

Assessing Readiness to Transition to Permanent Supportive Housing for People Who Have Experienced Homelessness: An OT Perspective



Sophia Alvord, MOTS¹, Makena Douglas, MOTS¹, Natalie Kwortnik, MOTS¹, Carol Lang, MOTS¹
Faculty Advisor: Donald Fogelberg, PhD, OTR/L¹; Community Mentor: Darcell Slovek-Walker, MA, LMHC²
¹ University of Washington School of Medicine Department of Rehabilitation, ²Transitional Resources

Background

Homelessness Overview

- The 2024 Nationwide Point in Time Count found a 18% increase in people experiencing homelessness from 2022. ¹
- Deinstitutionalization, increased cost of living, and reduced funding for social programs is exacerbating rates of homelessness in the U.S.

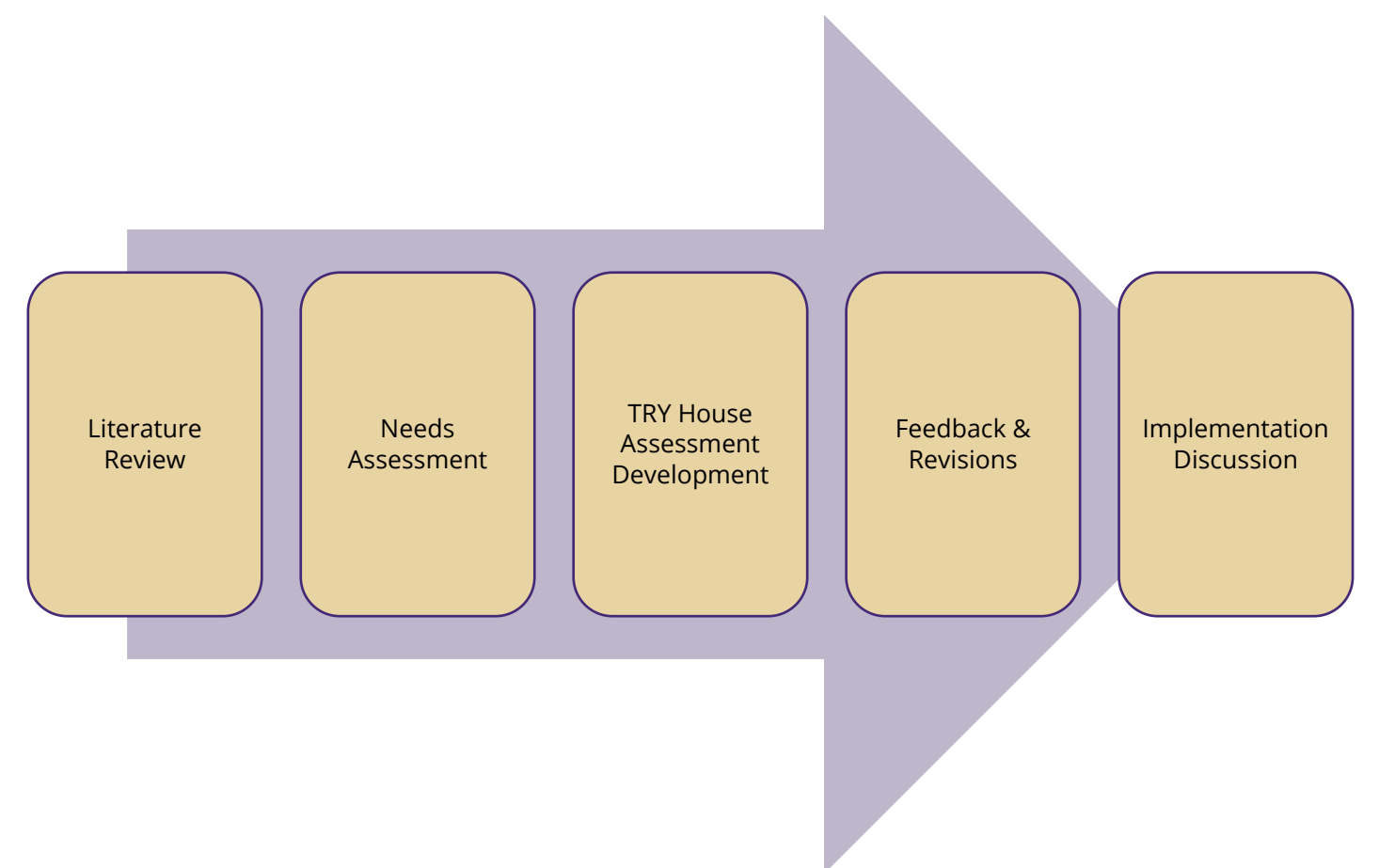
Community Partner

- Transitional Resources is a nonprofit organization that provides mental health services and supportive housing for adults with serious and persistent mental illness
- TRY house is an assisted living facility for individuals with severe mental illness who are at risk of hospitalization or homelessness

Purpose

Create a standardized intake and discharge assessment for TRY House social workers and case managers to use to evaluate independent living skills, housing transition readiness, and set occupational goals.

Process



Needs Assessment

Literature Review

- Housing supports: Stable relationships and social networks, community integration, satisfaction with meaningful daily activities
- Housing barriers: Substance use, difficulty with community reintegration, isolation, lack of social networks, high-risk behaviors
- A person's mental health diagnosis does not inherently interfere with their ability to maintain independent housing, indicating no need for individuals to undergo psychiatric treatment or sobriety prior to being housed. ³

Interviews & Focus Groups

TRY House Staff (case managers & social workers):

- Identified need for an assessment that can be used for goal-setting during the intake process and again to access readiness to transition to other supportive housing

TRY House Residents:

- Highlighted social activities, access to case managers, and medication management services as supportive housing factors

Permanent Supportive Housing Director:

- Recommended activities of daily living, personal hygiene, conflict resolution skills, and safety awareness as areas of assessment

Assessment Development

- An existing assessment² was used as a starting point to format information into response items
- New items based on themes from interviews were developed for the assessment
- Questions were worded to minimize stigmatization and reflect client-centered, trauma-informed practice
- Two versions of the assessment (intake and discharge) were created

