

Homelessness or Risk of Homelessness

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Why is this topic important?

Homelessness can happen to anyone at any point in their lives.

People are increasingly experiencing challenges with maintaining secure and suitable housing. Women aged over 55 are one of the fastest growing groups at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Facilitator guide

Question 1

What is important to the consumer in this case study?

Discussion prompts

- What have they expressed as important?
- What else do you think might be important?

Question 2

What challenges and risks do you identify for the consumer in this case study?



Question 3

What do we mean by 'homelessness'?

Points to consider

- Homelessness refers to people living on the street, as well as those sleeping in their cars, on other people's couches and in overcrowded or temporary accommodation
- Homelessness is about not having a home - 'home'less, not roofless
- A home means a sense of security, stability, privacy, safety and the ability to control living space
- Many people, if asked, would say that homelessness is when you don't have a roof over your head, for example, sleeping rough on the streets. However rough sleeping is only a small part of the picture.

Question 4

What are some of the factors that can lead to homelessness?

Points to consider

- Family violence
- Break down of relationships
- Illness
- Isolation
- Lack of superannuation and retirement savings
- Coming from a lower socio-economic background
- Lack of affordable and stable housing options
- Unemployment.

Question 5

Which groups of older people are more at risk of experiencing homelessness?

Points to consider

- Older women are the fastest growing cohort experiencing homelessness; retiring after a lifetime of lower wages, less superannuation and the devaluation of their caring roles
- Older people who identify as LGBTI.

Question 6

How might you support the consumer to disclose and talk about their risk of homelessness?

Discussion prompts

- What type of questions might you ask?
- Who is the best person to engage with the consumer?

Points to consider

- The consumer may never want to disclose to you the depth of their challenges
- Build rapport and trust
- Be honest in what you can do to support, do not make promises that you or others can't keep
- Be person-centred. You can have the best approach in the world, but without the consumer wanting to do something about the issue you will never make progress
- Ask open questions like:
 - ‘How are things going at home?’
 - Talk generally, normalise the cost of living/high rents and open up a conversation
 - Keep checking in how the consumer thinks their housing is going.

Question 7

How may the consumer react if you ask sensitive questions?

Points to consider

- When people are scared and feeling vulnerable then they may come across as being a “difficult” person to deal with/communicate with
- When people feel like they no longer have control, you may see “demands” or other reactions that may be seen as negative or confronting
- Be relieved that someone takes an interest.

Question 8

How might you support the consumer in this case study to reduce their risk of homelessness?

Discussion prompts

- What support options may be relevant to this consumer?

Points to consider

- Discuss other support options such as counselling
- Referrals to the local housing/homelessness agency through the Victorian Government Crisis and Emergency Accommodation Support. Phone: 1800 825 955
- Private Rental Assistance Programs and the like can assist with rental arrears, negotiate with the real estate to transfer into a cheaper rental/change rental agencies etc
- Local housing/homelessness service can refer to the waiting list for public/community housing
- Establish if service fees can be reduced or removed
- Explore social support options
- Secondary consultation with local housing service if consumer doesn't consent to referrals

Resources

Organisations

UnitingCare Housing Program

105 Dana Street

Ballarat

Phone: 5332 1286

Website: <https://www.unitingvictas.org.au/services/homelessness-housing/>

Housing for the Aged Action Group

<https://www.oldertenants.org.au>

Council to Homeless Persons

<https://chp.org.au>

Catholic Care Victoria - Community Connections program

<http://www.catholiccarevic.org.au/directory/services/community-connections>