

Needs Assessment: Poverty and Homelessness in an Agricultural, Resourced-Based Community Stony Plain, Alberta

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No observation or comment should be attributed to and specific individual, unless otherwise specified.

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Executive Summary

- 31.8% of the general public in Stony Plain believed homelessness is an ongoing problem while 28% believed that is a growing problem.
- 57% of service providers serving Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, and Parkland County believed that homelessness is a growing problem and 35 % that it is an ongoing problem in Stony Plain.
- 30% of participants that represent business in Stony Plain and Parkland County indicated that homelessness is an emerging concern for their industry and 10% agreed that it is a long standing concern for the industry.
- Participants from Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, and Parkland County (N = 161) who have completed the homeless and at risk survey have problems with housing availability (26.2%), affordability (33.2%), adequacy (12.1%) and suitability (16.9%).
- Youth (age 16 – 24) appears to be group at high risk of becoming homeless.
- Lack of affordable housing, employment issues, lack of personal/public transport and single family income were mentioned by participants in the at risk and homeless survey as contributing factors to people in Stony Plain to obtain or keep appropriate housing.
- 96% of the service providers in the area indicated that they were serving clients who were homeless at the time of completing the survey, but in only 18% of the cases the clients were primarily referred for housing issues.
- No place to go, hidden problem, coordination of services, unpredictability of the population at risk, lack of time, crisis mode, urgency of needs and no fixed address, were identified by the service providers as barriers to deliver care for the homeless and at risk of becoming homeless populations.
- The service providers in the area identified shortages of services, lack of transportation, and shortage of long term affordable housing/shelter as gaps in services.
- Quality of current services, availability of resources, resilience of people, community involvement, and accommodating landlords were mentions as strengths in the community of Stony Plain.
- Centralized services, education/awareness, information sharing, needs for different types of housing, and improved services were all mentioned as needs to improve service delivery to homeless and at risk of becoming homeless population in Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, and Parkland County.

Background

Stony Plain is a town within Parkland County, west of Edmonton dominated by agriculture and other resourced based industry. Stony Plain has a population of 15,051 according to the 2011 census and an average population growth rate of 4% per year. Residents of Paul First Nation, Parkland County, and numerous villages in the surrounding area access Stony Plain as a central service point. Domestic violence, homeless youth, newcomers, senior housing stressors and lack of transportation are some of the area trends. Community service providers recognize there is a homeless issue in the area, but the scope and characteristics are not well understood.

In Spring 2014, local and regional social service providers participated in a number of focused dialogues and came to the following conclusions:

- Valid, meaningful research was needed to put a face to the issues of homelessness locally,
- The lack of access to affordable and low-income housing was at a crisis point, having numerous complex social implications, and
- A systematic, community approach was needed; a simple 'program' delivered by a single sector or agency would not suffice to address the issues.

In July 2014, Stony Plain Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) obtained a Service Canada grant in the amount of \$ 38,737 administered by the Alberta Rural Development network. In partnership with the University of Alberta, the grant was allocated to cover costs of a full-time temporary research project coordinator working out of the FCSS office, and a part-time research assistant working with the primary University of Alberta researcher to conduct a six-month study on poverty and homelessness in Stony Plain and area. Data from the study has been compiled and analyzed.

Note: For the purpose of this study, Homeless has been defined as:

"The situation of a person or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing or the permanent prospect of acquiring it."

(Adapted from the Canadian Homelessness Research network, 2012).

Purpose

The purpose of the study is defined by the following goals:

1. What does homelessness look like in Stony Plain and surrounding area?
2. What are the causes of homelessness in our community?
3. What services are available to people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness in our community?
4. What gaps in services exist for people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness?
5. What is the level of awareness of homelessness in our community, and what are the attitudes towards it?

Needs Assessment Methods

Data collection methods were developed in keeping with the methodology of a similar study conducted in Drayton Valley, then compiled and analyzed. The design was approved by the Alberta Research Ethics Board.

Research Tools

Questionnaires from the Drayton Valley study were reviewed, refined, and modified focusing on five populations of interest:

1. General Public
2. Service Providers
3. Homeless and At-Risk Population
4. Business and Industry
5. Landlords

Interview guides were also developed for

1. Homeless and At-Risk Individuals
2. Service Provider Focus Groups
3. Industry

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection primarily focused on the Town of Stony Plain; however, because of the unique juxtaposition of communities within the Tri-Municipal Region, Stony Plain residents are required to access numerous regional services delivered out of the City of Spruce Grove. Therefore, data from Spruce Grove has been included with the 1) Service Providers and 2) Homeless and At-Risk groups.

Data was collected and analyzed as follows:

1. **General public:** Survey data to collect information of perceptions of housing related issues in Stony Plain. Three hundred and sixty eight (N = 368) members of the general public within the Town of Stony Plain completed the General Public survey. Participants were engaged through numerous presentations to local community groups, organizations, and community events targeting Town of Stony Plain residents.
2. **Service Providers:** Survey data and focus groups to collect data on possible causes and solutions to homelessness in Stony Plain and area. Twenty three (N = 23) service providers completed the Service Provider Survey, and three focus group interviews were conducted with a total of 16 service providers participating. Participants included local and regional service providers working out of Stony Plain and Spruce Grove, with the contingency being they provide services to Stony Plain residents, although not exclusively.
3. **People at risk of becoming homeless:** Survey data and individual interviews to collect data on possible causes and experiences. One hundred and sixty one (N = 161) participants completed the Homelessness and at Risk survey, and 12 individual interviews were conducted with individuals who were either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Surveys for this population were distributed with the assistance of front line local and regional service providers in Stony Plain, Spruce Grove and Parkland County. Collected surveys from participants in the at-risk population self-identified their residency at the time of survey completion as follows:

Stony Plain	N = 33
Spruce Grove	N = 72
Parkland County	N = 22
First Nation Community	N = 18
Transient, no fixed residency	N = 8
Other	N = 8

4. **Landlords:** Surveys to collect information and to understand poverty and housing related issues in Stony Plain rental availability. Eleven landlords from the Town of Stony Plain (N = 11) completed the Landlord Survey.
5. **Industry Members:** Survey to collect information on the industry's contributions to solving the housing issues in Stony Plain. Thirty three participants (N = 33) participants from industry within the Town of Stony Plain and Parkland County completed the Industry survey.
6. **Data gathering:** Data were gathered over a six month commencing October 1, 2014 through March 31, 2015.
7. **Data analysis:** Qualitative (thematic) and quantitative (statistical) methods were employed to analyze the data.

Findings

This report will highlight the main findings. We have collected and compiled extensive data that can be accessed upon request (see appendixes for the different instruments). The quantitative and qualitative findings are combined to portray a comprehensive representation of the findings.

Perceptions and awareness of the problem

Perceptions

Thirty one percent (31.8%) of the general public believed homelessness is an ongoing problem in Stony Plain and 28% agreed that is a growing problem. Service providers had similar perceptions; 57% indicated that homelessness is a growing problem in Stony Plain and 35 % that it is an ongoing problem. Thirty percent (30%) of participants that represent businesses indicated that homelessness is an emerging concern for their industry and 10% agreed that it is a long standing concern for the industry. Only 18% of the landlords who has completed the survey respectively said that homelessness is a new problem and an ongoing problem in Stony Plain.

Service providers confirmed the survey data by stating:

“...in the almost seven years I’ve been here, in the last two years I’ve certainly noticed a significant increase in the number of people that are at risk of homelessness. And that’s a reflection of the increase to... just the population; people moving in from the city.”

and

“I also see it as a growing problem of people from the inner city coming out to this area for whatever reason ...talking to my other colleagues, they do believe that this is a growing concern in the community, the amount of inner city long term homelessness coming out to our community now too.”

Magnitude of the problem

20.5% (n = 75) of the public who have participated in the public survey knew about someone in the community that were without shelter or a permanent place to live and 11.8% have been homeless or at risk of becoming homeless themselves.

Participants (N = 161) who have completed the homeless and at risk survey have problems with housing availability (26.2%), affordability (33.2%), adequacy (12.1%) and suitability (16.9%). Of those participating, 61.8% said that they likely will have to move within the 12 months following completing the survey and 42.7% had moved 2- 3 times in the 12 months prior to completing the survey, related to difficulties with availability, affordability, suitability and adequacy of their current housing. Also, 35.2 % received financial support to obtain or to keep appropriate housing. Participants reported the use of the following services/support because of housing insecurity issues: Food bank/soup kitchen (29.7%),

local churches (7%), financial assistant programs (15.9%), thrift stores (19.9%) and family and friends (15.9%).

In terms of income and expenses, 68.2% of the participants were not employed, 51.3% earned less than \$15000/year, 52.9% indicated they were single and 55.8% have financial dependents (children, spouse, family) living with them.

Participants self-identify as First Nations (61%), Metis (20.4%), Inuit (7.4%), immigrants (7.4%) and visible minority (9.3%).

The following quotes from the interviews additionally substantiate the magnitude of the problem. Service providers shared:

"I think it increases and decreases, it's never been "not there." And you see short term crisis for a few weeks for some people, but for the last five years that I've been in my position it's been a steady issue."

and

"I would just say that in the almost seven years I've been (providing services here), in the last two years I've certainly noticed a significant increase in the number of people that are at risk of homelessness. And that's a reflection of the increase to the population, people moving in, moving in from the city."

and

"...on Monday... I saw eleven people, ten of them were walk-ins and out of those eleven people, nine were homeless. And they were people nobody in our office has ever seen before. So they're new clients, they're new residents that were coming to our office for help. And that was just in one day.... So that was really just the fluctuation of people asking for help, needing help, realizing perhaps that there is more help or resources available. "

A participant at risk of becoming homeless shared:

"...the housing issues are just... well that's the way it is... so what can anyone do about it, right? But if the whole Town and the whole City don't want to look after their poor it's not a place that's preferred by anyone for how little the public cared. Just 'cause the Food Bank is good and they don't want people starving doesn't mean there might (not) be housing issues. It's a City and a Town that should have been responsible for this from the time they became a City and a Town."

and

“Maybe in my living experience out here, I think the hardest thing is that somehow you get a feeling that people don’t care. Or that the homeless people are unnoticeable ‘cause you always think homeless people are the ones with the pack sacks walking down the street. And until like you get into a situation where you’re looking for a place to do your dishes or you’re thinking, “I should buy some paper plates because then I don’t have to wash them,” then you go “Oh no it’s not like that.” Homelessness affects everybody, and I think that people have been good for me... one thing I’ll say before I leave about [name of place] is she knows how I feel about FCSS Spruce Grove.”

