



POVERTY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

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A New Beginning

Project Description

This Community-University Research Alliance (CURA2) brings together academic and community based researchers, key stakeholders including psychiatric Consumer/Survivors(C/S), family members, health and social service providers, and other non-profit organizations to study issues related to poverty and social inclusion faced by this group. Using a participatory action research approach, we hope to gain insight into the inter-relationships between poverty and social inclusion for C/S; to identify and explore strategies to overcome existing marginalization and social disadvantage; and in working with community partners to elicit concrete indicators and data that increase our capacity to evaluate and make policy recommendations.

Data Collection

The quantitative component of this study involves 380 structured interviews to be completed annually in years 1-4. Participants from a variety of housing types (e.g. homeless, group homes, independent living) and ranging along a continuum from unemployed to working (or studying) part-time or full-time have been included. Interviews incorporate open ended questions pertaining to the lived experience of poverty and social inclusion, quality of life, housing history, housing preference, service utilization, community integration, and experiences of stigma. 380 Year 1 interviews have been completed.

The qualitative component of this study involves open ended questions in individual interview and focus group format. Focus groups with family members started early autumn 2011. Focus groups with other key stakeholders including C/S, social service providers, employers and policy decision-makers are planned for winter/early spring 2012.

Through policy and ethical analysis, our plan is to address issues and concerns relevant to poverty and social inclusion that emerge through data collection and analysis. Throughout this process, we will also focus on a review of policy documents pertaining to income, employment and related social supports. Findings related to this analysis will be compared to ethical standards derived from welfare theory and accepted ethical principles of service providers.

Other Project Components

Training opportunities will be provided for undergraduate and graduate students from various disciplines such as Law, Nursing, Social Work, Philosophy, Psychology and Psychiatry.

Through CURA2 partnerships we hope to encourage and facilitate community capacity development. This means that we will work together to identify issues and concerns related to poverty and social inclusion for C/S. We will also work together with the community and all key stakeholders in order to develop strategies and solutions to address these concerns.

First Annual Conference

On October 24, 2011 we launched our first Poverty & Social Inclusion CURA2 conference to celebrate a new beginning, to share information about the project and to engage with CURA2 partners and other stakeholder members of the community. This CURA2 follows a previous successful CURA on Housing and Mental Health. Continued involvement and solid community-based partnerships will be key to informing this research while in process and will be vital to community capacity development as we work toward identifying concerns and implementing solutions that are relevant to poverty and social inclusion for C/S.

This full day conference was well attended with a total of **109** participants, including members of

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the research team, community partners, C/S, family members, service providers, undergraduate and graduate students as well as policy decision-makers.

Panel of Lived Experience

The issue of poverty and social inclusion were presented from C/S, family, service provider and research perspectives as a panel of 'lived experience'. This aspect of the conference was well received and helped to highlight the relevance of a participatory action approach within this critically important area of research.

"the panel discussion really addressed the bare truths, realities"

Some Issues of Importance

Conference participants were asked to identify hot topics or issues that will be important to address through this program of research. Some issues and concerns that were raised include:

- there is continued need for affordable, safe and permanent options in terms of accommodation, housing and supports;
- assess and advocate for an adequate living wage, income supports;
- there is a need to humanize the relationship between C/S's and other stakeholder members/groups, with emphasis on understanding the individual experience;
- additional supports that focus on prevention, outreach models, greater continuity and empowering approaches to care are needed;
- there is a need to explore and identify poverty reduction strategies;
- there is a need for better coordination, mapping of silos and alignment to improve awareness and access to services and supports;
- a focus on establishing an organized sustainable lobby based on good statistics and personal stories to influence policy change will be important part of this process;
- issues of stigma are ever-present and need to be addressed at a broad, community level

Where do we see ourselves in 5 years?

Through conversational café, discussion focusing on community capacity development as

a central feature and goal of CURA2 research elicited feedback based on the following themes:

- poverty;
- issues specific to social inclusion/stigma;
- community projects;
- research;
- education;
- and policy

These thoughts and ideas will be used to guide CURA2 priorities as we move forward together to embrace a participatory action research agenda.

CURA2 Committees

A number of CURA committees will meet regularly over the course of the project:

- Advisory committee
- Research subcommittee
- Community Projects subcommittee
- Student Curriculum subcommittee
- Annual Forum subcommittee
- Policy & Ethics subcommittee
- Media & Government Relations subcommittee

Feel free to contact us if you are interested in becoming more involved with the project.

Please reserve **October 18, 2012 for our next conference** at which time we will present initial CURA2 related research findings and progress, as well as continue to engage in meaningful dialogue and partnership with community members.

If you have any questions, issues or strategies that you would like us to address we encourage you to contact us. Thank you again to all of you who help to bring people and ideas together.

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