Addressing Contraceptive Disparities among Women Experiencing Homelessness

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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
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.
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.

Objectives & Aims

NIMHD Levels & Domains of Influence

*Individual*: Behavioral and Healthcare System

*Interpersonal*: Healthcare System

*Community*: Environment and Healthcare System

**Aim 1:**
Women Experiencing Homelessness
Age 18-44 Years

**Expected Outcome:**
Identified Barriers and Facilitators Impacting Contraception Access for Women Experiencing Homelessness

**Aim 2:**
Healthcare Providers and Housing Organization Workers

**Next Step:**
Intervention Development and Testing to Reduce Risk for Unintended Pregnancy
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)

- Average # of Pregnancies: 3
- Average # of Unplanned Pregnancies: 2
- Average # of Births: 1
- Average # of Unplanned Births: 2
Preliminary Results: Providers (n=7)

- Healthcare: 43%
- Social Service: 57%
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

Exploratory Research

Intervention Development

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