Towards an Understanding of Long-Term Outcomes of Transitional Housing

Programs for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

Research Proposal for Dismas of Vermont

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, the population of people experiencing homelessness across the United States has skyrocketed, including a recent 2.2% increase in 2020, a dramatic rise which does not account for a subsequent surge in homelessness caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Thrush 2021). At the same time, there are currently five times as many individuals in prison in the U.S. as there were in 1980, totaling some 1,526,600 people (TBJS 2017). These parallel increases are correlated to some degree; a vast body of prior sociological literature finds that the collateral consequences of prior incarceration lead to an increased chance of homelessness for individuals reentering society from imprisonment (Morenoff and Harding 2015, Visher and Travis 2003). As a result, several methods of providing housing support to ex-offenders during reentry have been implemented, including transitional housing programs. However, while previous research has analyzed the long-term impact of other forms of housing interventions, the long-term impact of transitional housing programs remains unstudied (Metraux and Culhane 2006). In Vermont, this is particularly prescient: across the state, the Department of Corrections has reduced its funding for congregate transitional housing by 100 beds (Kenyon 2021). More specifically, Dismas House of Vermont, which includes 4 distinct locations and hosts over 30 residents, has recently undergone cuts to its funding; moving forward, Hartford Dismas will receive $90,000 per annum from the Department of Corrections for the state of Vermont, instead of its typical $170,000 (Dismas of Vermont 2022, Kenyon 2021). Due both to the lack of a robust theoretical understanding of the long-term efficacy of transitional housing programs in mitigating homelessness among formerly incarcerated persons and the important practical implications of this knowledge, further research about the experiences of homelessness faced by graduates of transitional housing programs such as Dismas House are needed. We have designed

a qualitative research proposal which, if implemented in partnership with Dismas House, would begin to illuminate these underlying theoretical questions and provide critical information about the efficacy of local transitional housing programs for their administrators and their funders.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A long line of sociological literature has demonstrated that formerly incarcerated individuals face myriad structural barriers to reentry. These challenges can be broadly grouped as bureaucratic or social factors. The former includes community, state, and national policies and services that recently released individuals interact with in the period after their release, while the latter incorporates the community and individual relationships, interactions, and perceptions experienced by these individuals (Harding et al. 2013, Visher and Travis 2003). Bureaucratic constraints create an ecosystem in which individuals leaving prison spend a disproportionate amount of time navigating the social support, parole, transitional housing, and public assistance systems, resulting in an increased amount of stress to retain freedom and gain or regain access to basic services. Because living under these conditions is difficult to manage even when one is not returning from prison, the stress of this system often precipitates recidivism (Halushka 2019). On the other hand, social support on the individual level and community acceptance of reentering individuals play a significant role in the ability of people to navigate their reentry process. For instance, family support can make the process of reintegration much smoother and reduces the likelihood of reoffense (Fontaine et al. 2012). Lack of community integration stems from stigma surrounding ex-offenders that, paradoxically, requires self-isolation and continued supervision for geographical access to a community (Garland et al. 2014, Hamlin and Purser 2021). Taken together, bureaucratic and social challenges create a "revolving door," in which many offenders become entrenched, where they are shuffled between low-income jobs and navigating the reentry

system to recidivism and reimprisonment (Halushka 2019, Couloute 2018). This "revolving door" not only requires enormous effort to escape but also creates the very challenges that make it continue.

Further research has illustrated that, as a result of the above challenges, homelessness is closely correlated with previous incarceration, and unstable housing is a reliable predictor of recidivism (Jacobs & Gottlieb 2020, Couloute 2018). Homelessness comes in many different forms, and there is no all-inclusive definition; in fact, multiple sources inform the definition and analysis of homelessness in this proposed research. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development defines homelessness as fitting into one of four categories: one trading sex for housing, staying with friends for short periods, being trafficked, or having left home due to abuse or threats of it with no other options (HUD 2019). Other sources build upon this baseline, while shifting to a housing-based model and incorporating a temporal aspect (Rossi 1989, Lee et al. 2010). Temporality is an important aspect of the definition of homelessness because it offers a unique perspective by encouraging researchers to understand how both duration and cycles of homelessness impact a person's experience. The link between homelessness and prior incarceration is clear, as people who have been imprisoned are ten times more likely to be homeless than someone who has not served a sentence (Couloute 2018). This statistic is rooted in the structural barriers to reentry mentioned above, as the portion of the prison population that has experienced homelessness in the period before their imprisonment is more likely to be formerly incarcerated, to be unemployed, to have mental health issues, or to be convicted of a property crime like theft (Greenberg and Rosenheck 2008); thus, these individuals are, in most cases, returning to prison because of the challenges they face in the process of securing stability in the year-long period after release, lending credence to the revolving door