Populations at risk of becoming homeless in Stony Plain

Service providers indicated in the Service provider survey the proportions of clients they serve that have issues with acquiring or keeping appropriate housing:

Populations at risk	%
Youth 16 – 24	51
Seniors 55 and older	30
Aboriginals	35
New to the community	19
Experience domestic violence	35

Participants (N = 161) who participated in the homeless and at risk survey age groups are as follows:

Age	Number of participants
16 – 24	37
25 – 34	42
35 – 44	29
45 – 54	30
≥55	17
Missing data	5
Total	161

Participants (N = 161) who participated in the homeless and at risk survey age groups indicated their household income from all sources:

Income per annum	%
Less than\$15,000	51.3
\$15,00-\$24,999	14.7
\$25,000-\$28,999	7.7
\$29,000-\$35,499	11.5
\$35,000-\$41,499	5.1
\$41,500-\$44,999	1.9
\$45,000-\$49,999	7
\$50,000+	0.8
	100%

Participants were asked to indicate their highest level of education.

Level of education	%
Some high school	44.3
High school diploma	26.2
Some post – secondary	7.4
Technical school/ Collage diploma	20.1
Bachelor degree	1.3
Masters / Ph.D.	0.7
	100%

Only 31.8% of the participants were employed at the time they completed the Homeless and at risk survey. The participants that were employed reflected on their employment status:

Employment status	%
Full-time	31.6
Part-time	38.6
Multiple part-time jobs	1.8
Casual	10.5
Other	17.5
Total	100%

Service providers reflect on the populations they are serving as follows:

Youth

"We work with youth, and aboriginal particularly would be a sub population that would definitely be at risk. Abuse, absolutely if they're abusing drugs or alcohol, that tends to lead to conflicts at home and so it tends to lead to them getting kicked out of the house. So that's definitely an issue."

and

"Youth. Youth is a big one for sure... you can't live at home anymore for whatever reason. Perhaps domestic violence, perhaps addictions, perhaps mental health and yet they're still trying to go to school. They have no job. Where do they get support and where do they find housing? Again the landlord's not going to want the sixteen year old to be renting a room, and where do they find the financial assistance anyway? That's where we get a lot of that... that couch surfing population we know nothing about. That the teenagers just go to stay with a friend and eventually those couches run out and where do they go?"

Single parents

"I see across all spectrums from the guys living in the bush to the ones being abused and so they're now homeless 'cause they can't afford the place that they've been sharing with their partner. For lots of young moms, that's a big population. And their housing is very unstable... even if they have housing the reality is that they can't maintain it. They definitely can't maintain it on financial supports they get from the government. They need to be working, but even if it's low income, lots of women leaving situations where there's domestic violence that haven't worked and they're looking for housing for themselves and their children, the reality is they're marginally employable. For the most part they've been staying at home for the last ten, fifteen years, and getting that job to support themselves and their children is almost impossible. The housing is way too expensive."

and

"I think there's a group of people who will be coming into greater risk in upcoming five to ten years, and that's a whole collection of women who have been divorced or separated for years and they worked in maybe a social services or non-unionized environment and now they're turning sixty-five and they didn't contribute a whole lot to their CPP and they don't have pensions and they've lived in apartments or rentals for years. And now they're soon-to-be unemployed because they retire, but they won't actually ever because they can't afford to... as rents keep going up they're not going to be able to do it."

Seniors

"And older populations too, we do get the one in their sixties marginally housed. There's fifties, forties... it's across every age group and it's across men, women, everything."

and

"And there's other seniors that have problems like paying their utility bills or they start to have problems right on their budgets. Even though they have accommodation and all, I know if there was more public awareness that there are people out there..."

Immigrants/migrants (out of country and out of province)

"Working poor people, who just immigrated out here from somewhere, say in Eastern Canada, where you sold your house for a hundred and thirty five thousand dollars. Well when you get here that's what you can afford to buy and move into."

and

"There are a few who have come from out of country but they've been a minority."

First Nations

"We work with youth, and aboriginal particularly would be a sub population that would definitely be at risk. Abuse, absolutely if they're abusing drugs or alcohol, that tends to lead to conflicts at home and so it tends to lead to them getting kicked out of the house. So that's definitely an issue."

Uneducated/unemployed/Unskilled

"What the population I see is ah low ah low educated, low educated? That doesn't sound good. That sounds my education was pretty low. So I mean I would say probably ninety percent of the people I see are higher, have not completed grade twelve. And then low skills as well so they haven't gotten into a skilled type of employment so and that goes across every age group that I see."

and

"I think for the single men it's the most ominous for them because the services they can access through income support are so limited, so what little services I can offer them are not supplemented by anything from income support so I think they're at the greatest risk. And they're the ones that I will often say you're going to have to go into the City (Edmonton) into the shelter system because I can't access anything for them."

Contributing Factors

Participants in the general public and the homeless and at risk surveys identified the following factors contributing to people in Stony Plain community to obtain or keep appropriate housing:

Factors	% of participants in general public survey (N = 368)	% of participants in the homeless and at risk survey (N = 161)
Lack of affordable housing	23.8%	72.1%
Physical health		23%
Mental health	24.7%	24.8%
Addiction issues		12.4%
Employment issues	16.9%	52.2%
Lack of personal/public transport		44.7%
Poverty/lack personal finances	17.8%	39.1%
Finding affordable child care		28.6%
Relational violence/abuse		13%
Divorce		9.9%
Single income family		43.5%

In the interviews, shortage of housing, effect of industry, lack of financial sources/employment, affordability and suitability of housing, drug and alcohol abuse/addiction, poor mental or physical health, family struggles (abuse, divorce, conflict), and lack of education/mentoring/life skills were all mentioned as contributing factors.

Shortage of housing

A service provider described the lack of affordable housing as follows:

*“What is affordable? Affordable to me is subsidized housing that looks at their income and takes a percentage of their income to go towards the rent of their house. Like a subsidized accommodation for seniors. We have those, so they look at thirty percent of the senior’s income and that’s what they pay for rent. So that they can still continue living in these affordable places they opened up, and yes we can have the single mom in a home or someone whose experiencing domestic violence, and we were putting ‘them into an affordable place because that’s all we could afford. But in the last year they did a study and said, oh our rates are really low, and they increased the rent. Now all the people that we had moved into the brand new ‘affordable’ place are all homeless because they can’t afford the new rent prices. So the community really, we’re lacking. There’s definitely definition lacking as well, but again service providers know that this is out there but our hands are tied. **I don’t think its lack of information or resources in the community. It’s period, lack of housing.***

and

“And there’s not a large number of rental properties. And when the costs keep going up, people have to move out of their community.”

Lack of financial sources/employment

Participants at risk of becoming homeless shared:

“Both Stony and Spruce Grove have all these little jobs where people are not making much money, and so the jobs get bought out, but now everyone has a car to do these jobs and they need housing. That’s why people had, the public looked after everybody by renting rooms and if they can’t do it well.”

and

“When I talked to AISH last about it they said, you can earn up to eight hundred dollars a month part time, and I’m like but if I can’t work part time then how is it... because I know that even if I could, I know I’m an unstable employee because I get sick a lot. If I get hurt I’m out for weeks at a time. I was fired from a part time job, just before I ended up not being able to work. I was fired from a part time retail in a job, in a mall store.”

Affordability and suitability of housing

Participants who participated in the homeless and at risk survey indicated that the personally experience problems with keeping housing related to:

- affordability (33.2%), and
- suitability (16.9%).

Service providers reflected on the affordability of housing as follows:

“The one bedroom for nine hundred or nine fifty (dollars) with the mom and the child, and she’s on income support, she’s lucky if she gets a thousand and eighty dollars. And that’s to cover her shelter, her food, everything. So that’s like more than eighty percent of her income and if it’s because she’s fleeing abuse, for the time that it takes for her to be able to get back on her feet, there just isn’t support there. And it’s just not financial, but that’s a huge part of it.”

and

“I would agree anybody living in poverty, we have no subsidized housing. We have no low income housing. Our affordable housing isn’t affordable for anybody that is living in poverty you know.”

Participants looking for housing had the following to say:

“It was eight-seventy-five, nine-fifty for a one bedroom. They had a waiting list up to three months even and then they had two new buildings coming in August and September last year.”

and

"The affordable housing has not been a solution to the housing crisis in our community. The affordable housing is not affordable. So it's a wrong term for it. It's only ten percent below market value so the problem is that people get into that housing and they cannot afford it. And they're coming in with eviction notices for that affordable housing so I don't know if it can be renamed but I would totally rename it... it's not affordable."

and

"Since going there I just keep hearing the worst things, like they don't give you a copy of the lease and then suddenly come at you and say the rent is increased. Or that you need to get out. So people were transferring, some of the places I was looking at were saying that they were getting people from emergency situations. Like I just found out I have to leave my apartment, it's the sixteenth of the month, and they're just telling me that my lease is up but I don't even have a copy of the lease to go back on, and so it was pretty crazy some of the stories I was hearing about affordable."

A service provider added:

"For me I see it's a provincial issue as well as a regional issue, and that Alberta's population just is growing and growing and growing, and the services can't keep up. You have people coming for good high paying jobs and it doesn't always pan out ...oil prices drop and things change awful drastically. But also with with the high paying jobs comes high rent and low supply of rental properties, so affordable housing is pretty much non-existent. When you look at a community like Spruce Grove/Stony Plain where you know the cheapest two bedroom apartment is still probably about twelve hundred dollars a month, that's enormous... and I mean for many people holding decent job, that's virtually impossible to manage. So in domestic violence we see it quite a bit. We see women who are leaving (their situation) looking at a single income family now, or perhaps they are not employed and trying to find housing and it just doesn't exist. So definitely we see women that don't leave because there aren't any housing options. I also think for a community like Spruce Grove/Stony Plain that the invisibility of it is very true. People in your bedroom communities tend to define homelessness as the people that are lying on the cardboard on the street corner. And not as the broader picture... is it appropriate housing, is it safe housing, is it affordable housing? Are people living day to day wondering if they are going to have a place to sleep? And that is something I think as a community we're missing because people look around and say, I don't see anybody sleeping on the street corner or there's (only) one guy that sleeps in the park in Spruce Grove, that's it. We don't have a problem. But it's definitely a bigger picture. Also, there's lack of emergency shelter in our area and I think a big part of that is that we're almost too close to Edmonton so people think they can just go to Edmonton to access the service. And people can't, this is their home, we're still a half an hour from Edmonton, we're still our own community, people should be able to access emergency housing and shelter within their own community and not have to go somewhere else. So those are the biggest things that I see."

