

THE VALUE OF PEERS: LEADING WITH LIVED EXPERTISE

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PRESENTERS

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AGENDA

1

Why does
lived
experience
matter?



2

Importance
of Resident
Advisory
Boards



3

Support
and service
connection



4

Housing
First
Testimonial

WHY DOES LIVED EXPERIENCE MATTER?

- Honors the dignity and rights of people experiencing homelessness
- Grounds decisions in the realities of people experiencing homelessness based on real perspectives and information to improve services and service delivery
- Helps clients feel comfortable and be more open
- Breaks down social barriers

PEERS & HOUSING FIRST PRINCIPLES

HF Principle #4: Individualized and Participant-Driven Support

- Client driven schedule
- Voluntary supportive services
- Clients choice
- Short term realistic goals
- Smart recovery
- Mental Health and physical health
- Vocational training

HF Principle #5: Social and Community Integration

- Tenant engages in meaningful activities
- Social interaction in which tenant can recruit members for the Resident Advisory Board

MAINTAINING STABLE HOUSING

- Supporting Stable Housing
- Strengths of Community Health Workers/Peer Support Staff – Aftercare
 - Knowledge of resources
 - Building trust and relationships

KEY INGREDIENTS FOR RESIDENT ADVISORY BOARD

- Need buy in from the Executive Staff
- Funding Supports to hold meetings
- Testimonies are key to raise awareness of the Elected Officials
- Resident Advisory Board is a component of the Housing First Principles: Social & Community integration
- Resident Advisory Boards Members Mirror the NHCHC, HCH Peer/Tenant Boards with the same bylaws structure

Centering Lived Experience

“Those with lived experiences of homelessness typically have the best understanding of the reality of our work to prevent and end homelessness – both in terms of the problems that exist and the knowledge of the services and interventions that are the most effective solutions.”

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

IMPORTANCE OF “WORKING” WITH PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

Lived vs. “Learned” Experience

Employment

Volunteering

Advisory Boards

Councils

DATA & REFERENCES (1/2)

- NAEH 2023 Survey of people working in homeless services found:
 - 5% experienced loss of housing in the last year
 - 3% experienced homelessness in the last year
 - 9% believed they were eligible for housing choice vouchers

Source: [Working in Homeless Services: A Survey of the Field](#)

DATA & REFERENCES (2/2)

- Number of People Employed as Community Health Workers:
 - 67,200 current CHWs in the US
 - Expected to grow 14% over next 10 years
 - Growing much faster than average of 3%

Source: [Community and Social Service Occupations](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics

Low Threshold Shelter Access

The National Alliance to End Homelessness defines a low-barrier emergency shelter as "immediate and easy access to shelter by lowering barriers to entry and staying open 24/7; eliminate sobriety and income requirements and other policies that make it difficult to enter shelter, stay in shelter, or access housing and income opportunities."

The City of Boston opened **6** low-threshold sites with **198** total beds on January 12, 2022 to address the tent encampment crisis.

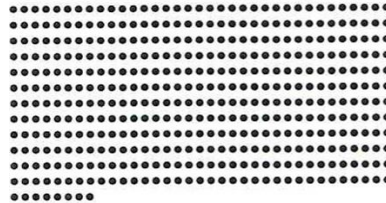
They stabilize people by:

- Giving them a safe place to sleep for an extended period
- Storage for their belongings
- Ability to come and go
- Access to clinical and social services
- Regular meals
- Housing navigation services

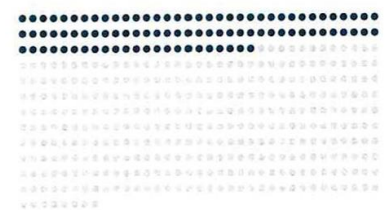


140
DAYS

418 INDIVIDUALS
SERVED



93 MOVED INTO
PERMANENT
HOUSING



Important note: Not all homeless individuals struggle with drug or substance abuse; there are many different factors that lead into an individual experiencing homelessness