model and highlighting the importance of housing in mitigating these obstacles and creating that stability. As much of the prior literature points to the necessity of this kind of housing for successful reentry (Geller and Curtis 2010, Moschion and Johnson 2019), this review now turns to the types of housing support that exist for individuals faced with the prospect of reentry.

With an overwhelming need for stable housing immediately after release, several strategies of housing support for formerly incarcerated individuals have been employed, each yielding varying degrees of success. Three relevant methods reviewed here are traditional shelters, housing first programs, and transitional housing programs. First, traditional shelters provide needed services in many communities but do not meet the stability needs of reentering individuals. In fact, shelter use is correlated with an increased risk of reincarceration, as managing housing on a day-to-day basis, in combination with all of the other systems ex-offenders must navigate, creates an unsustainable workload and is prohibitive in the process of gaining permanent housing (Metraux and Culhane 2006). Second, housing first programs, generally, are endeavors that provide free housing to ex-offenders upon their release and offer "consumer choice" for different social support programs, which are often woven into the community to encourage reintegration (Kohut and Paterson 2022). While some housing first initiatives have been successful when individuals are relocated to different neighborhoods and provided with wrap-around services, there are still spots in the process where many struggle to find adequate support and eventually walk back through the "revolving door" (Kirk et al. 2017). Even securing permanent housing is difficult in some places, and many individuals cease participating in programs within the same year-long period in which recidivation most commonly occurs without these programs (Hignite and Haff 2017). Third, transitional housing programs provide stable housing post-release but are also focused on creating a community that

provides support and social services to individuals, often for up to two years, better equipping them for successful experiences with later, permanent housing (Novac et. al 2004, Bowman and Ely 2020). The environment a transitional housing program creates directly combats both bureaucratic and social challenges to reentry through the provision of stable housing, support navigating other systems, and a sense of community, which makes them a promising intervention for successful post-release reintegration.

Some prior sociological research has demonstrated the efficacy of transitional housing programs as a means of mitigating homelessness for inmates released from prison. The key ways in which transitional housing provides unique support are through reduced stigma, personalized support in accessing services, and assessment of "housing readiness." The stigma associated with a history of incarceration is one of the largest barriers to accessing permanent housing for individuals reentering society and is a self-perpetuating challenge that can keep people from achieving successful reintegration and procuring permanent housing (Keene et al. 2018). Transitional housing provides a solution for this by allowing residents to have a period where they live in a supportive space; this temporal shift erases some of the stigma associated with the cycle of recidivism resulting from trying to procure permanent housing directly after release. All transitional housing programs, regardless of their target population, tend to provide or help residents gain access to relevant social services in order to assist them in gaining stable housing and resolving common issues faced by the target population (Novac et al. 2004). This is no different for transitional housing programs focused on ex-offenders; one of the key successes of these programs is their ability to help residents navigate the parole system and support services that exist. Additionally, these programs help residents to integrate employment into their routines and to build the skills needed to balance their responsibilities after graduating from the program.

The graduation aspect of the program also sets transitional housing apart, as it makes the process of recovery much more personal and allows individuals to gain confidence in their ability to live in permanent housing without direct support or through the support of program administrators (Dordick 2002). Understanding when someone is ready to move to permanent housing is a complex process, however, and programs' focus on the social aspects of recovery in transitional housing programs may result in under-examined financial factors, which may contribute to instability in the years after graduation. Thus, while transitional housing is a promising first step for reentry, a deeper understanding of its long term outcomes is needed.

