EXPLORING THE LIFE EXPERIENCES AND PARENTING NEEDS OF HOMELESS FAMILIES
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PURPOSE
TO ACQUIRE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE LIFE EXPERIENCES AND PARENTING NEEDS OF HOMELESS PARENTS RESIDING IN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Specific Aims:
1) Collect quantitative and qualitative data from homeless parents residing in transitional housing to determine the relevant life experiences and parenting needs of this population
2) Strengthen collaborative relationships with homeless families and service providers in support of a community-based program of research addressing parenting among homeless families

SIGNIFICANCE
- Approximately 650,000 people experienced homelessness on a given night in 2010, including more than 240,000 persons in families (37%)
- Homelessness among families has increased in recent years
- Families who have experienced homelessness show higher levels of parent distress and increased risk for child emotional, behavioral, and developmental problems
- Further research is needed to determine how parenting interventions can best serve the needs of these families

METHOD
SITE
- Transitional housing program in Northern Florida for men, women, and families
- Families reside together in dormitory and receive specialized services

PARTICIPANTS
- Parents or primary caregivers in transitional housing community
- Primarily female and African American

Quantitative sample (n) = 69
Qualitative sample (n) = 24

PROCEDURES
- Collected quantitative and qualitative data
- Calculated descriptive statistics and analyzed qualitative data with thematic analysis
- All procedures approved by appropriate IRB

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Parental Depression
- Clinically Significant: 15%
- Parenting Stress
- Clinically Significant: 23%
- Child Behavior Problems
- Clinically Significant: 33%

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

#1: I MAY BE HOMELESS, BUT I'M STILL A PARENT
Being a parent was a core identity that participants retained even while experiencing homelessness

#2: THIS COMMUNITY IS A BETTER CHOICE THAN ALTERNATIVES
Moving to the transitional housing community was a deliberate choice, influenced by the parenting role

#3: THIS COMMUNITY IS LIKE A BIG FAMILY
The transitional housing community is like a family in many ways, better for and far worse

#4: BEING IN A UNIQUE PARENTING CONTEXT
Parenting in this context presents unique challenges that motivated both change and consistency

#5: MOVING FORWARD DESPITE LIFE'S OBSTACLES
Parents displayed tremendous perseverance in spite of the numerous obstacles they were facing

DISCUSSION & NEXT STEPS

- Homeless families with children face significant challenges yet also demonstrate notable resilience
- Parenting remains a key role and responsibility in the lives of homeless caregivers
- Service providers must recognize the unique context of parenting in a transitional housing context

I currently have a CRC Planning Grant to conduct a preliminary adaptation of an evidence-based parenting intervention for families residing in transitional housing. The data will inform a grant proposal to NIH to test the effectiveness of the adapted intervention.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

REFERENCES
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Shandee Mail, Dr. Lenore M. McNeil, and the research team that contributed to this study; I would also like to thank the parents and service providers who made this study possible.

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48.5%
47.8%
53.2%
51.5%