Mindful Continuing Education

Family Interventions for Youth Impacted by Homelessness

Executive Summary

1. Although most programs serving youth experiencing homelessness use some form of family intervention to address conflict and help reconnect youth with families when appropriate, there is limited evidence as to which programs have the greatest success.

A. True
B. False

Findings on Evidence-Based and Evidence-Informed Interventions

2. Ecologically Based Family Therapy (EBFT) is an evidence-based strategy designed to support positive family connections as well as communication and problem-solving skills.

A. True
B. False

Core Components of Evidence-Based and Evidence-Informed Interventions

3. Core components of evidence-based and evidence-informed interventions for youth experiencing homelessness include each of the following EXCEPT:

A. A home-based component in addition to clinical services and interventions
B. Interventions designed to include weekly sessions that last between three and six months
C. Intervention-specific training for staff
D. Strategies that encompass prevention, reconnection, and reunification

Gaps in the Evidence

4. In recent years, research has suggested that youth who identify as LGBTQ are overrepresented among youth experiencing homelessness, and this has led to the development of numerous interventions that focus on the needs of LGBTQ youth and their families.

A. True
B. False

Key Implementation Lessons

5. Providers of homeless youth services have noted the importance of gaining parents' trust, working cooperatively with parents, and:

A. Helping parents decrease fear and resistance
B. Recognizing and addressing parents' barriers to engagement
C. Focusing on the strengths and power of each family member
D. Empowering parents to take initiative in achieving goals

6. One challenge of family intervention models is that even though they may improve family functioning, they may not fully address other family challenges and needs, such as serious mental illness or the need for stable housing.

A. True
B. False

Introduction

7. Risk factors for youth experiencing homelessness generally include:

A. Previous history of homelessness and/or family conflict
B. Current or past physical or sexual abuse and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning (LGBTQ) identity
C. Child welfare and/or juvenile justice involvement
D. All of the above

Family Conflict and Youth Homelessness

8. Recent national survey data suggest that approximately 25 percent of youth run away from home before age 18, many of those run away multiple times, and those who leave because of abuse generally enter a runaway and homeless youth program (RHY).

A. True
B. False

The Importance of Engaging Families

9. Homeless advocates contend that early intervention for youth who have left home for the first time provides the most hope of reunification, since when young people get older and families are more strained by years of conflict, reunification is less likely.

A. True
B. False

Methodology

10. While reconnection interventions typically support youth and their families in the transition to living together again, reunification interventions focus on improving family functioning after a separation.

A. True
B. False

The Evidence on Family Interventions

11. Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT) has been rigorously evaluated as an evidence-based intervention that changes maladaptive patterns within and around the family by enhancing family interactions and communication.

A. True
B. False

Table 4: Components and Outcomes of Evidence-Informed Programs

12. Which of the following are NOT addressed when assessing positive youth outcomes of evidence-informed programs?

A. Substance abuse, mental illness, and overall health
B. Delinquency, family functioning, and placement stability
C. Social skills, relationships, and spirituality
D. Education, school dropout, and employment

Promising Interventions

13. One promising intervention to help homeless youth is On the Way Home (OTWH), a transition program that provides parent training, homework support, and school-based mentoring for boys recently discharged from a continuum of out-of-home placement settings.

A. True
B. False

Gaps in the Evidence

14. While family-focused interventions from child welfare and juvenile justice sectors often focus on common risk and protective factors, they do not necessarily consider the unique aspects of working with youth experiencing homelessness.

A. True
B. False

15. An emerging trend in interventions for homeless youth is to frequently track housing or homelessness as a long-term outcome.

A. True
B. False

Few Interventions Have Been Designed for Racial and Ethnic Minority Youth

16. Poor outcomes for Native American youth include living with families who may be transient or shifting locations frequently, and the tendency to be at risk for:

A. Elevated risks of delinquency
B. Poverty and victimization
C. School dropout and suicide
D. Poor physical and emotional health

Implementing Family Intervention Models

17. In addition to establishing and preserving trust, key components for working with parents of homeless youth include helping them connect with resources, considering a trauma-informed approach, and maintaining cultural competence.

A. True
B. False

Consider Strategies to Successfully Implement Programs with Multiple Sessions

18. While research indicates that youth experiencing homelessness are often willing to participate in reunification and reconnection efforts, they are generally reluctant to meet in their family homes during the process.

A. True
B. False

Challenges of Implementing Family Intervention Models

19. One substantial barrier to adopting proven family intervention models in RHY settings is the overwhelming nature of their core task, which is to:

A. Provide stable long-term care
B. House youths quickly
C. Collaborate with all parties involved in the youth's best interest
D. Ensure ongoing safety

20. Implementing proven family intervention strategies with fidelity may require substantial resources to hire qualified staff, offer staff training and program monitoring, and budget adequate staff hours to carry out services, which is often too costly for service providers.

A. True
B. False

21. Key factors that must be addressed while working toward improving overall family functioning include:

A. Addressing the rise of severe mental health challenges among homeless youth
B. Helping meet basic material and stable housing needs
C. Connecting families to housing programs and other social services
D. All of the above

Research Needs and Challenges

22. The most promising models for evaluating the effectiveness of family interventions include each of the following EXCEPT:

A. A well-developed theory of change

B. A means for targeting the intervention to the appropriate youth
C. Clear process and impact research strategies
D. Some existing evidence of program effectiveness

Conclusion

23. A significant limitation in addressing the needs of youth experiencing homelessness is the lack of school-based interventions that target this population and their families.

A. True
B. False

Appendix C. Program Description-Functional Family Therapy

24. The phases of Functional Family Therapy include engaging and motivating family members by fostering positive contexts in which positive changes are more likely to occur, using parent training, problem-solving skills training, and communication training to promote behavioral changes, and:

A. Generalizing positive changes to foster supportive relationships with community systems
B. Addressing individual and family competency in extrafamilial settings
C. Prioritizing relevant strength-based mechanisms that support change
D. Incorporating therapeutic case management and cognitive behavioral techniques

Support to Reunite, Involve, and Value Each Other (Strive)

25. Support to Reunite, Involve, and Value Each Other (STRIVE) is a family therapy intervention for newly homeless youth that is based on interpersonal and motivational theories designed to build systemic strength-based skills within the family.

A. True
B. False