Prior literature has not yet explored in depth how completing a transitional housing program impacts individuals' subsequent experiences of homelessness. We have designed a qualitative research proposal in order to assess this unstudied question through the lens of Dismas House, a small transitional housing program in Vermont. We posit that previously incarcerated individuals who have completed a transitional housing program are likely to have some of the collateral consequences of prior incarceration mitigated by this program; as such, they may be less likely to experience chronic or literal homelessness, to experience homelessness in frequently, or to be connected with service providers relatively quickly, especially when compared to the experiences of formerly incarcerated individuals who did not have access to a transitional housing program, as highlighted in prior research. In analyzing this hypothesis, we also hope that Dismas House will be able to implement changes to render their housing program more effective in mitigating homelessness among graduates.

3. METHODS

In order to better understand the experiences of homelessness faced by people who have completed a transitional housing program, we propose that researchers implement a qualitative research design. The textbook *The Process of Social Research* notes that "select[ing] a relatively small number of cases or often a single setting to extract the meaning of, or describe the processes shaping," respondents' experiences is the aim of qualitative research (Dixon et al., 2015:95). Accordingly, because the target population of people who have both graduated from a Dismas House program and experienced homelessness in the years since their completion of the program is small, the qualitative research method of an in-depth interview is most suitable to address our research question. By asking detailed, open-ended questions, researchers will be allowed a deeper understanding of the effect of transitional housing programs on the experiences of homelessness faced by graduates of Dismas House than a self-reported survey would allow. Furthermore, this qualitative research design will allow researchers to begin to build a theory about how former incarceration, transitional housing, and differential experiences of homelessness are related; this inductive approach will be supported through the detailed experiences of those interviewed. For reasons of feasibility and in order to provide a baseline assessment of the efficacy of the program and its impact on graduates' experiences of homelessness, this initial study will be cross-sectional rather than longitudinal, exploring participants' past experiences at the moment of the interview.

3.1 Conceptualization and Operationalization

To conceptualize the various aspects of our research question, we have defined the antecedent as an individual's prior incarceration, the independent variable as an individual's completion of a transitional housing program, and the dependent variable as an individual's

experience of homelessness. In order to conceptualize homelessness, we have drawn from prior

literature to define homelessness, in accordance with the definition used by HUD, as "lack[ing] a

fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" (Appendix C, Figure 1). We define an episode

of homelessness in accordance with the definition used by HUD, as "a separate, distinct, and

sustained stay on the streets and/or in an emergency shelter;" we also include couch surfing

within this definition, as hidden homelessness is common in the Upper Valley (HUD Exchange,

2019). Our conceptual model, which depicts our theoretical framework and our understanding of

the relationship between these variables, is depicted in Figure 2 in Appendix C.

In order to detail, differentiate, and understand the disparate experiences of people facing

homelessness after their completion of a transitional housing program, we have developed three

different indicators qualifying varying experiences of homelessness: 1) temporality of

homelessness, 2) type of homelessness, and 3) personal well-being. We believe that this offers a

well-rounded description of different experiences of homelessness, allowing researchers to

assess variations in these experiences among respondents, while still being in conversation with

prior literature assessing the experiences of homelessness of other formerly incarcerated

individuals. First, the temporality of homelessness assesses the duration, frequency, and timing

of homelessness in relation to an individual's incarceration and completion of a transitional

housing program; individuals experience either chronic homelessness (in which people

experience homelessness for at least year-long, continuous period, or in which they experience

four episodes of homelessness or more in one year) or episodic homelessness (in which people

experience homelessness up to three times in one year) (HUD Exchange, 2019). Second, the type

of homelessness assesses where an individual experiences homelessness and what event(s)

precipitated this experience of homelessness; individuals can experience literal homelessness

(defined by HUD as living in "a public or private place not fit for human habitation"), or hidden

homelessness (defined by the non-profit Homeless Hub as living "temporarily with others but

without guarantee of continued residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent

housing"), and these experiences can either be transitional (precipitated by a traumatic event) or

not transitional (Figure 1; Homeless Hub, 2021; Cauf Society, 2020). Third, the personal well-

being of a person experiencing homelessness refers to the physical health, mental health, and

social integration of a person during an episode of homelessness; we separate our research from

prior literature in this instance, as we are more interested in broad, colloquial, and everyday

conceptions and indicators of well-being, rather than an in-depth measurement of self-efficacy or

self-mastery as is well-researched in previous studies.