Drug and alcohol abuse

A service provider reflected:

"I was going to say mental health and addictions. People with those issues struggle quite a bit. I know in the community we have three or four actual homeless, live(ing) in the tent in in the woods and addictions and mental health are the reasons why they're there."

and

"Or health issues, or addiction issues. So they're losing the housing (because of these issues) so when we're finding families like that it's hard to find them housing 'cause they just were renting from this one and this one said, hah like the lease is off and they're gone. There is no way I'm extending it. So then they find the next place and the next place says oh my god and they're counting down the days too. So you know that family's gonna be homeless again after a twelve month or a six month lease. Even though you point them in the right direction, those parents, most of the time it's mental. They can go for help, but it just doesn't click in or it doesn't...nothing happens. So it's just a revolving circle you're finding that family a home."

Poor mental and physical health

Health related issues do not only affect people's ability to obtain housing, but housing problems also affect their physical health, mental health, ability to work, and their relationship with their families. Participants in the homeless and at risk survey indicated that:

- Housing problems affected their physical health – 51.6%
- Housing problems affect my mental health – 63.4%
- Housing problems affect my ability to work – 4%.2 %
- Housing problems affect my relationship with my family – 62.1%

A service provider added:

"We work with youth, and aboriginal particularly would be a sub population that would definitely be at risk. Abuse... absolutely if they're abusing drugs or alcohol, that tends to lead to conflicts at home and so it tends to lead to them getting kicked out of the house. So that's definitely an issue. I would think that you could put all the populations together and say, does it matter if you're youth or aboriginal, or senior, maybe seniors may be different but people that have some mental illness or substance abuse problem. It doesn't matter across the board, that's who will be most at risk I think."

and

"I think mental health is always a huge factor, depression is huge. And there's not enough being done to help people that suffer from depression and that sort of thing 'causes those people to be

in a spot where they can't work right now or they can't hold a job until they (stabilize) their mental illness. And that's a huge factor in homelessness."

Other participants shared their own personal stories:

"I'm currently trying to get on AISH because I am unable to work. I was diagnosed with bi-polar and border line personality disorder which makes it really fun. And PTSD [Post traumatic stress disorder]. So it's a challenge to do all that and make all my appointments."

and

"Definitely relationships with friends and family 'cause I can't do things or go out when they invite me because I can't afford it. I think it affects mental health for sure because it's kind of depressing. You know not depressed per say but it's for sure depressing. It's stressful and you get sad sometimes 'cause you can't do things. I've always been, take the kids to the zoo, I've always been that kind of role. And we can't do that right now. We can't afford any extra things right now so.... "

Family relations (abuse, divorce, conflict)

Service providers reflected:

"One of the things we've noticed on domestic violence is women leaving other communities and coming here to stay with a friend, and contacting us and saying, we're leaving a domestic violence situation, we've come to stay with our friend or family member here, and I can't find housing now. So those women in our community, but then also women fleeing abuse and coming to our community, and then they're in our community. Then the conversation is too is they're thinking of going back because they have no other place to go... they can't stay with their family member or friends very much longer."

and

"We deal with it a lot at Outreach. Most of our kids, I guess you wouldn't call them homeless in the traditional sense of homeless. They live with their friends, sometimes they'll be one of the them who's getting some sort of government assistance and so many of them will be staying with them or their parents friends [couch surfing], in the short term. Usually most of these kids are having conflict in the home that they're in. Sometimes the conflict is shared conflict, and sometimes they are just a victim of the conflict. There are a lot of substance abuse issues that are tied in with this. At least with the kids I deal with."

and

"One group we didn't talk about too much that is people leaving their, their current situation either through divorce or fleeing abuse or something that where they have not had to work. In particular moms that stayed home for the last ten, fifteen years. They don't have a work history or that that skill set. And now with little to no warning they're need to find a place and a way to

pay for it so that's definitely a, a big chunk of the people that we see in that situation. The problem is if you have a few kids you're at that age and you need to find a place you can't take a minimum wage job because that doesn't, doesn't meet it but you don't have the skills or background to really jump into anything else."

A participant at risk of becoming homeless added:

"(I was living) with a roommate and he was a man who I had met through a 12 step program and he wasn't abstaining from drugs and alcohol so that became an issue with our living arrangements. He was actually from Fort McMurray so in the beginning it didn't work out too bad because he didn't come home to the place very often. But what ended up happening, I did have to ask him to leave... it was a safety issue for me. (But) I kept living there, so I would drive to the city and pay fifty... the rent was fifteen hundred. I actually didn't have any utility bills until she took me into a hearing."

Lack of education/mentoring/life skills

Service providers shared:

"Some of the kids that we see that have an advocate will quite often find government funding to help them get in to a living situation. My experience with that, there's not a lot of them but there's a few, is that they don't have the skills to sustain that. And so someone gets them set up but they don't have any budgeting skills. They they go and buy their PS5 for seven hundred dollars and then they don't have their rent money so they sell it for two hundred and it's this endless juggle of lack of knowledge, skills, guidance. So even though they are set up there it doesn't always last for very long because people that are setting them up, (we) don't have time to then teach them all of those skills that they need."

and

"I've talked to women who are thirty, forty, fifty, who from home their parents paid for their schooling and they went to school so they really never had to work 'cause they had things paid for. Met a man who's cared for them and now all of a sudden their relationship broke up and she's gotta be on her own. Has no idea what a cheque book is, has no idea how to balance a book, has no idea because never had to do any of that. And senior women are also in that same predicament. If their husband passes away they tend to sometimes lose their homes because they don't have that life learning."

A participant at risk of becoming homeless added:

"Because of the way I grew up.... Nowadays it's not like that. I don't know why they don't teach kids that in school, that and driver training. To me it should be mandatory. There would be a lot less poverty and a lot less financial problems in the world if kids were in high school having to take financial planning. Having to. They're in high school and they just get thrown to the wolves. Here you're done, you're done Grade 12, and you graduate good to go. That credit situation can

be really scary. I think we all know. I had friends and family that helped me burn a hole in my pocket with the credit cards. But you didn't see them at the end of it going... Oh here, I'll help you out."

Services: Barriers to delivery care, gaps and strengths from within and service needs

The service providers were asked to complete a service provider survey and participate in focus groups. Ninety six percent (96%) indicated that they were serving clients who were homeless at the time of completing the survey, but in only 18% of the case the clients were primarily referred for housing issues. In the focus groups the service providers identified gaps, needs and barriers to delivering care, and strengths from within.

Barriers

The following barriers to deliver care were identified: No place to go, hidden problem, coordination of services, unpredictability of the population at risk, and lack of time, crisis mode, urgency of needs and no fixed address.

No place to go

Service providers reflect as follow:

"Can I ask just in the high school 'cause one of my clients had no place to go but would go into the school and shower. 'Cause that was the only shower they had available. So do you guys know it's happening because they told me it was happening."

Hidden problem

"It's a percentage and whether we're touching them or not, I don't know. I hear of some things. Some will come forward with it but I suspect that there's something going on but they may not identify at school, kind of deal with it on their own. Lot of couch surfers for certain, and some of those it is that they're not willing to follow the rules at home whether they think those rules are too strict. So then they're out of the home."

and

"There's a lot of shame associated with coming into my office. So unfortunately they'll come in when they're really in crisis where if they'd come in sooner 'cause my job isn't just about financial assistance it's about providing resources and going down to (inaudable) there's a whole bunch of stuff that we work together on but when they come in in crisis then it's because they all know me. So, they're back. That pride thing is huge. They come in and they just start crying right away."

Coordination and awareness of services

Awareness of services available seems to be low. Participants in the Homeless and at risk survey were not very aware of the different services available.

Name of service	% of participants aware of service
Addiction services	7.3
Family and Community Support Services	16.7
Alberta Works	16.2
Capital Region Housing Corp.	3.3
Neighbourlink Parkland	6.2
Meridian Foundation	1.9
Mental Health	8.9
Parkland Food Bank	17
Auggie's Café	5
Work Source/ Bredin Institute	7.5
Westview Health Center	9.9

Service providers reflect on it as follows:

"They haven't done their research, they don't understand that to get on to AISH (takes) up to a year and not necessarily will they be eligible for it. So they really come here with the assumption that they're going to be taken care of like they were in their other province. Well can't you transfer my file? No that's not how it works. And so they're just staying with so-and-so, but so-and-so is expecting big rent or doesn't want them there for the long term. From all the Provinces, mostly BC and Ontario are the big populations we seem to get. People with disabilities...huge."

A homeless and /or at risk of becoming homeless participant added:

"I think they need more organizations that'll help people; I know at least four families in my complex that are like me. They are barely able to survive and I've tried telling them to talk but they're all scared to because everyone, Social Services and the Government, are not on our side. They're there to hurt us, essentially is what we are lead to believe because of the way everybody...."

Unpredictability of the population at risk

Service providers expand on this sub-theme:

"Of that cycle the people with mental health history or referral from mental health, what happens is they burned all their bridges and the places that they've lived, a lot of time beyond their control because of their mental health condition. But it's still small communities, so when the name is mentioned it's... we've given them one, two, three chances and we don't want them... so there's no support for people with mental health. Some kind of transitional support to be able to get them back on their feet (is needed)."

and

"I see across all spectrums from the guys living in the bush to the ones being abused and so they're now homeless 'cause they can't afford the place that they've been sharing with their partner. For lots of young moms, that's a big population. And their housing is very unstable... even if they have housing the reality is that they can't maintain it. They definitely can't maintain it on financial supports they get from the government. They need to be working, but even if it's low income, lots of women leaving situations where there's domestic violence that haven't worked and they're looking for housing for themselves and their children, the reality is they're marginally employable. For the most part they've been staying at home for the last ten, fifteen years, and getting that job to support themselves and their children is almost impossible. The housing is way too expensive."

