

Capacity building around food as harm reduction

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Food as Harm Reduction study

- The Food as Harm Reduction project uses a community-based research framework to explore the ways in which food provision can mitigate the physical, social, and psychological harms associated with substance use.



Engagement in Care at the Dr. Peter Centre



Food and Nutrition at the Dr. Peter Centre

- An important part of our engagement in care includes a seven-day-a-week breakfast and lunch program that provides a complete and nutrient-dense menu in a therapeutic environment.

“A full breakfast allows the medication to flow through with your food. My numbers are way better when I’m eating on a consistent basis.”

- Murray W.

Dr. Peter Centre Client

Community Advisory Committee member



HIV and Food Security

- Among people living with HIV/AIDS, food insecurity is associated with poorer health outcomes such as an increased risk of a reduced baseline CD4 cell count, decreased medication adherence, incomplete virologic suppression, and higher mortality.
- People living with HIV/AIDS who use substances face further risks including exposure to violence, stigma, and unsafe food procurement.
- A recent study found that 78% of people living with HIV in British Columbia were food insecure.

Community leadership

- Robust community involvement at each stage strengthened the project through the co-development and co-construction of the study.



Co-development

- The CAC, including representation from impacted communities, service providers, policymakers, and government, meets regularly to share expertise, to provide input on survey design, research questions, recruitment strategies, interpretation of results, and knowledge translation strategies.
- Two peer research associates (PRAs), who share experiences in common with study participants, are involved in data analysis and knowledge translation as well as administering surveys and co-facilitating the mapping activity.

Recommendations

- Because of the dearth of research on food as harm reduction, the research team recognized the importance of involving impacted communities in each step of the project.
- Community involvement necessitated continuous work to create a definition and carve out a space to talk about ways that food provision is a part of a spectrum of harm reduction approaches rather than solely focusing on food security measures.
- When reframing an issue, it is critical to allow time to build capacity with impacted communities to fully develop the research methods.

Special Thanks

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