3.2 Interview Content and Structure

The research instrument is an in-depth interview guide (Appendix B). The in-person

interview will take between 30 minutes and one hour to complete. Broken into several

subsections, the interview guide includes opportunities to collect demographic information, to

assess each of the three developed qualifications of experiences of homelessness in depth, and to

understand the participant's experience with and thoughts about Dismas House and its programs.

A shorter interview would not allow for nearly as robust a potential for data collection.

An email-based survey or phone-based interview would not be feasible because the target

population, especially if participants are currently experiencing homelessness, may have

unreliable access to phones or to computer-based email accounts. A mailed survey is absolutely

out of the question in this case because some respondents will likely have no fixed mailing

address at the time of administration. Thus, an in-depth interview provides the researchers an

advantage to gather a large variety of data and anecdotes from the individual experiences of the

people included in our small sample size; in addition, an interview allows for a tailored experience for each participant, making it more likely that people who have experienced the traumatic life events of homelessness and incarceration will be comfortable sharing these experiences (without the unreliability of self-report methods). In-depth interviews present a disadvantage when it comes to the small sample size of feasible participants, which makes it harder for us to make a generalization to the target population. In addition, long, in-depth, qualitative interviews depend on the interviewer to collect accurate information, making the study more prone to bias and to researcher error than in an email-based self-report survey, for instance. However, the benefits for our inductive research proposal outweigh the disadvantages of this strategy.

3.3 Recruitment of Participants

Participants will be recruited through non-probability, convenience sampling of previous Dismas House residents who have completed the organization's transitional housing program. Researchers should plan to contact participants from an available Dismas House directory of previous residents, selecting those whose date of departure from Dismas House was at least two years ago; this temporal criterion ensures that researchers can evaluate whether or not there is a sustained risk period for homelessness several years after incarceration, allowing for analysis of instances of homelessness that extend beyond housing insecurity immediately after leaving the stability of the transitional program. While we have included a template for contacting potential participants by email (Appendix E), it should also be noted that, in the case that a potential participant is currently experiencing homelessness, other methods of communication can be explored, especially in the case that a phone or email is not accessible. These contact strategies may include communicating through a service coordinator or other service provider. After

conducting initial interviews with participants who can be easily reached, snowball sampling, in which researchers ask participants for recommendations of other eligible respondents, should be implemented; this will allow researchers to learn from participants who may be otherwise hard to reach. However, in order to ensure that the sample remains representative, snowball sampling must be regulated: only referrals who meet the criteria of both having a prior history with incarceration and participating in the Dismas House program should be accepted. This sampling strategy presents a slight disadvantage for researchers, as it further precludes the ability to generalize the findings to the general target population and may result in an over-sampling of certain types of people (e.g. perhaps white respondents will be more likely to put forward other white respondents in their families or social networks, resulting in a potentially unrepresentative sample), and it increases the possibility of bias from researchers and participants in determining who is selected to be interviewed.

As many participants as possible should be recruited; given the small target population, it is likely that as few as ten participants will be eligible and available for interviewing. Participants will be compensated with $25 for participation in the in-person interview; this amount ensures that participants are paid fairly for their time, but it is not so large a sum as to be coercive. This information will be first conveyed over the phone, via email, or in person, depending on the contact information on file and the housing status of the participant. The researchers should plan on being fully transparent about the study's objective and financial compensation with potential participants; this will likely not skew the results but incentivize participation. In Appendix A, we include a consent form that discloses the intent of the study and delineates compensation for participation in it.

