

# ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

## PRESENTATION FOR CHP MAKING IT HOME YOUTH CONFERENCE 09

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**VICTORIA  
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# OVERVIEW

- ❖ International context
- ❖ Practice principles
- ❖ Pathways out of homelessness
- ❖ Differentiation
- ❖ Three outcome dimensions

# INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

39 empirical sources were reviewed:

- ❖ Australia - 14
- ❖ United States - 11
- ❖ United Kingdom - 6
- ❖ Canada - 5
- ❖ Australia and US/UK - 3

Different definitions of homelessness

Contemporary focus on pathways rather than factors

# PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

There is no accepted framework for working with homeless youth

Kidd, S. A., Miner, S., Walker, D. & Davidson, L. (2007) Stories of working with homeless youth: On being 'mind-boggling'. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 29.1: 16-34.

McGrath, L. & Pistrang, N. (2007) Policeman of friend? Dilemmas in working with homeless young people in the United Kingdom, *Journal of Social Issues*, 63:3, 589-606.

# PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

- ❖ Persistent
- ❖ Reliable
- ❖ Respectful
- ❖ Individualised
- ❖ Relationship-based support
- ❖ Recognition of young people's strength and resilience alongside their need for help and support
  - 'they are way stronger than any of us. They are still alive, and when you consider what has happened to them [...] They don't want you to feel sorry for them at all. That is totally degrading and doesn't recognise all the things they have conquered' (Kidd et al. 2007 19).

# SERVICE DELIVERY

- ❖ EET engagement is an integral part of assessment and intervention with all young people experiencing homelessness
- ❖ Specialist homelessness workers require a policy, program and organisational environment that supports EET

# REFERENCES

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- Mallett, S., Rosenthal, D., Myers, P., Milburn, N. & Rotheram-Borus, M. J. (2004) 'Practising homelessness: a typology approach to young people's daily routines', *Journal of Adolescence*, 27: 337-349.

# PATHWAYS INTO AND OUT OF HOMELESSNESS

<b>Homelessness stage</b>	<b><i>Focus of intervention</i></b>
At risk of becoming homeless	<i>Prevent homelessness</i>
Temporary homelessness	<i>Overcome temporary homelessness</i>
Homeless Contemplating exiting	<i>Personal development Community connectedness Economic resources Supporting courage to change</i>
Committed to exiting homelessness	<i>Securing help and transitioning</i>
'Successful' exiting	<i>Supporting changes in daily routines</i>

# DIFFERENTIATION

Mallet et al. (2004) identified four groupings of young people experiencing homelessness:

- ❖ Service connected - harm avoidant (45%)
- ❖ Partnered (16%)
- ❖ Socially engaged (21%)
- ❖ Transgressive (19%)

# PRACTICE ELEMENTS

- ❖ Case management
- ❖ Brokerage
- ❖ Early intervention
- ❖ Integrated support and accommodation (known overseas as 'foyers')
- ❖ Independent living programs

# CASE MANAGEMENT

A persistent, stable and sustained supportive helping relationship is an effective means of engaging young people in EET pathways

- ❖ Persistent
- ❖ Reliable
- ❖ Respectful
- ❖ Individualised

# BROKERAGE

Brokerage funds are best used within the context of client-centred case management

- ❖ **Service brokerage - access:** Ability on the part of the case manager to arrange for other services such as mental health and drug and alcohol services as required, usually through established networks with other service providers;
- ❖ **Service brokerage – payment:** Ability to pay for services required by a particular young person, for example enrolment in a fee-paying training program or dental care;
- ❖ **Flexible brokerage funds:** Access to a flexible pool of funds to pay for incidental expenses such as transport, work clothes and haircuts.

# EARLY INTERVENTION

- ❖ Early intervention by schools and family reconciliation programs are effective in reducing youth homelessness among 12 – 18 year olds.
- ❖ With EET assistance, schools, working with community agencies, can keep young people engaged with education.

# INTEGRATED SUPPORT AND ACCOMMODATION

- ❖ Integrated services have excellent potential because they provide housing integrated with comprehensive support and targeted EET engagement.
- ❖ Effectiveness reduces without adequate individualised case management support.
- ❖ Congregate care models are generally unsuitable for young people with complex needs and long term homelessness, as harmful aspects of homeless subcultures can become entrenched.



# YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

- ❖ Exiting the care system is a highly vulnerable time
- ❖ Young people leaving care face high risk of homelessness and other harmful experiences
- ❖ Some evidence that independent living programs can improve education, employment and housing outcomes
- ❖ Significant time and effort is needed to engage the most challenged young people in EET

# EET AND EXITING HOMELESSNESS

EET engagement assists young people to exit homelessness by:

1. Creating hope for the future and developing self-esteem
2. Building social connections to provide new friendships and informal supports
3. Providing a normative, stabilising effect by establishing mainstream habits and routines
4. Increasing the young person's economic resources through employment skills, educational credentials and savings.

# THREE OUTCOME DIMENSIONS

The benefits of EET translate into three outcome dimensions:

1. Personal development/self-esteem
2. Community connectedness/daily routines
3. Economic resources

# PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- ❖ Young people are survivors making active, rational choices
- ❖ EET engagement strategies should work with and respect young people's existing sources of self-esteem

# COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

- ❖ Community connectedness protects against homelessness
- ❖ Attachment to homeless and/or drug using subcultures plays a significant role in young people's experiences and duration of homelessness
- ❖ Social connections provide important survival resources, but can also hold young people back
- ❖ EET rebuilds routines and helps prevent loneliness/isolation

# ECONOMIC RESOURCES

- ❖ Increased economic resources empower young people to end their homelessness
- ❖ Economic resources include literacy and numeracy skills, self-presentation, work habits and experience, and formal educational attainments as well as money
- ❖ Assistance and motivation to accumulate savings from employment income is a proven effective incentive for young people
- ❖ Also proven is intensive, structured job skills training and provision of job placement, settling in and mentoring support



# REVIEW

EET interventions for young people experiencing homelessness can be made more effective by using the evidence we have about:

- ❖ Typical challenges that young homeless people face
- ❖ Differences within the population of young people experiencing homelessness
- ❖ What we know about processes of exiting homelessness
- ❖ What we know about effective support practice.