Lack of time, crisis mode, urgency of needs and no fixed address

Service providers discussed it as follow:

"There's a lot of shame associated with coming into my office. So unfortunately they'll come in when they're really in crisis where if they'd come in sooner 'cause my job isn't just about financial assistance it's about providing resources and going down to (inaudable) there's a whole bunch of stuff that we work together on but when they come in in crisis then it's because they all know me. So, they're back. That pride thing is huge. They come in and they just start crying right away."

and

"One of the barriers that I see with our population that it's in housing crisis like that is they don't have the time to put into getting that better job or finding that career type thing. They have to kind of like I said they have to take what they can get immediately 'cause they need to make money right now. And so that's definitely a barrier in that there's only so much we can work with them if they come and see us they can't come in."

and

"And that issue of (having) no identification is a big one too because you're caught between a rock and a hard place. They're trying to get government ID, to get a government ID they need some sort of ID, well that's why I want some government ID. I have no ID, I don't have my birth certificate. Well you have to have your birth certificate. You have to have some ID to get ID. So they're caught. And without an address or contact (inaudable), housing is difficult (to obtain)."

Gaps

Shortages of services, lack of transportation, and shortage of long term affordable housing/shelter were identified as gaps in services.

Shortage of services

Service providers discussed the shortage of services as follows:

"The isolation... I know we're so close to Edmonton but we're really not. I'm close to Edmonton 'cause I can get in my car and drive there. But my clientele is not close to Edmonton and they cannot access services, they can't access addiction counselling that they need. They can't get to it. You can set up as many appointments as you want with them in Edmonton they, can't get there."

and

"We're also missing crisis counselling. 'Cause any time you refer someone to counselling it's a long wait, the quickest someone can get counselling is Turning Points. But certainly through mental health, children's mental health, adult mental health, it's weeks 'til you can even get an intake for children with mental health... I think almost six weeks ... and this girl is cutting. That's an emergency to me and we definitely don't have that, which is another service that could be provided through shelters if it's twenty four seven."

and

"I think mental health services are just huge, I know somebody already mentioned it, but that is a big gap. And addictions treatment too. That's pretty hard to access, its two weeks before you even get to talk to somebody about it and then the will is gone."

Lack of transportation

Transportation was mentioned as one of the reasons that prevent people to access services. A service provider sums it up as follows:

"I think the reasons that we talked about with the transportation stuff is what hinders us from helping them. But from their perspective I think their lack of even knowing what's out there."

and

"I try my best to encourage a lot of my single or single moms to go into Edmonton because of transportation. There are no buses out here and most of them don't have vehicles so that's another big issue. So there's buses, there's jobs, there's some housing, but they will not even look at Edmonton."

and

"Just trying to get to work, most of my clients don't have vehicles or can't get them, can't drive right now, and to try to find work that fits their skill set, what they're looking for within walking distance of their house, or if they're a rural client it's even harder. So sometimes that has an

impact on housing too because they need housing where there's transportation, if there's no transportation they have to be able to be walking distance so it has an impact on where they want housing."

Shortage of long term affordable housing/shelter

A homeless participant shared:

"We lived in the van. And we also went to Calgary to my daughter's place. We'd spend like two weeks with her 'cause I had to keep in contact with my AISH worker, and with the housing. [So your mom lived in the van with you?] Yeh, this fall? She's eighty eight years old."

A service provider commented:

"I think that it's unfortunate that we don't have an emergency youth shelter anymore or any emergency shelter."

and

"I think that when you have such a short, small supply of housing the quality of that housing goes down as well. Where there's more competition, or I guess less competition then landlords are gonna do more to keep a place looking better, safer, keeping all the upgrades and making sure it's all up to code and up to up to par. If it's gonna be full anyways then maybe some of that stuff starts to slide and units aren't as up to code as they should be, and maybe there's other safety issues or health issues that are being neglected by landlords. You can get the slum landlord situation happening and I I've seen that in Spruce Grove. Some very, very awful."

Strengths within Stony Plain

Quality of services, availability of resources, and resilience of the people, community involvement, and accommodating landlords were mentioned as some of the strengths in the community of Stony Plain.

Quality of services

Service providers reflect on this as follows:

"I think there's a lot of community resources out there. And it's just a matter of them accessing them. But there are lots of resources in the community, lots of really good resources. There's good interconnection between the resources too so a lot of other organizations will bring people to us when they need our help, we send them to other organizations kind of almost advocating your clients to different areas. So there's a lot of connection there once they do start to access the services, the people in the community can usually get them to the right places."

and

“Well there are good services that are available for people in the community, I mean in terms there’s the food bank and there’s our services and other agencies and lots of good services, low cost services and opportunities. Parenting supports, all those things are really valuable in the community and those can go a long way in helping people that are at risk of falling through the cracks, so we have enough of the small town stuff but enough of an access to the bigger city services as well.”

Availability of the services

“And we’ve got groups like NeighbourLink and our FCSS program is well connected to Salvation Army so there are those little pockets of money and Alberta Works there’s little pockets of money to try and help people stay in their homes.”

and

“I think there’s a lot of groups of people who have come together and see a need, and we have people who donate to Outreach. These aren’t people that we seek out. These are people that say you know what we wanna help, what can we do? They give us money to run our little bar-b-que at the end of the year, we’ve had people who donated money to support a hot lunch program through us. Like volunteered generosity of people right? Not necessarily government run but it’s certainly community.”

and

“There’s good interconnection between the resources too so a lot of other organizations will bring people to us when they need our help, we send them to other organizations kind of almost advocating your clients to different areas. So there’s a lot of connection there once they do start to access the services, the people in the community can usually get them to the right places.”

Resilience of the people/ community

A participant that was at risk of becoming homeless shared:

“There’s a certain amount of (awareness) and so where I’m more peaceful with it now is this is what happened to me and I’ve learned some things from it. I’ve found who my friends were and who they weren’t and the other part with family is like I can express today that it’s okay. I think I’m okay with having a lower budget and somehow it all kind of works itself out. You notice other people more in your similar situation and you can have empathy for them. You don’t have to look at it as a negative all the time. And even coming here to talk to you today, I go... I’m sure there are some things I could have done better like not give up on the housing pursuit kind of thing. I might be in a different situation today but, it is what it is. And so even knowing they have these things where they ask people, I think that’s excellent. Like you even saying that other people want to keep their pets...”

Accommodating landlords

Individual interviews with participants at risk of becoming homeless shared how accommodating landlords are:

"Oh yes, yes. Landlord's really good. She's really nice you know. If I do happen to end up being short on my rent she's pretty good about that, she'll let me carry it over."

Needs

The service providers talked about the service needs for people in Stony Plain that are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Centralized services, education/awareness, information sharing, needs for different types of housing, and improved services were all mentioned as needs to improve service delivery.

Centralized services

A service provider shared:

"Because their family is still around here or their family is too far away and this is where they're staying and they don't see (leaving) as an option, so even though they're homeless or they're struggling to make their payments and what not, they're not willing to look at moving into a different municipality or moving closer with their kids or anything of that nature. 'Cause it's either too far or this is where they grew up and this is where they're dying. That's a lot of what I hear; this is where I grew up and this is where I'm going to end. I get a lot of that, so when I get clients who are homeless or struggling with living with their costs and what not, there's no other option... they can't pay their utilities this month and they're far behind and their utilities are going to get cut off. We're trying to find somehow to get the utilities back up and say, no matter what give them all year long summer and winter, here's your budget give them a hundred dollars each month. Even though you're over paying in the summer, it'll balance out in the winter. And so we're trying to tell people that. 'Cause they don't want to leave their home, they still want to live there. So in order to do that you gotta budget, so one of the things you don't want to do is miss a payment on utilities. That kind of thing 'cause they don't wanna leave their place. Once you find them a place they don't want to leave that place. And especially when it's in their own community. Villeneuve opened up a place and it's a very nice place but my seniors are like, yeah it's beautiful but it's in the middle of where? What are my options to go shopping? How do I get shopping when I don't have transportation...when I don't have my driver's (license) anymore? Ah when my family can't come then what? What am I gonna do if I need something and nobody can come and bring it 'cause I'm way out here. It's a beautiful facility for those who have family who live there, it's a beautiful facility. But for my seniors who can't find anything but they can get in there 'cause there's an accommodation opening, they're not willing to do it. And you can't force them even though they can become completely homeless, you can't force them to go there because seriously then I'm dealing with them phoning about transportation and how do I get my meds? And I'm lonely... and... and..."

Education/awareness, information sharing

Service providers shared that a combination of education, awareness, and information seeking is important.

"I also find with my seniors a lot of them aren't getting all the resources that are available to them. 'Cause now everything is so technological you have to go on line and research. Your guaranteed income supplement isn't something that's automatically applied for so I probably see half of my seniors don't even know there is such a thing. Never mind having applied for it so you know it's getting them on the process but..."

and

"Sometimes (inaudible) services really understanding what each agency can do. There's a lot of information that we all have to bring to the table I know we talked about reducing poverty at one of our last community meetings. And they were talking about at the upper government level and we need to talk about it at the bottom level 'cause there's stuff that we could be doing already. But they don't, not everybody knows what each other is capable of doing. And I think that in there needs to be more education around what services we can provide, what services they can provide and so that you're more informed when you're dealing with ah person in crisis."

and

"I think a greater connection possibly with some of the health care providers in terms of what services are there so instead of just giving them a medical diagnosis and a prescription and sending them on their way, maybe getting a little more involved in education...I mean we've tried, I think we've tried to reach out to the medical clinics but they could do a lot too for the preventative social services piece. They really could."