3.4 Analysis of Responses

We are not proposing a causal relationship between our highlighted variables because there are numerous well-studied causes of homelessness; rather, we are proposing an inductive research method in order to build a theory as to how the completion of a transitional housing program impacts the ways in which people experience homelessness after incarceration. This process will also allow researchers to examine the efficacy of the specific program studied. There is no overarching theory or understanding from which to deduce these experiences, as they are unstudied in prior literature; thus, researchers must draw upon participants' answers to generate a theoretical framework about the relationship between prior incarceration, completion of a transitional housing program, and varying experiences of homelessness.

In order to accomplish this, the interviewer will record each in-depth interview using an audio device. The researchers will then transcribe the audio recording and analyze the transcribed data, looking for patterns, themes, similarities, and differences among participants' responses. Next, researchers will annotate the transcripts in order to code different data types and patterns, including relevant words, actions, themes, concepts.

Researchers will ask such questions as: 1) are there similarities in the responses of our participants? 2) Are these responses different from the experiences of people experiencing homelessness in other studies? 3) Are there themes emerging and can we link them to aspects of this specific transitional housing program? 4) What specific temporalities of homelessness, types of homelessness, and well-being during homelessness are common among participants? 5) What specific elements of the Dismas House program were found to be helpful or unhelpful among participants? For instance, if there are particular locations, particular types of homelessness, or particular times after incarceration when many respondents experience homelessness, these

themes will be noted; if there are particular practices of Dismas House programs that are routinely found to be lacking, these themes will be noted; if there are particular demographic groups that are experiencing similar types of homelessness after participation in a Dismas House program, these themes will be noted.

After annotation, they will conceptualize the data, creating categories and subcategories through grouping codes. We have included a template for coding for expected patterns among transcribed responses in Appendix D; these include methods of coding for similarities and differences among responses in relation to our three indicators of varying experiences of homelessness and in response to questions about the efficacy of Dismas House programs. Finally, the researchers will draw connections between categories and analyze these segments to build insights and test the hypothesis.

In order to better understand participants' responses, we also propose that researchers reference datasets describing the experiences of people who become homeless after incarceration without accessing transitional housing support. This will allow for a comparison within the literature review between these individuals' experiences and those of the former Dismas House residents. Some potential comparisons include the study design from Bowman & Ely's 2020 paper examining the impact of a supportive housing program on ex-offenders' life trajectories and social ecosystems, and a study that examines the experiences of both populations in a mixed transitional and public housing space (Hamlin & Purser 2021).

3.5 Validity and Reliability

The external validity of this project is threatened by the small sample size and its qualitative design. While the researchers should aim to include a group of participants that is representative of previous and current residents of Dismas House, with participants also filling

each category of HUD's homelessness definitions (see Figure 1), it is difficult to assume

generalizations about the larger population of ex-offenders completing transitional housing

programs in the United States based on this small sample size. Furthermore, *The Process of*

Social Research notes that, while qualitative studies can build theory well, "obtain[ing] data

[with] greater validity… observ[ing] more honest behavior and get[ting] more truthful responses

to their questions than the experimenter or survey researcher," it is also true that "the strength of

these inferences is contingent upon the care and judgment of researchers in selecting cases,"

meaning that our research design introduces more opportunities for researcher bias and error than

a quantitative design (Dixon et al. 283). This is important in terms of generalizability because

this makes it more likely that the bias or error of a single researcher in a single interview is

mapped onto an entire group of people at the national level, making the harm of bias and error

proportionally larger. Even further, while the in-depth interviews do provide great detail of these

experiences, the detail is internal to one person's story and cannot be generalized; a shortcoming

of generalizing the findings or comparing them to this would be that our study is framed around

incarcerated individuals from Vermont, not throughout the United States. Thus, the findings of

this study should not be expected to accurately encapsulate the experiences of the wider

population of people in the nation who have completed a transitional housing program and

experienced homelessness.

  Assessing the reliability of qualitative research requires a different set of standards than

that of quantitative research; as such, consistency of the qualitative data will be upheld using an

identical interview guide, audio recordings, and detailed field notes during each interview.

