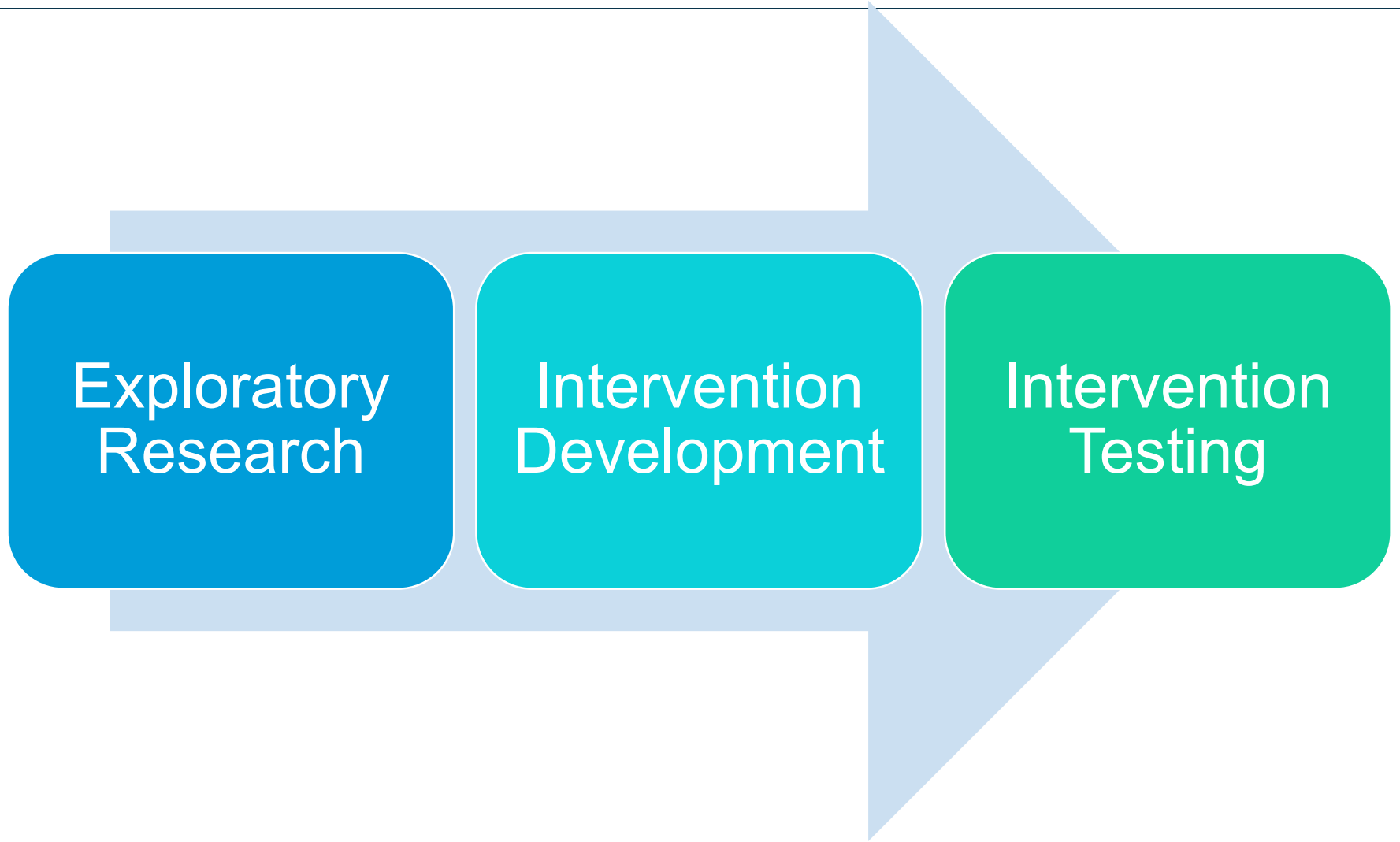
Interviews with providers and women experiencing homelessness

Data coding and analysis

Triangulate findings

Disseminate findings to local community and professional audiences

Future Directions



Reducing the risk of unintended pregnancies will empower women experiencing homelessness to help them break the cycle of poverty and gain reproductive autonomy.