

Introduction

- Families experiencing homelessness have complex needs²
- There's a desire for family-centered services⁵ and meaningful routines in homeless shelters.
- The law supports and encourages services geared towards families experiencing homelessness^{3&4}.
- There's a lack of literature exploring current practice and experiences in the homeless shelter of both the families and their service providers in relation to early childhood intervention.

Research Aim

To describe how early childhood intervention (ECI) services are provided in a homeless shelter.

Methods

- Qualitative Descriptive⁶
- Purposive sampling
- 3 Participants: Child service coordinator, Early Childhood specialist, Developmental specialist
- Semi-structured interviews
- Thematic coding & analysis¹

Findings

Providers wear multiple hats
“...pause on therapy and really address what the family is going through...”

Undefinable Strength
“...there's a very particular quality of strength...”

Acknowledge Barriers to Access
“It's not just working with a family, you're working within a complex system”

Space Shapes Practice
“I like know how valuable the environment is”

Navigating Community Partnerships
“We have a partnership, [who does] the referrals, but how do we respond when they don't”

Building blocks of ECI for families experiencing homelessness

Discussion & Implications

- Interventionists are flexible and consistently shifting their role to meet the needs of each of the families they serve.
- A strength-based approach can lead to an increase in the quality of care.
- Access to services are influenced by systems outside of the family.
- Attention to the physical environment can be is just as important as the client-interventionist relationship
- Community relationships and resources must be navigated intentionally.

Conclusion

ECI in a homeless shelter may be as beneficial as services provided in more common practice settings; however, it requires interventionists to be mindful about the socially-constructed challenges families experiencing homelessness face.

References

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