However, because the researchers will not be able to use other methods – e.g. observations over

time, supplementary archival data, etc. – in this study, the findings of the observations during

these interviews will not be reproducible or confirmable. This point is highlighted in *The Process of Social Research*, which also notes, to our benefit, that in-depth "interviewees' accounts… sometimes can be cross-checked against one another" to provide a degree of reliability (Dixon et al. 284). Again, however, the fact that the risk of researcher bias and error is outsized in these cases presents a risk that the observer may misinterpret the participant's words or behavior. In order to ensure accurate interpretations of the data, the researchers should check their conclusions with their respondents after analyzing the results.

CONCLUSION

4.1 Ethical Considerations

We base our evaluation of the ethical considerations on the Belmont Report, viewed as the benchmark for conducting ethically sound research (NCPHSBBR 1979). The first principle of this report, respect for persons, requires that subjects are "treated as autonomous agents" and those with "diminished autonomy are entitled to protection" (NCPHSBBR 1979:4). As such, the most essential aspect of this research will be ensuring that the people interviewed for this study are treated extremely well; so often, people who have been incarcerated or who have experienced homelessness are treated differently – belittled, coerced somehow into participation in student projects, denied services and housing and jobs. To keep the utmost respect for our respondents, we have taken their perspective into account when compiling the questions used in our interview guide. Inevitably, some of the questions asked will lead to some daunting memories or thoughts of times when obstacles or difficulties were faced. Researchers conducting these interviews, thus, must be diligent in finding a happy medium between asking these questions, which will be useful to the study, along with ensuring that participants feel comfortable throughout the entire process. Because participants will be approached through the contacts provided by Dismas

House, there may be a concern that participation in the study is linked to the coercive effect of Dismas House receiving funds from the Department of Corrections, collaborating closely with parole officers, and providing essential services to its clients. Researchers should stress at each stage of the recruitment and interview processes that current services participants are receiving or those needed in future will not be affected by participating in the research and that participating in the research is not mandatory. To further protect against this misconception and to provide an ethical degree of distance, third-party researchers, not Dismas House staff or volunteers, should conduct these interviews and outreach efforts. Furthermore, through the consent form (Appendix A), respondents are informed that participation in the study will not affect anything that participants are receiving or their relationship or standing with the organization. In addition, our consent form ensures the confidentiality of persons interviewed in this study. To ensure their responses remain confidential, participants' names and any prominent location names should be changed in any transcription or final report compiled by researchers.

The second principle of this report, beneficence, states the obligation for researchers to not harm the subjects and, more specifically, to "maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harm" (NCPHSBBR 1979:5). To ensure that the research being done will have a positive impact on the respondents and others like them, hope Dismas House will build upon its findings to improve the housing support offered to formerly incarcerated people across Vermont. Additionally, the final report compiled and could be shared with state-level entities or local municipalities responsible for funding housing interventions for reentering citizens. Gauging the findings of the project and evaluating salient themes, researchers could open up some insight to potential policies that could benefit those in similar situations to participants. It is important to note that the answers and experiences of respondents might be used to obtain increased funding

or services for people who are not the respondents, even if the recipients of the benefits of the research are experiencing similar conditions, meaning that respondents may not directly benefit from participation besides a small compensation fund. Furthermore, participation in the study may cause distress or reliving of trauma for interviewees, or its findings, if extremely negative, may result in funding cuts for transitional housing programs or other programs that are helpful to some (but not those interviewed). Thus, participant compensation and clarity in what the interview will comprise is necessary.

The third principle of the Belmont Report is justice, meaning the benefits and burdens are equally distributed; accordingly, this research must advocate fair treatment for all participants, including a fair distribution of the risks and benefits of the research. The largest concern with the study is the risk of placing an undue burden on the participants; it may place the experiences of people who are extremely vulnerable, historically denigrated, and often members of other disadvantaged groups, under a microscope in ways that may place an undue burden on the respondents. There may also, in the case of untrained interviewers, be an undue burden on folks to explain traumatic events and difficult experiences to people. In order to combat this, the third-party interviewers.

