POLICY OVERVIEW: SEGUIR EM FRENTE – A MUNICIPAL STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION AND HEALTHCARE ACCESS FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN RIO DE JANEIRO

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Keywords: Harm Reduction; Drug Policy; Health Services and Systems

Background

People experiencing homelessness face extreme poverty, disrupted family relationships, and the absence of conventional housing. In Rio de Janeiro, the Homeless Population Census (2024) identified 8,195 individuals experiencing homelessness. In response, the Municipal Government implemented the Moving Forward Program ("Seguir em Frente") (2023), a five-phase initiative promoting access to healthcare and psychosocial rehabilitation for people experiencing homelessness and problematic alcohol and other drug use. A key component is the Ponto de Apoio na Rua (PAR), a 24-hour harm reduction service and entry point into the care network.

Approach

This study analyzes the Moving Forward Program and its contribution to access to public policies, healthcare, social inclusion, and productive reintegration among people experiencing homelessness and problematic alcohol and other drug use.

Analysis

During its first two and a half years, the program supported 6,446 individuals. Participants were predominantly cisgender men (83%), Black individuals (82%), and adults aged 30–49 years (55%). Among all participants, 61% presented problematic alcohol and other drug use, with cocaine and its derivatives as the most reported substances.

A total of 2,144 individuals participated in productive reintegration initiatives. Within this group, the prevalence of problematic substance use reached 82.6%, again with cocaine and its derivatives as the predominant substances. Outcomes included housing (40.7%), formal employment (6.7%), and vocational training (9.3%).

Conclusion

The findings highlight the role of productive reintegration in pathways out of homelessness, particularly among people with problematic alcohol and other drug use, in line with Brazil's National Policy for Decent Work and Citizenship for People Experiencing Homelessness (2024). The high prevalence of substance use among participants, especially those engaged in productive reintegration activities, suggests that harm reduction and community-based interventions can engage populations facing social and health vulnerabilities. Expanding access to employment and housing contributes to transitions away from homelessness. The racial and gender profile of participants highlights the need for equity-informed approaches in program design and service delivery. The results also underscore the importance of coordination across health, social assistance, housing, and employment policies. Future research comparing

outcomes between program participants and unsheltered individuals will be critical for scaling this model across Brazilian cities and beyond.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

This work was conducted through a collaboration between the Rio de Janeiro Municipal Health Department and Vital Strategies. No pharmaceutical grants were received in the development of this study.