



Housing the “Un-houseable”

*Using relationship-based
service models to rapidly re-house
the chronic homeless*

Meghann Cotter
Micah Ecumenical Ministries

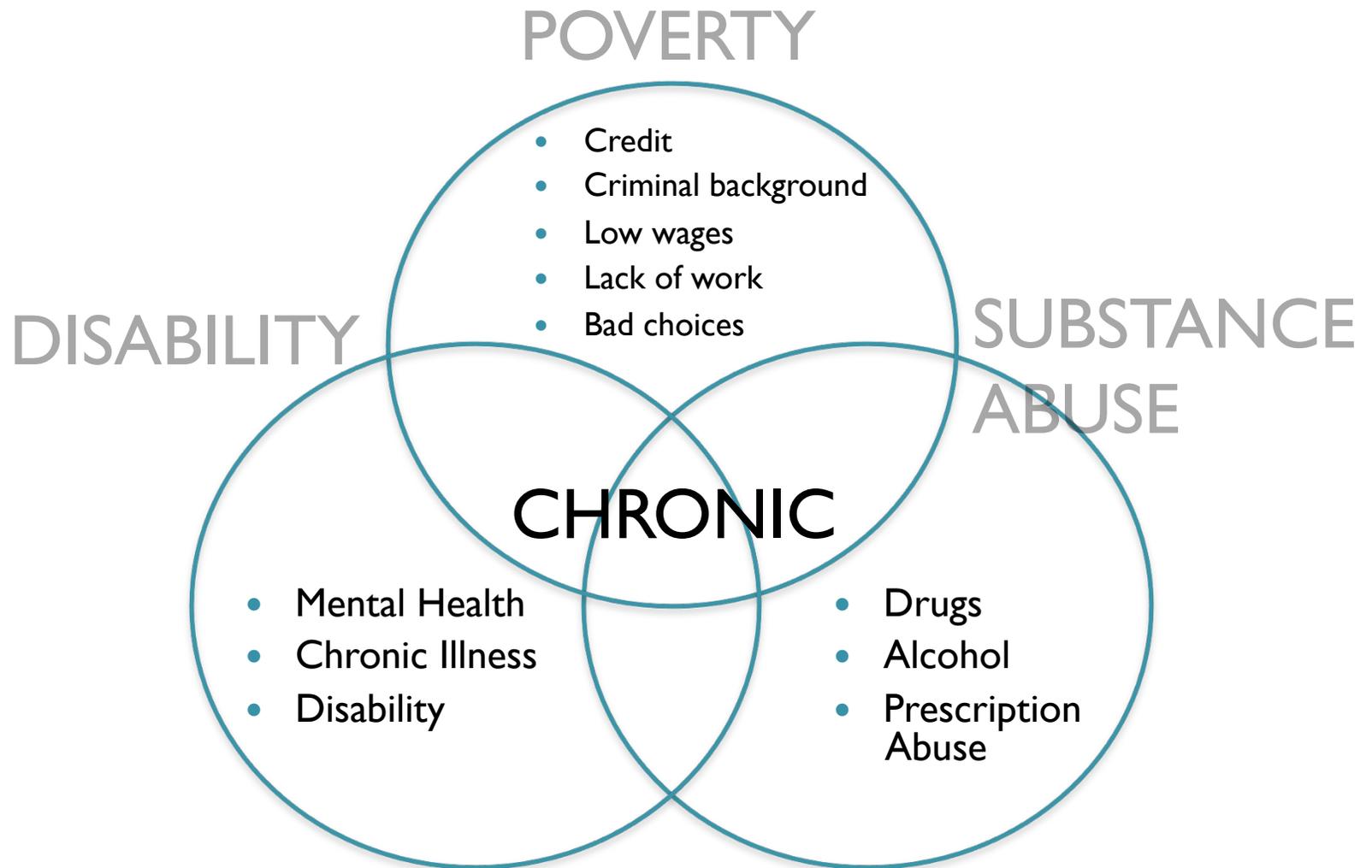




Confessions

- Everything Micah has learned and continues to learn has been by trial and error
- If anyone had figured out yet how to end homelessness, we wouldn't have any homeless people any more

Why are people homeless?





The Missing Link

- Support Network
 - Family/friends lack resources to assist
 - Behaviors threaten the family unit
 - So many bridges have been burned that they can't even come up with an emergency contact
 - Lack of responsibility on the part of family or friends
 - Person removes themselves from family or friends

Bridging the Gap

Reality	Need
Social service systems are designed around client determination, personal initiative and achieving benchmarks	People experiencing homelessness lack faith in their ability to achieve, do not trust systems set up to help, and are usually not the best self-advocates
Homeless service systems generally focus on stabilization first (employment, mental health, treatment, etc.)	While people experiencing homelessness came into their circumstances in different ways, they all have the same problem—lack of housing.
Service systems are set up as a supplement to support networks	Homeless people, especially the chronic, need a supplement for the support system they are lacking.



Micah's Strategies

- Hospitality Center
 - Basic Needs
 - PATH
 - SOAR
 - Journey Program (volunteer service navigators)
- Winter Shelter
- Residential Recovery Program
- Supportive Employment Program



Forging the Housing Frontier

- People on the street had money and a desire to be housed
- “Family” to the street population was each other, making shared housing a natural transition
- Despite poor rental history, credit and criminal there were landlords willing to rent to them



Forging the Housing Frontier

- Facilitating shared housing and landlord connections
- Permanent Supportive Housing
 - HUD-funded, long-term subsidy
 - Intensive in-home support services
 - *Realization*: not all chronic homeless people needed long-term support
- Rapid re-housing
 - Allowed us to house more people, quicker
 - Long-time homeless people did just as well, if not better than newer homeless.



Outcomes

- More than 160 people have been housed with less than 10% returning to homelessness (most of which are eventually re-housed)
- Fredericksburg has realized a 32% decline in chronic homelessness in the last 3 years (compared to 19% nationally and no change statewide)



Challenges

- Moving all their friends in
- Housing higher barrier people introduces new problems (24-hours, money management, household management, etc.)
- Long-time homeless people had been in shelters and on the street so long that they lacked most skills of surviving on their own.
- Stability typically took 6-9 months and not all neighbors and landlords were that patient



Solutions

- Trying out different landlords and roommates
- “Damage” control with the neighbors
- Using payee services
- Pro-active and home-based case management
- Roommate agreements
- “Give and take” interventions
- Engaging residential service providers and other community supports
- Rekindling family connections
- Relationship!



Five cents

- How can we have the conversation about housing people in 30 days or less when we have people who have been homeless longer?
- Higher barrier models work just as well for lower barrier people, but lower barrier models do not work as well for high barrier people.
- If you want housing to work for higher barrier people, you have to believe in an end to homelessness.
- We can't end homelessness, if all we talk about is homelessness. Engage all possible service providers in the conversation.
- Don't let anyone tell you that you can't. If it makes sense to the client and it makes sense to you, its worth trying!