Healing Homelessness: Reimagining Community

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Assignment 2b: Essay Outline
Instructor Name
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Introduction

Introductory Statement: Homelessness is often described as a cycle that is hard to break, and thousands of Albertans find themselves caught in this cycle without a clear way out.

Thesis: The most effective way to positively influence the cycle of homelessness in Alberta is by creating a productive community where people can maintain housing stability, employment status, and get the support they need while finding somewhere to belong.

Summary of main ideas:

- Services provided by provincial governments to people experiencing homelessness are currently ineffective in creating long-lasting pathways from homelessness.
- Shelters and other programs available to homeless people are uncoordinated and often contribute to confusion and difficulty finding employment and stable housing.
- Building and maintaining positive relationships are imperative to the well-being of people experiencing poverty.
- Taking a broader view of homelessness and building a community with the intent to address multiple issues at the same time is a more effective way of helping people in need than the solutions currently in place.

Main Idea #1

Claim: Services provided by provincial governments to people experiencing homelessness are currently ineffective in creating long-lasting pathways from homelessness.
Evidence:

- There is limited access to government provided services to begin with in rural towns like Fort McMurray and these services are often already overextended (Dashora et al., 2018).
- Many people experiencing homelessness don’t know where to find the help they need, are unaware of specialized services that exist to help them or rely on shelters alone to provide support (Shier et al., 2011).
- Tools used by service providers for determining housing eligibility, such as the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT), allow some people in need of housing assistance to be overpassed if they don’t meet every single requirement (Shier et al., 2011).

Significance: Homelessness is not a new problem, and traditional methods employed by the government are failing to break the cycle. Efforts are being made to aid these vulnerable populations, but long-term outcomes are failing to meet the expectations of people who utilize government-run programs. As a result, they often fall back into the cycle of homelessness.

Main Idea #2

Claim: Shelters and other programs available to homeless people are uncoordinated and often contribute to confusion and difficulty finding employment and stable housing.

Evidence:

- Many shelters enforce stringent rules, have limited opening hours or a limited number of beds, creating danger when there is nowhere for people to find safety from harsh winter weather conditions (Dashora et al., 2018).
• Employment services are offered by the government and finding a job is crucial to a successful pathway from homelessness, but a positive state of well-being includes more than just employment (Johnstone et al., 2016).

• Many service providers are not working together or are unaware of the services offered by each other, leaving gaps where vital services are needed (Dashora et al., 2018).

• “Care must be offered in a consistent and collaborative manner to be effective” (Dashora et al., 2018, p. 141).

**Significance:** The foundations for successful pathways from homelessness have been laid down by the government of Alberta, but the problem of homelessness is complex. When there are inconsistencies in the system that is meant to help fix the problem, the cycle of homelessness remains unbroken and remains an issue. Necessary changes include re-evaluating shelter policies, increasing communication among service providers, and ensuring that locations are properly staffed.

**Main Idea #3**

**Claim:** Building and maintaining positive relationships are imperative to the well-being of people experiencing poverty.

**Evidence:**

• Dashora et al. (2018) explain that for staff in rural towns, “the high turnover of outreach workers [is] not conducive to addressing the complex needs of some of their clients” (p. 144).

• Long-term support 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 or to avoid hindering their loved ones (Shier et al., 2011).

- “Declines in social support were associated with declines in well-being, which improved when social support improved, and the effects were consistent even when controlling for housing status, alcohol use and employment status” (Johnstone et al., 2016, p. 421).

Significance: Homeless people are in a situation that is unique to their population and require specially trained counsellors and staff to work with. If case workers in shelters are constantly coming and going, building trust and therapeutic relationships becomes difficult. These relationships are necessary to ensure that homeless people can be heard and understood in order to resolve the problems that brought them into poverty in the first place, increasing the likelihood that their exit from homelessness will be permanent.

Main Idea #4

Claim: Taking a broader view of homelessness and building a community with the intent to address multiple issues at the same time is a more effective way of helping people in need than the solutions currently in place.

Evidence:

- It can be 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 (Shier et al., 2011).
- Shier et al. (2011) note that “the gaps between different elements of a person’s social community were being bridged only by the service delivery system, and often this represented a lone positive force in the lives of [homeless people]” (p. 470).
• Delivery of social support services is not an adequate replacement for the positive impact that stable community has on a successful pathway from homelessness (Shier et al., 2011).

**Significance:** Creating a community where homeless people can secure stable housing, employment, and assistance overcoming addiction and mental health problems would be an efficient approach to ending the cycle of homelessness. Rather than providing support in each area alone, a more comprehensive approach would allow multiple issues to be tackled at the same time. This would allow for a positive change in overall well-being and create a ripple effect in the lives of people experiencing homelessness.

**Conclusion**

**Restatement of argument:** Reimagining community in Alberta with a more supportive approach can be a lasting and effective solution to homelessness.

**Significance of main points:** A substantial effort is being made with current social supports and services being offered to homeless people, but they are not often accomplishing the desired outcome of lasting pathways away from homelessness. Instead of working together, they are incoherent and can keep people from achieving lasting pathways from homelessness. These services are offered with good intentions but without consideration for the importance of building therapeutic relationships to increase well-being. Multi-dimensional approaches to community must be considered when searching for long-term solutions to homelessness.

**Concluding statement:** Constructive communities built with the purpose of providing support in every area of a person’s life, instead of just providing housing, is necessary to ensure permanent exits from homelessness.
References

