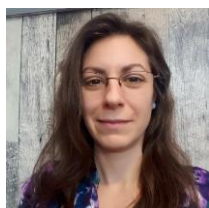


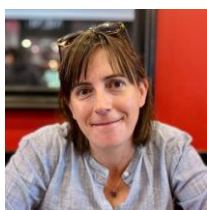
Seminar 2: Fidelity of Housing First (Room: TBD) - Chair: Volker Busch-Geertsema, DE

Ashley Ward, Samara Jones, Stephen Gaetz, CA: Validation of a Brief Fidelity Self-Assessment Tool for Housing First (HF) Interventions for Youth: Pilot Testing

Program fidelity assessment is the evaluation of a program's performance in correspondence with its defined principles and practices - or, its underlying core model. A well-recognized step in verifying a program's quality, specifically its adherence to the core model in balance with any necessary contextual adaptations, fidelity assessment can also be expensive and time-consuming; qualified independent assessors may additionally be challenging to access. In response to these concerns, self-assessment is increasingly being recognized as a valid form of fidelity review, offering a way for program operators to capture current program quality, better define its limits, and provide tangible directions for capacity-building. Housing First (HF) interventions that address youth homelessness are continuing to be implemented and operated in a number of countries; in tandem with this is a call for fidelity tools and resources to support practitioners in building their program's capacity. In this presentation, we describe a pilot study providing an initial validation of a fidelity self-assessment tool for HF programs for youth using the Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) model's core principles. It draws on data collected from a larger study examining program adoption, implementation, and practitioner innovation in HF programs for youth in Canada and Europe. The study applied a mixed-methods design consisting of survey and interview data collection; as part of the survey package, a 31-item tool was developed to measure fidelity across HF4Y's five core principles. The survey was completed by service delivery team leads (TLs); qualitative interviews were conducted with TLs as well as host organization leaders who led the decision to implement their HF program(s) for youth. Interview guides covered three topics relevant to fidelity assessment: program design and implementation, program innovation and practices, and training and capacity-building. Currently, the study is ongoing; results of the analysis will be discussed.



Ashley Ward (she/her) is a Senior Researcher with the Making the Shift Youth Homelessness Social Innovation Lab. She holds a PhD in Psychological Science from Toronto Metropolitan University, as well as expertise in interdisciplinary and community-based research, evidence-based program design, and program evaluation. Her research focuses on Housing First for Youth (HF4Y), evidence-based practice adoption, as well as what works to bring quality and empowerment to the lives of marginalized youth.



Samara Jones has worked on homelessness and social justice issues, with a particular focus on Housing First, youth, and systems change. Based in Brussels, she is the Coordinator of the Housing First Europe Hub (www.housingfirsteurope.eu), a partnership established by FEANTSA and the Y-Foundation (Finland), and over 20 housing providers, governments, cities, and researchers from across Europe and beyond. In 2023 and the first half of 2024, she is on sabbatical back home in Canada and is working part-time with the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and A Way Home Canada as a researcher on the Housing First for Youth Program Adoption & Practice Innovations Study.



As a scholar, Dr. Stephen Gaetz has had a long-standing interest in understanding homelessness – its causes, how it is experienced, and evidence-based solutions to ending it. His program of research has been defined by the need to 'make research matter' through conducting scholarly research that is mobilized to impact policy, practice, and public opinion. Dr. Gaetz has published extensively on the topic; his research on youth homelessness, its prevention, and models of intervention have contributed to significant change in how we respond to homelessness in Canada and internationally.

Riikka Perälä, Saija Turunen, FI: Adapting Housing First. Exploring Stakeholder Perspectives on Adaptations to the Housing First Model in Four European countries

The presentation examines the local adaptations of the Housing First model in Europe. The Housing First model has proven to be a successful and effective response to homelessness with evidence of its feasibility in different

contexts. However, further research is needed to explore balance between the Housing First model and the local context as well as to identify potential training needs. The data of this presentation consists of semi-structured individual interviews with stakeholders in Housing First (N=50) collected in Finland, Germany, Ireland, and Spain. The focus of the presentation is on the eight principles of the European Housing First model (Pleace 2016), prompting the interviewees to reflect on their relevance to their work and on the implementation of the principles within their respective organisations and countries. The interviews were analysed by applying thematic content analysis. In the presentation the main findings of the interviews will address the following questions: how the interviewees applied the eight principles in their work, what challenges, if any, they experienced in applying the principles and what were the underlying cause of the potential challenges. The significance of the results and the relevant training needs arising from them are discussed at the end of the presentation.



Saija Turunen is the Head of Research at Y-Foundation, Finland where she has worked since 2017. Saija studied and worked in the field of social research in the UK where she founded and ran her own research consultancy as well as taught research methods at the University of Bangor, North Wales after receiving her Ph.D. from there in 2001. Currently Saija co-leads the knowledge development work cluster of the Housing First Europe Hub and her research interests include impact assessment, women's homelessness as well as subjective well-being.



Dr. Riikka Perälä received her PhD in sociology in 2012 from the University of Helsinki. Her research interests cover the position of vulnerable citizen groups in welfare and housing policies and services. In the homelessness field, she has investigated these issues in the context of Housing First policies and participated also in the development of policies in various expert groups. Currently, she works as a post-doctoral researcher in Y-Foundation, in an Erasmus+ funded research project, which investigates the adaptation of Housing First policies in four European countries.