FROM ENGAGEMENT TO EMPOWERMENT: ADDRESSING THE SOCIAL DRIVERS OF HIV THROUGH PEER EMPLOYMENT IN COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH (CBR)

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Community-based research exploring HIV, housing and health

Impact of food security on health outcomes in people living with HIV/AIDS across Canada

Community-based research study on employment status and health

**CBR STUDIES**

**Food Security Fact Sheet: Ontario**

**The Impact of Food Security on Health Outcomes in People Living with HIV/AIDS**

**How Does Food Security Affect People Living with HIV?**

Food security is a fundamental requirement to lead a healthy life. In Ontario, people living with HIV who have secure access to food report fewer health issues than those who are food insecure.

- People living with HIV who are food-secure...
  - Experience 30% lower HIV symptoms
  - Are 11% more likely to take their HIV medications as prescribed
  - Score 17% higher on measures of mental health-related quality of life
  - Score 17% higher on measures of physical health-related quality of life
  - Report 79% lower depressive symptoms
  - Are 12% less likely to feel stigmatized due to their HIV status

**How Can We Address Food Security?**

Food insecurity in Ontario is affected by a wide range of social and economic factors. Any solution to food insecurity will require a long-term commitment to reducing poverty.

We must develop holistic programs that address the underlying causes of food insecurity, rather than tackling food insecurity alone.

We must build stronger, broader community partnerships to address the social conditions under which people with HIV live, work, and age.

We must continue to support initiatives such as the Special Diet Allowance offered by the Ontario Disability Support Program.

**employment change and health outcomes in HIV/AIDS**
• Peer Research Associates are members of the community under study

• Participate at all levels of a community-based research study

• Conduct interviews & collect data

• Help with analysis and interpretation of results

• Help in dissemination of study findings
**Issue & Background**

- **Isolation** – The episodic nature of HIV often results in underemployment or reliance on government assistance.

- **Empowerment** – The meaningful engagement of people living with HIV in the research process.

- **SDOH** – By addressing the SDOH peer engagement can benefit the health and well-being of people living with HIV.

- **Peer Research Associates (PRAs)** – 14 PRAs conducted multiple OHTN community-based research studies that addressed the social determinants of health.
LESSONS LEARNED

- **Reflecting** the lived experience of people living with HIV
- **Identifying** & understanding social drivers
- **Sharing** the burden
- **Returning** to work in a supportive and equitable environment
- **Shifting** perspectives - HIV as positive
LESSONS LEARNED

- PRA's interviewed hundreds of participants living with similar social pressures
- Social determinants of health are common ground for discussion

Exchange of knowledge =

greater connection to community

- Personal challenges seen in a broader context
• PRAs have become mentors and leaders in their communities

• Peer engagement in CBR creates a choice about seeking employment
Peer researchers:

To learn more about Community-Based Research and working as or with peer researchers, please visit universitieswithoutwalls.ca
Lori Chambers, Scott De Blois, Devica Hintzen, James Gough, R.K, Rob Rollins, Jasmine Cotnam, J.J. (Jay) Koomstra, Keith Hambly, Sergio Rueda, Barry Adam, Sean B. Rourke

1 McMaster University 2 AIDS Committee of North Bay & Area 3 The Ontario HIV Treatment Network 4 Réseau Access Network 5 Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention 6 HIV/AIDS Regional Services 7 People Advocating for through Change through Empowerment Inc. 8 Bruce House 9 Fife House 10 Centre for Addiction and Mental Health 11 University of Windsor 12 University of Toronto, The Ontario HIV Treatment Network
THANK YOU!

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