

Breaking the Cycle: The Implications of a Recovery House and Resource Hub for Women Experiencing Criminalization.

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Introduction

Purpose: Community report funded by the TRU community development grant, intended to inform the development of a recovery house and resource hub for women experiencing criminalization in affiliation with the Kamloops & District Elizabeth Fry Society.

Methodology: We conducted a literature review, in which we reviewed nearly 100 articles speaking to the needs of women experiencing criminalization, recovery housing models, and resource hub models. We tracked the articles on a spreadsheet and used an online concept mapping software (Sketchboard) to organize themes. We read, analyzed, and wrote through a critical, anti-oppressive, and intersectional feminist lens.

Part 1: Women Experiencing Criminalization

WOMEN'S CRIMINALIZATION QUICK FACTS

- WOMEN ARE THE FASTEST GROWING PRISON POPULATION
- MOST OFTEN CONVICTED FOR NON-VIOLENT OFFENCES
- WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN CRIMINALIZED OFTEN EXPERIENCE TRANSCARCERATION
- INDIGENOUS WOMEN ARE OVERREPRESENTED IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

(1,2,3)

6 Key Considerations

1. Indigenous Women

Overrepresented in prison and in the harshest punishments due to discriminatory policing and risk assessments. Impacts of intergenerational trauma are perpetuated (3,4,5).

2. Health Care Needs

- a. Mental Health:** Diagnoses and symptoms brought on by and exacerbated by prison conditions(2).
- b. Substance Use:** Irrelevant treatments are forced upon women who have high rates of substance use(6).
- c. Trauma:** Prison environment tends to be retraumatizing and imposes victim-blaming sentiments(7).
- d. Physical and Sexual Health:** Women who have been incarcerated experience a disproportionate number of illnesses and face barriers and fragmentation to healthcare while re-integrating into the community (8).

3. Relationships

The separation between mother and child is cited as one of the greatest pains of imprisonment (9), and their reunification can be one of the greatest predictors of post-release success (10).

4. Community Reintegration

Transition can be challenging, and social control mechanisms restrict recovery (2).

5. Additional Barriers

Education, employment, housing, transportation, stigma, and parole all prove to be additional yet significant barriers to reintegration (11).

6. Considerations

- a. COVID-19:** Women experiencing criminalization are disproportionately affected by COVID and restrictions placed due to the pandemic (12).
- b. Transgender Women and Older Women:** Experience increased marginalization and oppression due to ageism and transphobia, making them vulnerable to victimization and increased health concerns (13 & 14).

Part 2: Recovery Housing

A model of secure housing for women post-imprisonment that will support reintegration and an eventual transition to independent housing (15).

Housing First: every human deserves adequate, affordable, and suitable housing with no preconditions. Emphasis on empowerment and self-determination (16).



Adapted from Ahmed et al., 2016, Gaetz et al., 2010, and Maidment, 2005 (2,17,18).

Tensions: women-only (19), safety and surveillance (20), location(19), single-site vs. scattered site (16), substance use and harm reduction (21).

Considerations for Success: inclusive planning (22), autonomy from CSC (23), supportive relationships (2), unlimited time and 24/7 support (24), and flexible space (25).

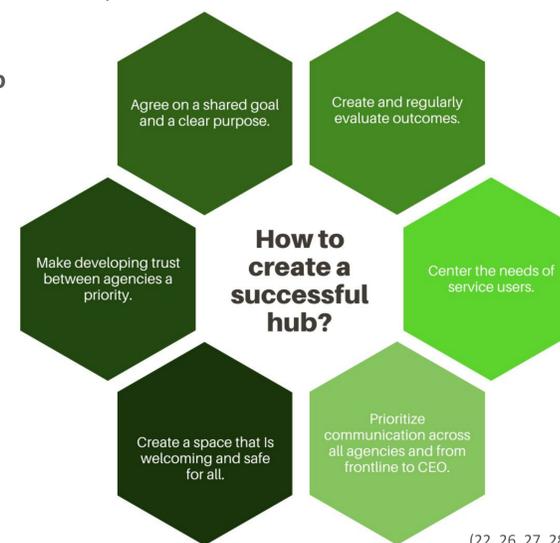
Part 3: Resource Hubs

What is a Resource Hub?

Resource hubs are a tool to meet the needs of a community or a population of people. At its most simple, a hub is the collaboration of two or more agencies under one roof. At its most complex, a hub model is the complete integration of multiple agencies and their services into one seamless delivery that supports service users in a wrap-around fashion.

What are the benefits to a resource hub?

Hubs can be very beneficial for several reasons. They are a "one-stop shop" for service users to access support and services holistically (26). They also allow agencies to pool their resources together and avoid the siloing of services (26).



(22, 26, 27, 28)

Part 4: Recommendations

1. Indigenous Women

Decolonizing approach centred around cultural connectedness and policies reflective of Indigenous values (29).

2. Health Care Needs

Mental Health, Substance Use, and Trauma:

Comprehensive, integrated care. Trauma-informed and harm reduction (2).

Physical and Sexual Health:

Women who have experienced criminalization are disproportionately affected by illnesses and face barriers to healthcare. For that reason, we recommend that a physical and sexual health care component be added to the hub and house. Some examples include an on-site doctor, on-site pharmacy, access to free tampons, pads, and period cups (8).

3. Relationships

The implementation of a family therapy clinic is strongly recommended to aid in family reunification. Thee inclusion a child-welfare advocate is also strongly encouraged to help women navigate child and family services. Finally, adding a day-care component is recommended (9 & 10).

4. Community Reintegration

Peer support can mitigate challenges of reentry, such as isolation (30).

5. Additional Barriers

Vocational training programs, educational upgrading opportunities, and a food bank are all recommended programs to incorporate into the house and hub. Free bus passes, opportunities to give back to the community, and a parole advocate to help women navigate the criminal justice system are also highly suggested (11).

6. Considerations

COVID-19, Transgender Women, and Older Women:

Internet access and technology, PPE (12). For older women and women with disabilities, it is important to ensure the house and hub are accessible for all. For transgender women and non-binary folks, it is important that the house and hub are gender-affirming (13 & 14).

7. Extras

Animal-assisted activities, yoga classes, a community garden, a community kitchen, and a free library are also recommended to help women re-integrating into the community (19 & 29).

Future Research

Through this research, we became interested in women who have previously been incarcerated and now work or volunteer in a peer support role with women currently experiencing reintegration barriers. We applied and were awarded an undergraduate research award (UREAP) in November to fund our own exploratory research regarding peer support in Canadian agencies.

We are presenting our preliminary findings from our UREAP research in conjunction with this research. Please [click here](#) to view our UREAP poster.

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