



RESEARCH STUDY LETTER OF EXPLANATION FOR YPNFA AGENCIES

TITLE OF PROJECT: *Exploring the experiences of homelessness and food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic among pregnant and postpartum people in Toronto*

INVESTIGATOR:

This research study is being conducted by Barbara Chyzy RN, PhD from the Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing at Ryerson University. This study is funded by Ryerson's Faculty of Community Services COVID-19 Rapid Response Research Grant. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Barbara Chyzy at the Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing, Ryerson University, 350 Victoria Street, Toronto, ON, M5B 2K3, barbara.chyzy@ryerson.ca.

CO-INVESTIGATORS:

Other co-investigators involved in this study include Dr. Sepali Guruge (School of Nursing, Ryerson University), Dr. Enza Gucciardi (School of Nutrition, Ryerson University), Nicole Bennett (Midwifery Education Program, Ryerson University) and Dr. Anita Rachel Ewan (Social Work, Wilfred Laurier University).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

This research study will explore the experiences of pregnant and parenting people including women, trans and non-binary people, who are homeless and don't have enough food during the COVID-19 pandemic so we can learn which supports and services have been helpful and which areas require strengthening.

BACKGROUND & METHODS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, people experiencing homelessness have been disproportionately affected with a higher transmission rate of the virus in homeless shelters because of shared living spaces, overcrowding, difficulties in maintaining physical distancing, and high population turnover. In response, the Toronto shelter system has moved people into temporary community center programs, hotels, and permanent housing. According to my community partners in this study (which include midwives, doulas, nurses, and service providers from the YPNFA network), homeless people who are pregnant or who have given birth (i.e. in the postpartum period) during the pandemic have encountered unique and significant challenges in accessing shelter and food. One of the major problems facing this maternal population is that, as their status changes during the perinatal period (from pregnancy to parenting), often these people are forced to move within the shelter system because most shelters draw distinctions between being pregnant and having children. Our community partners have identified that pregnant and postpartum people experiencing housing and food insecurity are falling through gaps in social services during the pandemic. To date, no research projects have focused on this highly vulnerable maternal group.

Guided by the social-ecological model, this qualitative study will use the interpretive description method to understand the experiences of pregnant and postpartum people who are homeless and food insecure in Toronto during the COVID-19 pandemic. Individual interviews will be conducted with 24 people who are experiencing homelessness and food insecurity to examine individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural factors that influence their ability to obtain adequate housing/food and prenatal and postpartum supports. The goal of this study is to develop and disseminate policy and practice recommendations to social service agencies and interdisciplinary front-line service providers in Toronto via video and written reports. These recommendations will be shared quickly with YPNFA agencies so they can use this information right away in their practice settings in order to benefit pregnant/parenting people facing homelessness.

PARTICIPANTS

Below are the eligibility criteria for participants:

1. Able to speak English
2. 16 year or older
3. Are pregnant or have given birth since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic
4. Have experienced homeless during COVID-19
5. Have worried about having enough food to eat during COVID-19

RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

Recruitment of participants will take place from December 2020 until February 2021. Your assistance is greatly appreciated to display the attached research poster in your agency and help me identify people who may be eligible to participate in this study. Because of COVID restrictions, please only connect with potential participants by phone, email or zoom/skype to let them know about the study.

If you have any questions or comments about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at barbara.chyzyy@ryerson.ca or on my cell phone at 647-292-6521.

Thank you very much for your support.

Sincerely,



Barbara Chyzyy, RN, PhD
Assistant Professor
Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing
Ryerson University