Needs for different types of housing

The different subpopulations within the at-risk population for becoming homeless have different needs. Service providers talked about the need for a youth shelter and the needs of young families and seniors:

"Even the youth. I don't think we need a shelter that can keep them from the age of fourteen because they decide to move out of home (just) until they're eighteen. I think they need a shelter that can house them and have someone there that can guide them... where are you going now and here's what we need to do to get you out of here to get to the next place. But to work with them whether it be three months or six months. I know we've had meetings where people are (asking) what is short term, for youth? Well short term can be a week, short term can be a year. And we have to distinguish when we talk about things, what is short term. For me short term is anywhere, it could be three months up to six months, it could be a year. But even if we had something that was specific to even just six months that would help us tremendously."

A single parent with children shared the difficulties she experienced:

"I had six kids in the house and then two with me and then my friend, and I'm trying to raise all of them and then Children's Services came in and took them and it was hell and I'm still trying to... I want to find a four bedroom because I wanted, I want my nieces and nephews to come and live with me, but I'm not fit right now because I only have a two bedroom."

Another participants added:

"I think lower income housing. And more family, pet friendly ones too so.... a lot of people don't recognize it but sometimes our pets are like our children too. It's very devastating on the whole family to have to give up those, especially after... like our cat we've had for eleven years, my daughter's eleven, she's had that cat all of her life. So to have to give him up is a big deal."

Improved support

Service providers shared the needs of single mothers:

"The single moms, especially the young ones; because that's the only way they stayed in a home is they go from guy to guy and they end up with more kids on the way. And that's how they battle homelessness; they just find the next guy."

Service providers are also sometimes unaware of their needs. They shared:

"I think a barrier from us as service providers is sometimes we miss the point in what they want or need. We think they need that five hundred dollar cheque; meanwhile they wanted something more basic than that. For example, they needed just to talk to someone and just for someone to listen. Sometimes we make assumptions of what they need or what we think they need or what they... what they want? I know I've fallen into that as... oh my goodness is that what you wanted? Is that what you really needed? 'Cause you get off on this service that we provide."

and

I think too it's awareness of services available 'cause if I had never worked in this field, I may not have not known what FCSS was. There's lots of family members and friends, they have no idea about all these things so if this person has come on hard times and now they're finding themselves in need of these services, they don't really know where to reach out. I had one client who said... had I known that your support was available I would have left this situation sooner. It's just about that awareness of everybody, we are all aware because we work in this field but a lot of people don't."

Business and Homelessness

Participants who completed the business survey were asked if they felt that having housing problems affects an employee's effectiveness and productivity. Ninety seven percent (97%) said 'yes', and 23% said their employees experienced problems with housing at the time of the survey.

Sixty one percent (61%) believed that local businesses in Stony Plain and Parkland County have a role in finding solutions to homelessness issues in Stony Plain. They were asked to briefly explain what they think their role can be:

"In order to find staff, you need to have communities that are attractive to those you are trying to attract. Also strong communities tend to attract others of the same, which helps attract candidates for your agency."

"A safe and secure home improves productivity for all involved. Productivity leads to a better quality of life for the whole Town."

"We all need to offer opportunities for people to have a roof over their head. Working with social services and not for profits helps."

"Local business and industries may try to build up some employee colony with the help of the government and rent them with low cost for those who having low income."

"Communicate to our Town councilors when affordable housing affects the ability to attract a work force."

Landlords

Participants who completed the landlord survey in Stony Plain indicated that they have an average 10 inquiries per available unit per month. Landlords were asked who they think should play a role in addressing homelessness in Stony Plain area.

Following are a few of their answers:

"Everyone needs to play a role, not one service provider can provide all the services."

"The entire community and government could all play a significant role."

"Homelessness is a concern for the entire community. All community members, business owners, and government need to be involved to solve this issue."

Recommendations

1. Awareness raising need to focus on making the general public, town council and politicians aware that homelessness is not only a real problem in the community of Stony Plain but it is a growing problem. Awareness raising should include education that people at risk of becoming homeless have long term problems with affordability, adequacy and suitability of housing.
2. Centralization of services is important. This will include a coordinated approach to delivery holistic services to people at risk of becoming homeless. Coordination and awareness raising of current service is needed.
3. Interventions should focus on building safety nets to prevent people from becoming homeless by developing affordable housing options, creating opportunities for people to find employment and to generate and income in Stony Plain.
4. Program development should have a special focus on sub groups that are more vulnerable to become homeless; youth, single parents, seniors, First nations and immigrants/migrants (out of country and out of province).
5. The courses of homelessness are multi-factorial and inter-sectoral collaboration is essential to prevent people from becoming homeless and to support people experiencing homelessness.
6. Short-, mid- and long term plans need to be developed to come up with a permanent solutions to prevent people from becoming homeless and support people experiencing homelessness to become housed.

Appendix A: Forms and Letters

Participant Information Letter (Individual Interviews)



Information for Individual Interviews

Title of the Project: A needs assessment related to poverty and homelessness in an agricultural, resource-based community, Stony Plain, Alberta.

Researcher information

Dr. S. Richter
Faculty of Nursing, ECHA 5-269
11405- 87Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
Tel: 780-492-7953

Janine Peter
Executive Director
Town of Stony Plain Family and Community Support Services
Tel: 780-963-8588

Danielle Mattson
Poverty and Homelessness Research Project Coordinator
Town of Stony Plain Family and Community Support Services
Tel: 780-963-8588

Background

You are asked to participate in a research study. We are doing research to understand housing related issues of people living and working in the Stony Plain area. We are asking different community groups and residents in the Stony Plain area to participate.

Purpose

The purpose of the research study is to understand if poverty and related housing issues and homelessness are a problem in the Stony Plain area.

Study procedure

This letter outlines important information to help you decide whether or not you would like to take part in this research. If you agree, we will ask you to take part in a face-to-face recorded conversation that will last approximately 1 hour. We will ask you to share information about housing related issues specific to the Stony Plain area. The audio recording of the interview will be private and your name will not be used in this study. The tapes of the interviews will only be heard by the research coordinator, the researcher and the confidential transcriptionist.

The tapes and writings will be kept in a secure storage following the research. The typed version of our conversations may be used in written publications in professional journals for teaching purposes.

Benefits

Your participation might not benefit you individually but the information will help the Town Council to develop a Social Plan for Stony Plain. The information that you will share with us will help us to make recommendations for this plan.

Risks

It is not expected that taking part in this study would cause any harm to you. The only requirement from you is your time and willingness to engage in the conversation.

Confidentiality

The data will be kept confidential. All identifying information will be removed from the data. Nothing you have shared will be connected to your name. All information will be kept in a password protected and encrypted file on a computer in the researcher's office. Only the researcher, a research assistant and transcriber will know what you have shared. Everyone will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. The data will be stored for an undetermined time. When we decide to destroy it, it will be in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality.

The data will be used to inform the Social Plan of Stony Plain Town Council. The data will also be used to write academic papers and policy information sheets. Your name will not be connected to these sharing events. We may use the data we get from this study in future research, but if we do this it will have to be approved by a Research Ethics Board.

Freedom to Withdraw

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. The participation is completely voluntary. Even if you agree to be in the study, you can change your mind and withdraw at any time. If you decide to stop participating you can ask that all information you have shared be removed and destroyed. You can ask that any information you have shared be removed up to the end of the study, August 2015.

Additional contacts

You are welcome to ask any questions, at any time, regarding any aspect of this study. You may ask questions of Dr. Solina Richter, Tel: (780) 492-7953, Janine Peter, Tel: (780) 963-8588, or Danielle Mattson, Tel: (780) 963-8594.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

If you would like a copy of the final report, please mark the appropriate box.

I want a copy of the final report:

Yes	
No	

If 'yes' please add your email or mailing address:



Participant Information Letter (Focus Groups)



Information Letter for Focus Group Participants

Title of the Project: A needs assessment related to poverty and homelessness in an agricultural, resource-based community, Stony Plain, Alberta

Researcher information

Dr. S. Richter
Faculty of Nursing, ECHA 5-269
11405- 87Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
Tel: 780-492-7953

Janine Peter
Executive Director
Town of Stony Plain Family and Community Support Services
Tel: 780-963-8588

Danielle Mattson
Poverty and Homelessness Research Project Coordinator
Town of Stony Plain Family and Community Support Services
Tel: 780-963-8594

Background

You are asked to participate in a research study. We are doing research to understand housing related issues of people living and working in the Stony Plain area. We are asking different community groups and residents in the Stony Plain area to participate.

Purpose

The purpose of the research study is to understand if poverty and related housing issues and homelessness are a problem in the Stony Plain area.

Study procedure

This letter outlines important information to help you decide whether or not you would like to take part in this research. If you agree, you will be invited to take part in a focus group. The interview will last about an hour and will be scheduled at a location which is convenient for you. The focus group interview will be audio-recorded and your comments will be transcribed. You will receive a copy of the transcribed interview upon request to

confirm or clarify anything you said. We will ask you to share information about housing related issues specific to the Stony Plain area.

Benefits

Your participation might not benefit you individually but the information will help the Town Council to develop a Social Plan for Stony Plain. The information that you will share with us will help us to make recommendations for this plan.

Risks

It is not expected that taking part in this study would cause any harm to you. The only requirement from you is your time and willingness to engage in the conversation.

Confidentiality

The data will be kept confidential. All identifying information will be removed from the data. Nothing you have shared will be connected to your name. All information will be kept in a password protected and encrypted file on a computer in the researcher's office. Only the researcher, a research assistant and transcriber will have access to the data. Everyone will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. The data will be stored for an undetermined time. When we decide to destroy it, it will be in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality.

The data will be used to inform the Social Plan of Stony Plain Town Council. The data will also be used to write academic papers and policy information sheets. Your name will not be connected to these sharing events. We may use the data we get from this study in future research, but if we do this it will have to be approved by a Research Ethics Board.

Freedom to Withdraw

Participating in this study is your choice and you have the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. In the event of withdrawal, we will not report on any personal information collected on you. Data can be withdrawn till the end of August 2015. It will be hard to remove the information particularly related to your audio recording (what you have said), as it will be a group discussion.

Additional contacts

You are welcome to ask any questions, at any time, regarding any aspect of this study. You may ask questions of Dr. Solina Richter, Tel: (780) 492-7953, Janine Peter, Tel: (780) 963-8588 or Danielle Mattson, Tel: (780) 963-8594.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

If you would like a copy of the final report, please mark the appropriate box.