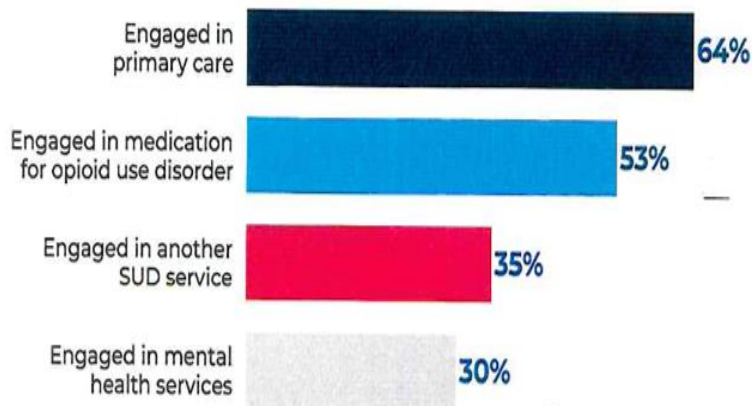
- Job loss
- Sickness
- Physical or Mental Illness
- Debt
- Many others

About LTS

LTS combines a harm reduction philosophy with policies that promote engagement for people who use drugs.

ACCESS TO SERVICES¹

(N=172)



¹ Source: Point-in-time service assessment among guests staying across 6 low-threshold sites, August 2022

As of 3/14/24, 617 people have been housed at the 6 sites, and 203 people have been permanently housed from the LTS.

3-6 MONTH FOLLOW-UP²

Since moving into LTS or permanent housing, guests surveyed reported maintaining or gaining access to the following services.

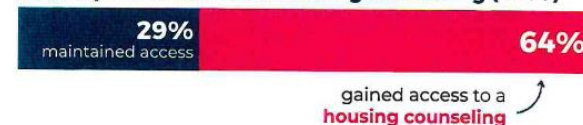
79% reported access to a medical provider (N=58)



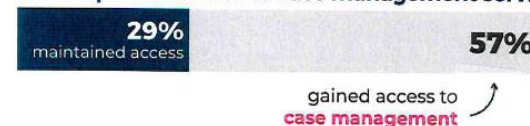
64% reported access to a mental health provider (N=58)



93% reported access to housing counseling (N=56)




86% reported access to case management services (N=58)




Since moving into LTS or permanent housing, guests surveyed


reported improvements:

 access to regular meals (n=57)


82%

 sleep quality (n=58)

71%

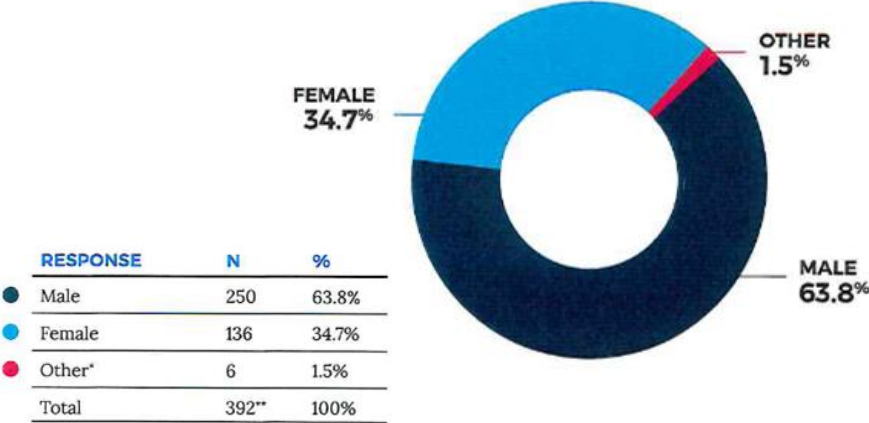
 connection to other people (n=57)