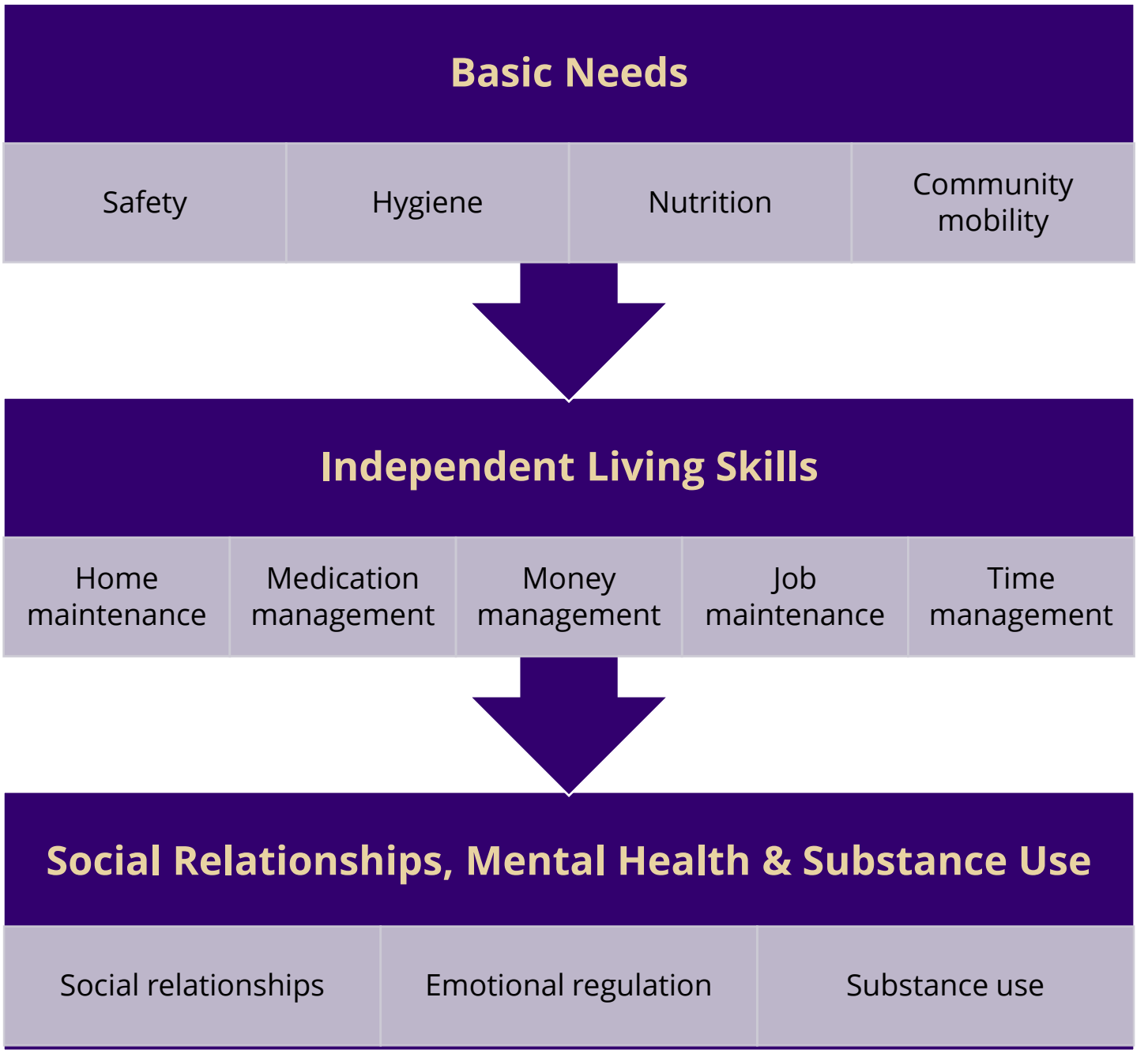
Assessment

Example Pages

Independent Living Skills			
Home Maintenance		Always	Sometimes
How often within the last week did you:		Never	No Opportunity
1. Clean your countertops		---	---
2. Clean your floors, toilet, or shower		---	---
3. Take out your trash		---	---
4. Wash your dirty dishes		---	---
5. Put things back where they belong after using them		---	---
Medication Management			
Are you currently taking any medications?			
How often within the last week did you:			
6. Take the appropriate amount of medication		---	---
7. Take medication at the appropriate time/day		---	---
8. Take the medication independently		---	---

Safety, Maintenance, & Emergency Response Skills			
How confident do you feel about handling these situations?		Very Confident	Confident
		Not Confident	Not Confident
1. Unclogging a sink		---	---
2. Turning off an overflowing toilet		---	---
3. Putting out a fire inside		---	---
4. Responding to the smoke alarm going off		---	---
5. Calling emergency services for help		---	---
6. Dealing with pests inside (ants, mice, etc)		---	---
7. Finding a way to get in after getting locked out		---	---
8. Dealing with loud neighbors		---	---
9. Experiencing a power outage		---	---
Comments & Additional Information:			

Key Assessment Sections



Additional Discharge Questions

- What would help you feel ready to transition to independent living?
- Who do you turn to for support when you're having difficulties?
- Are there any specific fear or concerns you have about moving?
- What do you think will be challenging about the transition?
- What about this opportunity are you excited for?

Conclusion

Using a client-centered and occupation-based lens, we synthesized the gaps identified by the case managers and social workers at TRY House with the needs professed by the residents to generate targeted assessments. Our assessments will be implemented for the purpose of initial intake and goal determination, as well as informing treatment plans and transition goals. While the results of implementation were beyond the timeline of this project, we hope final iterations will continue to aid staff and residents in the future.

Quotes from TRY House Residents

"I'll be fully independent one day, but I'll need help."

"You see your future move in TRY House."

References

¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2024b). *The 2024 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR)*. HUD USER. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2024-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

² Wallace, C. J., Liberman, R. P., Tauber, R., & Wallace, J. (2000). The independent living skills survey: A comprehensive measure of the community functioning of severely and persistently mentally ill individuals. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 26(3), 631–658. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.schbul.a033483>

³ Tsemberis, S., Gulcur, L., & Nakae, M. (2004). Housing first, consumer choice, and harm reduction for homeless individuals with a dual diagnosis. *American Journal of Public Health*, 94(4), 651–656. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.94.4.651>