

The Right Place? A Closer Look at Supporting Practices for Aging Persons Experiencing Homelessness in Canada

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12 The right place? A closer look at supporting practices for aging persons experiencing homelessness in Canada.

Chair

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186 Older Adults Experiencing Housing Insecurity: An Environmental Assessment of Housing

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Abstract / Résumé

As part of a multi-year, multi-city partnership project the Aging in the Right Place Environmental Audit (AIRP-ENV) and Secondary Observation (AIRP-ENV-SO) tools were created to facilitate observation-based audit of the built environment, particularly in shelters, transitional housing, independent housing with offsite/onsite supports, and permanent supportive housing with onsite medical and/or specialized services for older adults who are experiencing or vulnerable to experiencing homelessness. Data were collected at four sites of a transitional housing program in Vancouver, Canada. The presence/absence of exterior and interior built environmental characteristics that promote housing stability were audited using the 241-item AIRP-ENV tool. Contextual data on function, safety, and land-use of surrounding neighbourhood were collected using seven open-ended questions in the AIRP-ENV-SO tool. Preliminary findings suggest that built environment and urban design features support tenants' residential resiliency and aging in place. Data from the environmental audit demonstrates that study sites are in close proximity to accessible resources, there are opportunities for tenants to engage in social activities, the buildings are equipped with accessible interior and exterior features, built environmental features are implemented to foster safety and security, and furnishing and accessible features of the room support the tenants in continuing to live independently. The AIRP-ENV and AIRP-ENV-SO tools provide insight on the built-environmental features of housing and neighbourhoods that contribute towards the aging in the right place. Additionally, these tools address a gap in audit tools by considering transitional housing and other settings where older persons experiencing homelessness seek to age in place.

205 Through the service providers' eyes: A first glance on practices aiming to support aging in the right place for older adults experiencing homelessness in Montréal.

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Abstract / Résumé

It is increasingly recognized that older people who are homeless have unique life trajectories, goals and vulnerabilities that must be accounted for in service provision. Tailored services for older persons who have experienced homelessness (OPEH) are therefore paramount. As a component of a larger study aimed at identifying the extent to which promising housing practices designed for OPEH support Aging in the Right place, this study reports findings from service providers (n=5) affiliated with one innovative transitional housing program in Montreal. Using qualitative in-depth interviews, the study explored how the organization's history, eligibility criteria, funding sources and physical environment work together to support or challenge Aging in the Right place for OPEH from the perspective of service providers. Thematic analysis of the interviews revealed that personalized approaches tend to strengthen the OPEH's ability to remain in place, by facilitating access to resources within and beyond the practice, enhancing OPEH's emotional place attachment, and fostering social participation and inclusion. Findings also indicated that the type of service provided may be better suited to OPEH who still have a high degree of autonomy as the support provided was limited in cases of physical or mental health decline. These limitations hint at the challenges and issues posed by the transitional aspect of a service offered to OPEH in response to their need and desire for stability in the turbulence that aging can bring forth.

206 Aging in the right place for housing insecure older people: A conceptual framework

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Abstract / Résumé

Emerging research has highlighted the significance of aging in the right place (AIRP) by recognizing that secure and optimal housing should support an individual's unique vulnerabilities, values, and lifestyles. Existing literature, however, has yet to conceptualize what it means for older people experiencing homelessness and/or housing insecurity to age-in-the-right-place. In order to address this knowledge gap, our team developed an AIRP framework for housing insecure people by extracting critical identifiers from the literature. Refinements to the model were made following consultation with interdisciplinary scholars and stakeholders in the fields of aging, poverty and housing and a document review of three innovative housing programs. This paper presents the resulting conceptual framework and outlines the key indicators of AIRP relevant to housing insecure older people. For instance, indicators related to case management, affordability, and practical life skills (e.g., financial management, home cleaning supports) were found to be particularly pertinent to the experience of AIRP for housing insecure older people. The proposed framework provides a practical and meaningful contribution to the literature which can be used to promote housing security among individuals often excluded from existing aging-in-place models.

215 Perceptions of Aging in the Right Place: Photovoice with Older Adults Transitioning from Experiencing Homelessness During COVID-19

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Abstract / Résumé

Aging in the right place (AIRP) recognizes that where an older person lives impacts their ability to age optimally and must match their unique lifestyles and vulnerabilities. As a concept, AIRP involves supporting older adults to live as long as possible in their homes and communities. Photovoice is an arts-informed, community-based, participatory action research strategy that empowers people to document their experiences through photography while promoting critical dialogue. This methodology is particularly well-suited to examining issues such as AIRP and rights-based housing. In this study, phenomenological

photovoice interviews were conducted with diverse older adults residing in permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, and emergency shelters during COVID-19 in Vancouver, Montreal, and Calgary, Canada. Participants were adults age 50 and older with intersectional identities and experiences of homelessness. Each interview was conducted in three 45 to 60-minute sessions over three weeks to allow time for participants to develop rapport with the researcher, become comfortable with the process, and offer deeper commentary. This paper presents the use of photovoice methodology in effectively engaging homeless older adults in participatory research and promoting a sense of empowerment among study participants. We highlight participant's perspectives of AIRP, including how their living situation meets their various housing and support needs. Findings can be used to inform policy initiatives that promote AIRP and the right to adequate housing for older adults experiencing homelessness.