Homelessness in Alberta

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Instructor Name
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Homelessness in Alberta

**Research question:** To what extent do services and supports help Albertans experiencing homelessness?


In this article, Dashora et al. (2018) discuss accessibility to government provided services in rural towns like Fort McMurray and difficult it can be for people who are homeless to access them. As well, the authors note the few services that are available are often overextended. The authors highlight the stringent rules that homeless shelters enforce, requiring people to leave first thing in the morning and not return until much later in the evening, leaving people exposed to inclement weather during the day and facing other dangers on the streets. The authors conclude that care and compassion is needed to support those seeking shelter supports. I will use the evidence in this article to illustrate the current challenges people face when seeking and accessing government provided services.


In this study, Johnstone et al. (2016) examine the relationship between social supports for homeless people and their overall well-being. Their findings show that increased social supports contribute to increased well-being and the same is true for the inverse: decreased social supports are linked to decreased well-being. Importantly, the authors note that these correlations are true even when they factored in alcohol and substance use disorders. The authors argue that although
employment services are offered by the government and finding a job is crucial to a successful pathway from homelessness, positive well-being includes more than just employment. This source is useful in justifying the need for increased social supports to help lift Albertans out of homelessness, despite stigmas surrounding alcohol and substance use that may contribute to a lack of supports.


Shier et al. (2011) examine the social and emotional resources that homeless people may or may not have to help them seek a pathway to stable housing and employment. The authors conclude that long-term support in the form of a community is needed for people exiting homelessness, and though family is considered an important emotional resource, many homeless people have little family contact because of social stigma. The authors also argue that it is often challenging for people to escape the lifestyle associated with being homeless when they are surrounded by others who do not share the same values or desires that they do. I will use the research findings in this article to argue that social support services are not an adequate replacement for the positive impact that stable community can have on a successful pathway from homelessness.