60%

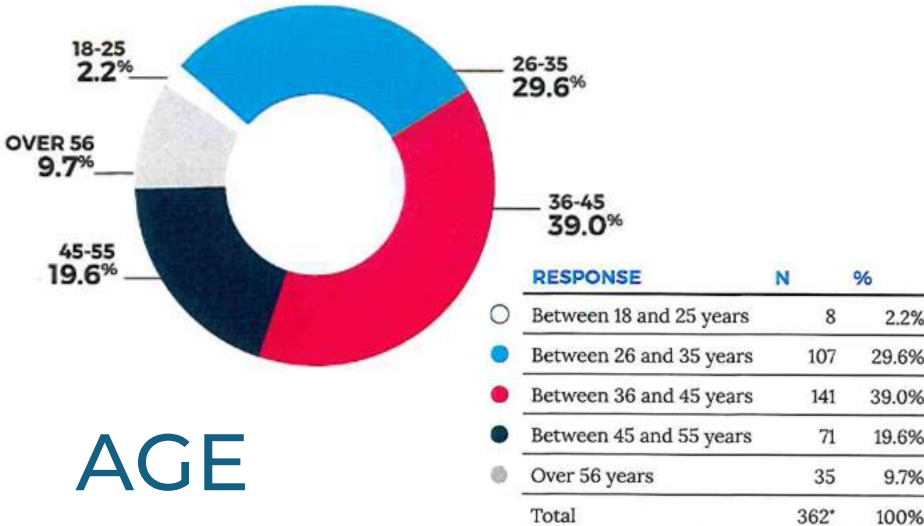
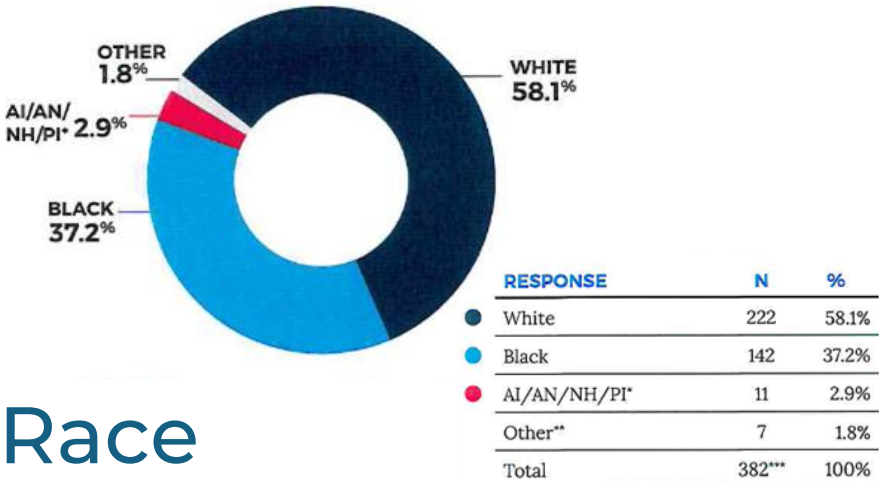
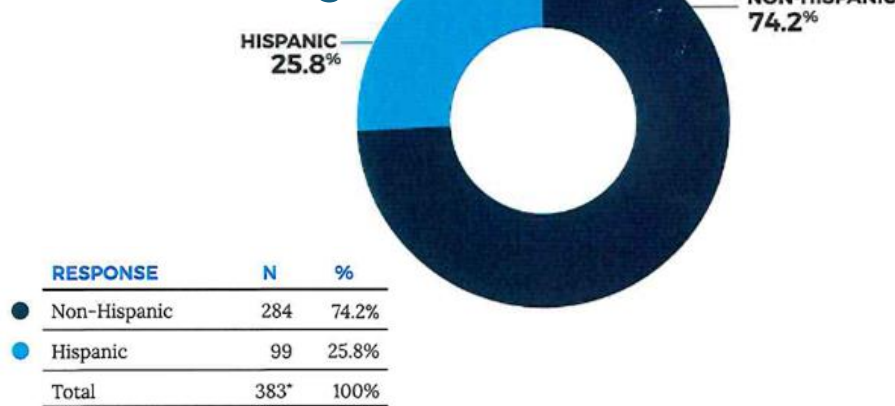
 ability to think about the future (n=58)

79%

Gender



Ethnicity



Race

AGE

“ A place to stay is the best first step to change...getting back to a normal routine, doing chores, cleanliness, free gym...work on my mind and body.”

- LTS GUEST

“ We did a lot of trainings that got [staff] to shift their mindsets over time. It's not a one-time thing, it's gradual.”

- LTS PROVIDER

“ I'm now working. I'm more open about my feelings. I now have a better relationship with my daughters and grandkids. I've been taught how to... reach goals.”

- LTS GUEST

“ For me, the goal isn't zero use. My goal is whatever [the guests] tell me their goal is... If our staff can make them feel better about who they are, that's a huge part of the story.”

- LTS PROVIDER

“ Having a step-by-step plan, and stability. It is a blessing to be here. Having a place to sleep and have your belongings, knowing they will still be there when you return.”