I want a copy of the final report:

Yes	
-----	--

No	
----	--

If 'yes' please add your email or mailing address:



Consent Form



Consent Form for Participant

Part 1 (to be completed by the researcher):

Title: A needs assessment related to poverty and homelessness in an agricultural, resource-based community,
Stony Plain, Alberta

Researcher: Dr. Solina Richter

Phone Number(s): 780-492-7953

Part 2 (to be completed by the research participant):

Yes

No

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study?

☐
☐

Have you read and received a copy of the attached Information Sheet?

☐
☐

Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this
research study?

☐
☐

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?

☐
☐

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time,
without having to give a reason and without penalty?

☐
☐

If you request to withdraw from the study, do you understand that all data gathered
up to the point of withdraw will be destroyed on request?

☐
☐

Has the issue of confidentiality and anonymity been explained to you?

☐
☐

Do you understand that the conversations will be recorded?

☐
☐

Do you understand that portions of the final research may be published in
professional journals or presented at conferences?

☐
☐

Do you understand the researcher is obligated to report any breach of
professional conduct that is unethical and not legal, and that is not
currently in a process of resolution?

☐
☐

Who explained this study to you? _____

I agree to take part in this study: ☐ YES ☐ NO

Signature of Research Participant _____

(Printed Name) _____

Date _____

Signature of Witness _____

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate.

Signature of Investigator or Designee _____ Date _____

THE INFORMATION SHEET MUST BE ATTACHED TO THIS CONSENT FORM AND A COPY GIVEN TO THE RESEARCH SUBJECT.



Confidentiality Agreement

Confidentiality Agreement

Title of the Project: A needs assessment related to poverty and homelessness in an agricultural, resource-based community, Stony Plain, Alberta.

I, _____, the _____ (specific job description, e.g., interpreter/translator) have been hired to _____

I agree to -

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher(s)*.
2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the *Researcher(s)* when I have completed the research tasks.
4. after consulting with the *Researcher(s)*, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher(s)* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).
5. other (specify).

(Print Name)

(Signature)

(Date)

Researcher(s)

_____	_____	_____
(Print Name)	(Signature)	(Date)

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Researcher information

Dr. S. Richter
Faculty of Nursing, ECHA 5-269
11405- 87Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
Tel: 780-492-7953

Janine Peter
Executive Director
Town of Stony Plain Family and Community Support Services
Tel: 780-963-8588

Danielle Mattson
Poverty and Homelessness Research Project Coordinator
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Consent to Contact Form

Consent to Contact Form

Title of the Project: A needs assessment related to poverty and homelessness in an agricultural, resource-based community, Stony Plain, Alberta

Principal Investigators: Dr. Solina Richter and Janine Peter

I
[name of potential participant] hereby on behalf of

.....
[name of person at organization and name of organization] give permission that my name be forwarded to the researchers conducting a study related to an assessment of poverty and homelessness related issues in the Stony Plain area. The University of Alberta Ethics Board has given permission for this study to be conducted. You are cordially invited to be part of this study. You will be invited for a conversation of approximately 60 minutes. The conversation will focus on housing related issues in the Stony Plain area. You are free to choose the time that will be the most convenient for you. If you are interested in the study, can you kindly sign this form and give your contact details. It will be forwarded to the researcher. She will contact you to set up an appropriate time to talk to you.

I give my consent to be contacted by the research staff from the research project: A needs assessment related to poverty and homelessness in an agricultural, resource-based community, Stony Plain, Alberta. I would like to know more about this study. However, this is not my consent to participate in the study.

Name _____ Signature _____

Phone number _____ Email _____



Appendix B: Survey Instruments

General Public Survey



Title of the Project: A needs assessment related to poverty and homelessness in an agricultural, resource-based community, Stony Plain, Alberta

Researcher information

Dr. S. Richter
Faculty of Nursing, ECHA 5-269
11405- 87Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
Tel: 780-492-7953

Janine Peter
Executive Director
Town of Stony Plain Family and Community Support Services
Tel: 780-963-8588

Danielle Mattson
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Background

You are asked to participate in a research study. We are doing research to understand housing related issues of people living and working in the Stony Plain area. We are asking different community groups and residents in the Stony Plain area to participate.

Purpose

The purpose of the research study is to understand if poverty and related housing issues and homelessness are a problem in the Stony Plain area.

Study procedure

This letter outlines important information to help you decide whether or not you would like to take part in this research. If you agree, we will ask you to participate in a survey. The survey will focus on understanding housing related issues of people living and working in the Stony Plain area. This will take about 5 minutes of your time to complete. **Your voluntary participation in completing and submitting the survey will imply your consent for us to use the information.**

Benefits

Your participation might not benefit you individually but the information will help the Town Council to develop a Social Plan for Stony Plain. The information that you will share with us will help us to make recommendations for this plan.

Risks

It is not expected that taking part in this study would cause any harm to you. The only requirement from you is your time and willingness to engage in completing the survey.

Confidentiality

The data will be kept confidential. All identifying information will be removed from the data. Nothing you have shared will be connected to your name. All information will be kept in a password protected and encrypted file on a computer in the researcher’s office. Only the researcher, a research assistant and transcriber will know what you have shared. Everyone will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. The data will be stored for an undetermined time. When we decide to destroy it, it will be in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality.

The data will be used to inform the Social Plan of Stony Plain Town Council. The data will also be used to write academic papers and policy information sheets. Your name will not be connected to these sharing events. We may use the data we get from this study in future research, but if we do this it will have to be approved by a Research Ethics Board.

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If you would like a copy of the final report, please mark the appropriate box.

I want a copy of the final report:

Yes	
No	

If 'yes', please add your email or mailing address:

Definition:

Homelessness: Describes the situation of a person or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing or the immediate prospect of acquiring it
(adapted from The Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2012)

1. Homelessness in the Stony Plain area is:

- ☐ Not a problem
- ☐ A newly emerging problem
- ☐ A growing problem
- ☐ An ongoing problem
- ☐ I don't know

2. What factors impact homelessness in our community? Mark all your choices

- ☐ Lack of affordable housing options
- ☐ Mental health/Addiction issues
- ☐ Health challenges
- ☐ Poverty
- ☐ Employment issues
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

3. Does homelessness in the Stony Plain area look different from homelessness in a more urban centre?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

If 'yes', please specify how:

4. Do you know anyone who is without shelter or a permanent place to live in the Stony Plain area?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If 'yes', is this person connected with services in the community? (Optional to answer; please see community resource list for more information)

5. Do you know of anyone in the Stony Plain area who is at risk of homelessness (i.e. a person or family that is experiencing difficulty maintaining their housing and has no alternatives for obtaining subsequent housing) because their current accommodations are not affordable, adequate, or suitable?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If 'yes', is this person connected with services in the community? (Optional to answer; please see community resource list for more information)

6. Have you ever been homeless or at risk of becoming homeless?

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. Which sectors of the community do you think could play a role in addressing homelessness in the Stony Plain area?

Thank you for your participation! Please submit your questionnaire.



Homeless and At Risk Survey



Title of the Project: A needs assessment related to poverty and homelessness in an agricultural, resource-based community, Stony Plain, Alberta

Researcher information

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If you would like a copy of the final report, please mark the appropriate box.

I want a copy of the final report:

Yes	
No	

If ‘yes’ please add your email or mailing address:

Please use the following definition when answering the questions:

Homelessness: Describes the situation of a person or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing or the immediate prospect of acquiring it
(adapted from The Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2012)

1a. What is your current living situation? (please check all that apply)

- ☐ Living alone
- ☐ Living with spouse/partner and/or children
- ☐ Living with immediate family (parents, siblings)
- ☐ Living with extended family (grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins, etc.)
- ☐ Living with friends/roommates
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

1b. Do you live in a . . .

- ☐ House
- ☐ Part of a house (garage, basement suite, upper level, etc.)
- ☐ Mobile home
- ☐ Apartment/Condo
- ☐ Town home
- ☐ Hotel/Boarding house
- ☐ Travel trailer/RV/Motorhome
- ☐ I do not have a place to live
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

1c. Do you...

- ☐ Rent monthly (apartment, house, basement suite, etc.)
- ☐ Rent daily/weekly (hostel, hotel, motel, etc.)
- ☐ Own your home
- ☐ Not rent or own ("couch surf" or live rent free with family/friends)
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

1d. **If you are renting**, are you currently living in a unit considered...

- ☐ Low Income/Cooperative Housing
- ☐ Affordable Housing

- ☐ Seniors Subsidized Housing
- ☐ Full price/Market value
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____
- ☐ Not applicable (I am not renting)

1e. **If you are renting**, what is the average cost, per month, for your accommodation (including any rent or mortgage payments, utilities, municipal services, fees, taxes, etc.)?

- ☐ \$1 - \$499
- ☐ \$500 - \$749
- ☐ \$750 - \$999
- ☐ \$1000 – \$1499
- ☐ \$1500 – \$1999
- ☐ \$2000 – 2499
- ☐ \$2500 or more
- ☐ Not applicable (I am not renting)

2. Where are you currently living?

- ☐ Within the Town of Stony Plain
- ☐ Within the City of Spruce Grove
- ☐ Out of town rurally (Parkland County)
- ☐ Within a First Nation community (Enoch, Paul Band, Alexander, etc.);
please specify: _____
- ☐ In another nearby community (Wabamun, Duffield, Spring Lake, etc.);
please specify: _____
- ☐ I move frequently between communities (Stony Plain and Spruce Grove, etc.);
please specify which communities: _____

- ☐ I do not have a place to live
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

3a. How long have you been living in the area you specified in question 2 (above)?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
- ☐ 6 – 10 years
- ☐ 10 -15 years
- ☐ 15+ years
- ☐ Not applicable

3b. **If you moved to the Stony Plain area in the last 5 years**, what was the main reason you moved here?

- ☐ Work
- ☐ To access services
- ☐ Family/friends here
- ☐ Affordability
- ☐ Liked the community
- ☐ Not applicable
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

3c. **If you moved to the Stony Plain area in the last 5 years**, where did you move here from?

- ☐ Somewhere else in Alberta (please specify) _____
- ☐ Another province (please specify) _____

- ☐ Another country (please specify) _____
- ☐ Not applicable

4a. If you had to leave where you are now because of housing issues, where are you most likely to go?

- ☐ To a major city (Edmonton or Calgary)
- ☐ To a mid-small city (Spruce Grove, Leduc, Red Deer, etc.)
- ☐ To a town about the same size as Stony Plain
- ☐ To a town or village smaller than Stony Plain
- ☐ Back to where I am originally from
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

4b. Why would you choose that place?

5. What keeps you in the Stony Plain area? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Work ☐ To access services ☐ Family/friends here
- ☐ Affordability ☐ Liked the community
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

6a. Have you personally experienced any of the following problems with your housing within the past 12 months? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Availability (You had difficulty finding housing) ☐ Affordability (You spent more than 30% of your income on housing expenses)
- ☐ Adequacy (Your housing required major repairs to meet minimum health and/or safety standards)
- ☐ Suitability (Your housing does not have enough space for the number of people living there)
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

6b. If **“yes”** to any problems in 6a, approximately how long have you been experiencing these difficulties with your housing? _____

7a. Have you had to move in the past 12 months because of any of the reasons listed in question 6a?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

7b. If **“yes”** to 7a, how many times have you had to move in the past 12 months?

- ☐ 1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4+

8. Is it likely you will have to move at some point in the next 12 months because of any of the problems listed in question 6a?

☐ Yes

☐ No

9. Do you have friends or family you can turn to when you are experiencing housing problems?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not applicable

10. Are you aware of anywhere else you can get assistance when you need help with housing?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not applicable

11a. Are you aware of any other individuals or families in the Stony Plain area who have experienced difficulty finding or keeping housing that meets their needs in the past 12 months?

☐ Yes

☐ No

11b. If **“yes”** to 11a, how many other individuals or families are you aware of?

☐ 1-2

☐ 2-4

☐ 5-9

☐ 10+

12a. Are you currently receiving financial assistance to obtain or keep appropriate housing?

☐ Yes

☐ No

12b. If **“yes,”** to 12a, where from?

☐ Income Support (Alberta Works)

☐ Direct Rent Supplement

☐ Family/Friends

☐ Other (please specify) _____

13a. Are you aware of any of the following service providers operating in the Stony Plain area? (please check all that apply)

☐ Addiction Services*

☐ Family and Community Support Services (FCSS)

☐ Alberta Works (Income Support)

☐ Capital Region Housing Corp.

☐ Neighbourlink Parkland

☐ Meridian Foundation

☐ Mental Health*

☐ Parkland Food Bank

☐ Auggie's Café (soup kitchen)

☐ Work Source/Bredin Institute

☐ Westview Health Center*

*services or programs offered by Alberta Health Services

13b. Have you ever had to use any of the following forms of assistance because of housing issues? (please check all that apply)

☐ Food bank/Soup kitchen

☐ Local churches

☐ Financial assistance programs

☐ Emergency shelter

☐ Thrift Stores

☐ Family/Friends

☐ Not applicable

14. Are there any services you feel could be helpful to people facing housing difficulties that are not currently available in the Stony Plain area? (please specify by name)

15a. Are you currently employed?

☐ Yes

☐ No

15b. If “yes” to 15a, are you employed:

☐ Full-time

☐ Multiple part-time jobs

☐ Part-time

☐ Casual

☐ Other (please specify) _____

15c. Do you face any of the following barriers to employment?

☐ Physical health issues

☐ Mental health issues

☐ Affordable child care

☐ Transportation issues

☐ Need for training/education

☐ Other (please specify) _____

16. Please list any other current sources of income outside of any formal employment:

☐ Long-term social assistance

☐ Short-term social assistance

☐ Financial support from friends/family

☐ Student loans

☐ Disability benefits

☐ Canada Pension Plan

☐ Informal employment (odd jobs)

☐ Private Pension(s)

☐ Bank loan/Private lenders/Credit

☐ Other (please specify) _____

17. Do you feel you are able to afford all of your basic needs on your current income?

☐ Yes

☐ No

18. Please indicate whether the following statements are true for you:

Housing problems affect my physical health	Yes	No	Not applicable
<i>Housing problems affect my mental health</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
Housing problems affect my ability to work	Yes	No	Not applicable
<i>Housing problems affect my relationship with my family</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>

19. Please indicate if each of the following factors is impacting your ability to obtain or keep appropriate housing:

Shortage of affordable housing (to rent or buy)	Yes	No	Not applicable
<i>Current income doesn't cover cost of housing</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
Employment issues	Yes	No	Not applicable
<i>Lack of education</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
Lack of personal/public transportation	Yes	No	Not applicable
<i>Finding affordable child care</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
Criminal record	Yes	No	Not applicable
<i>Addiction issues</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
Mental health issues	Yes	No	Not applicable
<i>Physical disabilities</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
Mental/Cognitive disabilities	Yes	No	Not applicable
<i>Discrimination (age, racial, gender, etc.)</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
Personal debt	Yes	No	Not applicable
<i>Relational violence/abuse</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
Divorce	Yes	No	Not applicable
<i>Single income family</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>

20. Are there any other factors you feel impact your ability to access appropriate housing? (please specify) _____

21. Have you ever felt discriminated against or at a disadvantage because of your housing situation?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Demographic Data

1. Date of birth: _____ (mm/dd/yyyy) Age: _____

2. Gender: ☐ Female

☐ Male

3. What is your marital status?

☐ Single

☐ Married

☐ Common Law

☐ Separated

☐ Widow/Widower

☐ Divorced

☐ Other (please specify) _____

4. Do you have any financial dependents living with you (children, spouse, etc.)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If "yes", how many? _____

5. What is your annual household income from all sources (check one):

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$15,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$15,000-\$24,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25,000-\$28,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$29,000-\$35,499 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$35,000-\$41,499 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$41,500-\$44,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$45,000-\$49,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 + | |

6. What is your highest level of education?

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some high school | <input type="checkbox"/> High school diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> Some post-secondary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technical school/College diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor degree | <input type="checkbox"/> Masters/Ph.D. |

7. Do you self-identify as any of the following (check all that apply):

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> First Nations | <input type="checkbox"/> Métis | <input type="checkbox"/> Inuit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Immigrant | <input type="checkbox"/> LGBTQ/two-spirit | <input type="checkbox"/> Visible minority |

8. Do you have...

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canadian citizenship | <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent residency | <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary residency |
|---|--|--|

Invitation to participate in an individual interview

If you have experienced an accommodation related problem or homelessness for any period of time while living in **the Stony Plain area**, we would like to **invite you to participate in an individual interview** to discuss this issue in more detail (depth).

Please fill out the CONSENT TO CONTACT FORM. The research staff will contact you and set up a time and place that is convenient for you to conduct the interview.

Thank you for your participation! Please submit your questionnaire



Service Provider Survey



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(adapted from The Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2012)

1. Does your agency currently serve any clients who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2a. About what proportion of your agency's clients have issues with acquiring or keeping appropriate housing?

_____ %

3a. Of those of your clients who are having issues with acquiring or keeping appropriate housing, what proportion would you estimate are:

Youth (16-24 years old): _____ %

Seniors (over 55 years old): _____ %

Aboriginal: _____ %

New to the community: _____ %

Experiencing domestic violence: _____ %

3b. Would you say that there are any other specific group(s) or population(s) that you work with that were not represented in question 3a that are having issues with acquiring or keeping appropriate housing? Please specify: _____

4. Also of those of your clients who are having issues with acquiring or keeping appropriate housing, what proportion would you estimate are living:

Unsheltered: _____ %

Temporarily with family/friends: _____ %

In a community supported housing program: _____ %

In an emergency shelter outside of the Stony Plain area: _____ %

At risk of becoming unsheltered: _____ %

Other (please specify below): _____ %

5. In the Stony Plain area, homelessness is:

- ☐ Not a problem ☐ A new problem ☐ An ongoing problem
☐ A growing problem ☐ A major problem ☐ I don't know

6. Are housing issues the main reason clients are referred to your agency?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Does your agency directly address client housing issues (ie. providing financial assistance to be used towards rent, provide low-income housing, provide emergency accommodations, etc.)?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

8. Do your services focus primarily on:

- ☐ Emergency intervention
☐ Short-term intervention
☐ Long-term intervention
☐ Support
☐ Prevention

9. Please indicate whether you agree/disagree with the following statements:

(D – disagree, N – neutral, A – agree)

Housing issues impact clients' physical health	D	N	A
Housing issues impact clients' mental health	D	N	A
Housing issues impact clients' chances of success in my care	D	N	A
Housing issues impact my relationship with my clients	D	N	A

10. Please indicate if any of the following is a factor in homelessness in the Stony Plain area:

Shortage of affordable housing (to rent or buy)	Yes	No	Not sure
Employment issues	Yes	No	Not sure
Poor life skills	Yes	No	Not sure
Mental health/addiction issues	Yes	No	Not sure
Physical/cognitive disabilities	Yes	No	Not sure
Discrimination (age, racial, gender etc)	Yes	No	Not sure
Intimate partner violence/abuse	Yes	No	Not sure
Elder abuse	Yes	No	Not sure
Parent-youth relationship dynamics	Yes	No	Not sure
Single income family	Yes	No	Not sure

Other (please specify): _____

11. Are there any services you feel could be helpful to people having housing difficulties that are not available in the Stony Plain area? Please specify: _____

Thank you for your participation! Please submit your questionnaire.



Industry Survey



Title of the Project: A needs assessment related to poverty and homelessness in an agricultural, resource-based community, Stony Plain, Alberta

Researcher information

Dr. S. Richter
Faculty of Nursing, ECHA 5-269
11405- 87Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
Tel: 780-492-7953

Janine Peter
Executive Director
Town of Stony Plain Family and Community Support Services
Tel: 780-963-8588

Danielle Mattson
Poverty and Homelessness Research Project Coordinator
Town of Stony Plain Family and Community Support Services
Tel: 780-963-8594

Background

You are asked to participate in a research study. We are doing research to understand housing related issues of people living and working in the Stony Plain area. We are asking different community groups and residents in the Stony Plain area to participate.

Purpose

The purpose of the research study is to understand if poverty and related housing issues and homelessness are a problem in the Stony Plain area.