- LTS GUEST

“ Now, the foundation is laid. The staff have an idea of what to do and how to act. The guests are more comfortable too. People feel welcome here, they feel like it's home.”

- LTS PROVIDER

Sources

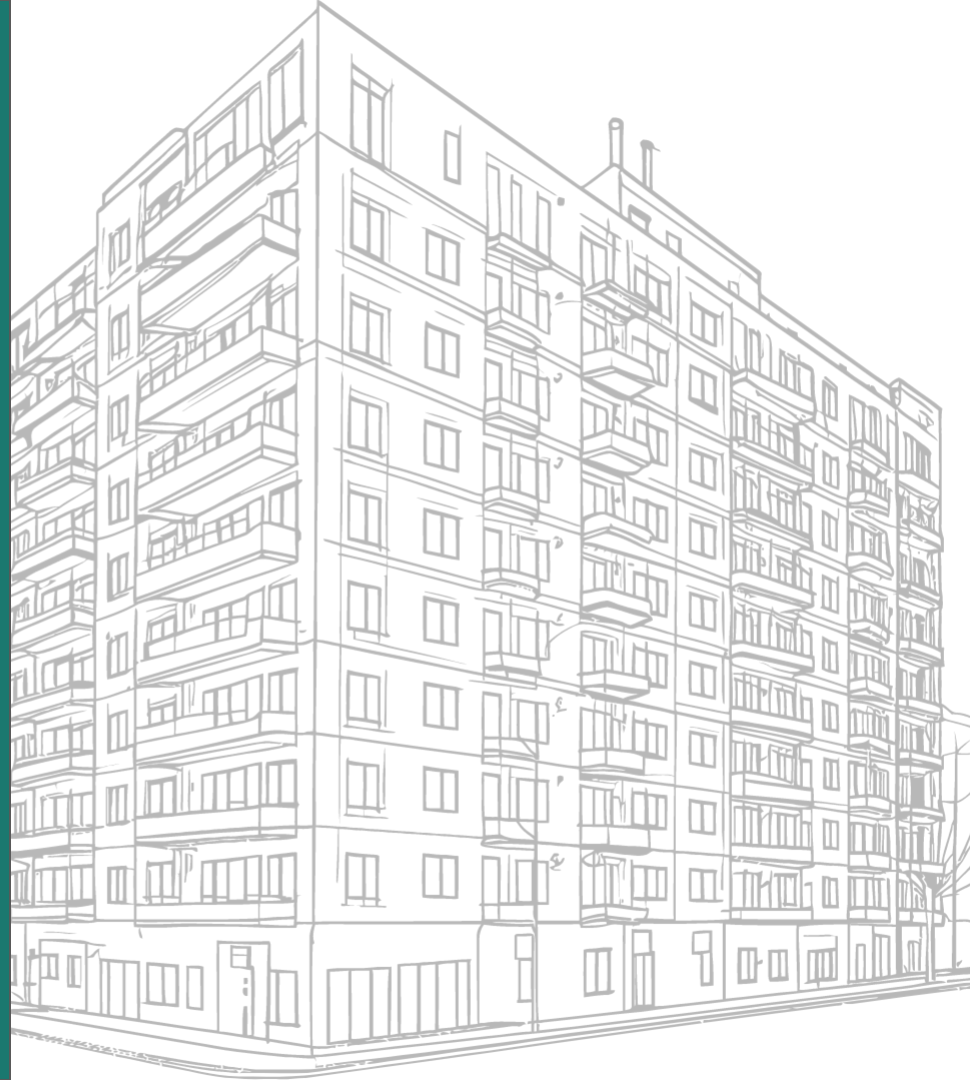
Office of Minority Health (OMH) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) 2023. Boston Low-Threshold Transitional Housing Sites.

https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/file/2023/07/Final%20LTH-Year1-Report_June2023_0.pdf

Point-in-time service assessment among guests staying across 6 low-threshold sites, August 2022

BPHC 3-6 month follow-up survey, April-July 2022.

TESTIMONIAL OF HOUSING FIRST



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GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How are people with lived experience engaged in your work?
- What has the value of engaging people with lived experience?
- What does harm reduction look like in your community?
- What would you like to see in your community?