Study procedure

This letter outlines important information to help you decide whether or not you would like to take part in this research. If you agree, we will ask you to participate in a survey. The survey will focus on understanding housing related issues of people living and working in the Stony Plain area. This will take about 5 minutes of your time to complete. **Your voluntary participation in completing and submitting the survey will imply your consent for us to use the information.**

Benefits

Your participation might not benefit you individually but the information will help the Town Council to develop a Social Plan for Stony Plain. The information that you will share with us will help us to make recommendations for this plan.

Risks

It is not expected that taking part in this study would cause any harm to you. The only requirement from you is your time and willingness to engage in completing the survey.

Confidentiality

The data will be kept confidential. All identifying information will be removed from the data. Nothing you have shared will be connected to your name. All information will be kept in a password protected and encrypted file on a computer in the researcher’s office. Only the researcher, a research assistant and transcriber will know what you have shared. Everyone will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. The data will be stored for an undetermined time. When we decide to destroy it, it will be in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality.

The data will be used to inform the Social Plan of Stony Plain Town Council. The data will also be used to write academic papers and policy information sheets. Your name will not be connected to these sharing events. We may use the data we get from this study in future research, but if we do this it will have to be approved by a Research Ethics Board.

Freedom to Withdraw

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. The participation is completely voluntary. Even if you agree to be in the study you can change your mind and withdraw at any time. If you decide to stop participating you can ask that all information you have shared be removed and destroyed.

Additional contacts

You are welcome to ask any questions, at any time, regarding any aspect of this study. You may ask questions of Dr. Solina Richter, Tel: (780) 492-7953, Janine Peter, Tel: (780) 963-8588 or Danielle Mattson, Tel: (780) 963-8594.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

If you would like a copy of the final report, please mark the appropriate box.

I want a copy of the final report:

Yes	
No	

If 'yes', please add your email or mailing address:

Definition:

Homelessness: Describes the situation of a person or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing or the immediate prospect of acquiring it

(adapted from The Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2012)

1. Homelessness in the Stony Plain is:

- ☐ Not a concern for our industry
- ☐ An emerging concern for our industry
- ☐ A long-standing concern for our industry
- ☐ I don't know

2. Do you have trouble attracting employees to the area because of a housing situation?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3. Do you feel that having housing problems can affect an employee's effectiveness and/or productivity?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4. Do you currently know of any of your employees that are experiencing or at risk of homelessness?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5a. Do you believe local businesses and industries have a role in finding solutions to our community's homelessness issues?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5b. If 'yes', please briefly explain that role.

6a. Does your company currently do anything to assist employees to find and/or keep appropriate housing?

☐ Yes

☐ No

6b. If 'yes', please explain.

7. Are you aware of any services in the Stony Plain area available to those experiencing difficulties finding or keeping appropriate housing?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8a. Will the information gathered from this study be of use to your industry?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8b. If 'yes', how?

8c. What type of information could be gathered that would be useful to your industry?

Thank you for your participation! Please submit your questionnaire.



Landlord Survey



Title of the Project: A needs assessment related to poverty and homelessness in an agricultural, resource-based community, Stony Plain, Alberta

Researcher information

Dr. S. Richter
Faculty of Nursing, ECHA 5-269
11405- 87Avenue
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Tel 780-492-7953

Janine Peter
Executive Director
Town of Stony Plain Family and Community Support Services
Tel: 780-963-8588

Danielle Mattson
Poverty and Homelessness Research Project Coordinator
Town of Stony Plain Family and Community Support Services
Tel: 780-963-8594

Background

You have been asked to participate in a research study. We are doing research to understand housing related issues of people living and working in the Stony Plain area. We are asking different community groups and residents in the Stony Plain area to participate.

Purpose

The purpose of the research study is to understand if poverty and related housing issues and homelessness are a problem in the Stony Plain area.

Study procedure

This letter outlines important information to help you decide whether or not you would like to take part in this research. If you agree, we will ask you to participate in a survey. The survey will focus on understand housing related issues of people living and working in the Stony Plain area. This will take about 5 minutes of your time to complete. **Your voluntary participation in completing and submitting the survey will imply your consent for us to use the information.**

Benefits

Your participation might not benefit you individually but the information will help the Town Council to develop a Social Plan for Stony Plain. The information that you will share with us will help us to make recommendations for this plan.

Risks

It is not expected that taking part in this study would cause any harm to you. The only requirement from you is your time and willingness to engage in completing the survey.

Confidentiality

The data will be kept confidential. All identifying information will be removed from the data. Nothing you have shared will be connected to your name. All information will be kept in a password protected and encrypted file on a computer in the researcher’s office. Only the researcher, a research assistant and transcriber will know what you have shared. Everyone will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. The data will be stored for an undetermined time. When we decide to destroy it, it will be in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality.

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Additional contacts

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If you would like a copy of the final report, please mark the appropriate box.

I want a copy of the final report:

Yes	
No	

If 'yes' please add your email or mailing address:

Definition:

Homelessness: Describes the situation of a person or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing or the immediate prospect of acquiring it
(adapted from The Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2012)

1. Homelessness in the Stony Plain area is:

- ☐ Not a problem in our community
- ☐ A new problem in our community
- ☐ An ongoing problem in our community
- ☐ I don't know

2. What type of rental property(s) do you own? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Apartments
- ☐ Detached homes
- ☐ Rooming house
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____
- ☐ Row housing (duplex/fourplex, etc.)
- ☐ Mobile Homes
- ☐ Suites (basement, upper level, etc.)

3. How many individual rental units do you own/operate? (please count each unit in a complex, or if you rent out the floors of a house, count each separately)

- ☐ 1-2
- ☐ 2-5
- ☐ 5-10
- ☐ 10+

4a. How many inquiries do you typically get per unit per month?

4b. How many applications do you typically get per unit per month?

5. How do you normally advertise a unit available for rent?

- ☐ Newspaper
- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ Community bulletins
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Internet rental boards

6. How long is your typical lease agreement?

#_____ years/months/weeks (please circle)

7. Do you rent to adults with children?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no, please specify age requirements: _____

8a. Would you rent to someone who is currently homeless?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8b. If 'no', why not?

9. What criteria do you set for potential tenants?

10. How do you decide what to charge for rent?

11. Which sectors of the community do you think could play a role in addressing homelessness in the Stony Plain area? (for example: Social Services, business/industry, law enforcement, etc.)

Thank you for your participation! Please submit your questionnaire.

Appendix C: Interview Guides

Homeless & At-Risk of Homelessness Interview Guide

Definition:

Homelessness: Describes the situation of a person or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing or the immediate prospect of acquiring it

(adapted from The Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2012)

Background

Tell me a little bit about yourself:

- How old are you
- Family in the area
- Any dependants
- Education
- Employment/Income

How has being a (woman/single parent/immigrant/migrant worker/young person/person with a disability/single working man) affected your ability to acquire/keep appropriate housing?

Current Living situation

What is your current living situation like?

Do you have issues with housing affordability?

-tell me about them

Do you have issues with housing adequacy?

-tell me about them

Do you have issues with housing suitability?

-tell me about them

Have you had any other issues with your housing?

Is your income enough to cover the costs of all your basic needs?

Do you pay for your living accommodations?

Have you had to move because of any of the difficulties you mentioned?

-tell me about it

-how did you find your current accommodation?

Health & Wellbeing

How does your housing situation affect your everyday life?

- physical/mental health
- ability to earn an income
- relationships with family/friends

Have you ever felt stigmatized because of your housing issues?

- dealing with government/bureaucrats
- dealing with service providers

-other

Migration

Where are you from originally?

How long have you been here?

What brought you to this area?

What keeps you here?

Under what circumstances would you leave the area?

If you had to leave because of housing problems where would you go?

-Why?

Causes & Barriers

What do you feel are some causes of your housing problems?

Do you feel anything is preventing you from obtaining more appropriate housing or improving your situation in general?

Accessing Services & Resources

Have you had to access any services due to housing issues?

-what was your experience like?

Do you think there are any services that would be helpful to people in your situation that are not available in or near Stony Plain?

Solutions

What have you already done to improve your housing situation?

What would you like to be able to do to improve your housing situation?

What needs to happen/what supports do you need in order for you to be able to do that?

Service Provider Focus Group Guide

Definition:

Homelessness: Describes the situation of a person or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing or the immediate prospect of acquiring it

(adapted from The Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2012)

How do you see homelessness in our community?

How do client housing issues affect your work?

Where do your clients come from?

- life-long residents
- recent arrivals
 - domestic
 - foreign

How long do your clients stay in the area?

- why?
- where do they go?
- is care transferred?

What do you see as the main contributing factors of homelessness in the Stony Plain area?

What are we doing well as a community in serving individuals and families coping with or at risk of homelessness?

Where are the gaps in service?

- How can we fill these gaps?

What are the barriers to service – why might people not be accessing services that available to them?

- How can we overcome these barriers?

Which populations do you see as most at risk?

- why are they most at risk?
- how can we reach them?

Industry Interview Guide

Definition:

Homelessness: Describes the situation of a person or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing or the immediate prospect of acquiring it

(adapted from The Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2012)

How do you see homelessness as an issue that affects your industry?

- examples of serious housing issues/homelessness common to the industry

- what proportion of your work force is affected by homelessness or other serious housing issues?

- How do you address these issues?

How would reducing homelessness in our community benefit your industry?

What role do you think the oil industry could take in reducing homelessness and housing related problems in the Stony Plain area?

Does your company currently do anything to assist employees (new or otherwise) find or keep housing appropriate to their needs?

What services do you feel would be of benefit to industry employees facing serious housing issues?

Appendix D: Ethics Approval

Notification of Approval

Date: November 17, 2014
Study ID: Pro00051268
Principal Investigator: [Magdalena Richter](#)
Study Title: A needs assessment related to poverty and homelessness in an agricultural resource-based community, Stony Plain, Alberta
Approval Expiry Date: November-16-15

Approved Consent Form:	Approval Date 17/11/2014 17/11/2014	Approved Document CONSENT FORM for Participant CONSENT TO CONTACT FORM
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Sponsor/Funding Agency: Alberta Rural Development Network

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 1. Your application has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee.

A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to access the staff, students, facilities or resources of local institutions for the purposes of the research.

Sincerely,

William Dunn, PhD
Chair, Research Ethics Board 1

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).