4.2 Feasibility and Significance

Dismas of Vermont is an organization that supports the transition for incarcerated individuals into society. Incarcerated individuals often see themselves having a disconnect between them and society after committing the crime, causing them to face re-entry barriers and housing insecurities (Dismas of Vermont 2022). Thus, the Dismas of Vermont's mission statement is centered around fostering a community, because it is this sense of community that re-establishes the relationship between the former prisoner and society: debunking ideas of

alienation or the mental harm that comes with committing the crime. Through the help of students and international volunteers from the Volunteers for Peace Program, Dismas of Vermont creates a vibrant, welcoming, and supportive environment that imitates the natural rhythms of life: from residents having the opportunity to go to work, further their education, or even reconnect with their families. Moreover, in the case that prisoners find difficulty with any of those activities, staff and volunteers work closely and collaborate to improve the educational and professional outcomes of the incarcerated individuals, by providing in house programs such as the 12 "step meetings." All of these activities and shared experiences ultimately creates the sentiment that the lives of the incarcerated individuals matter: people care for them and want them to succeed in life no matter what happened in the past. This research design allows the researchers to gather robust accounts of the lived experiences of ex-offenders after completing transitional housing. This data will help Dismas House improve and tailor their services to better meet the needs of their residents, and position them more securely for permanent housing.

Due to the limited sample size of those who had completed the transitional housing program, we approached our research question from an inductive point of view. Taking practicality into consideration, we are mindful that this study will require an initial financial investment to incentive participation, along with the time needed to not only conduct the interview, but also interpret the responses. The in-depth interview strategy requires a large time commitment, and the small sample size will affect the generalizability of the study. We also expect the researchers to face challenges contacting and recruiting participants, as they are no longer residents of Dismas House. Due to the sensitivity of these subjects, researchers should also expect to face limitations in disclosure of personal information.

We hope to collect as much qualitative data as possible, accumulating as many aspects as possible of the experiences homeless individuals have faced. After analyzing this data, we hope to make theoretical generalizations to existing data about the efficacy of comparable transitional housing programs – shedding light on certain methodologies using existing data and literature that ultimately enhances the experiences incarcerated individuals face with homelessness.

In addition, we hope that our interview will make unique contributions to existing data and academic literature due to the lack of information available tailored to the thoughts of the incarcerated individuals with a history of participating in transitional housing programs. Our qualitative approach further allows us to draw connections that may not be possible by a quantifiable means. To Dismas of Vermont, we hope to not only provide support and reasoning for the success, or failures, of the activities Dismas of Vermont provides, but also present insights directly from the incarcerated individuals about how certain aspects of the program could be improved or remain in practice. From analyzing the responses, we expect to provide a specialized acumen to Dismas of Vermont to ultimately further their mission statement of fostering a community centered on acceptance and growth.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Consent Form

Informed Consent

Introduction: You are being asked to take part in a research study. Taking part in research is voluntary.

What does this study involve?
We would like to learn more about your experiences with homelessness after your involvement with Dismas House in order to understand how transitional housing programs affect the experiences of homelessness of formerly incarcerated people. Participation in the interview will take 30 minutes to 1 hour to complete.

Who is eligible to participate?
You must have graduated from the translational housing program at Dismas at least two years ago and have experienced an episode of homelessness in the years since your graduation from the program in order to participate.

Will you be paid to take part in this study?
Respondents who meet the eligibility criteria listed above and who take part in the study will receive $25 upon completing the interview.

What are the options if you do not want to take part in this study?
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time with no consequences to you.

Will you benefit from taking part in this study?
Your responses will help us gather information that may help people who are exiting prison to access services that will help them avoid recidivism and homelessness. You will also receive financial compensation.

What are the risks involved with taking part in this study?
There are no known risks of participation in this study; however, it may be difficult to talk about your experiences with these subjects.

How will your privacy be protected?
The information collected for this study will be kept secure and confidential. Your name and prominent locations mentioned in the interview will be changed and will not be linked to your responses in any way. Only the research team will have access to your data.

Whom should you contact about this study?
If you have questions about this study, you can contact the research director for this study.

CONSENT

I have read the above information and agree to take part in this study.

Name (Print) _____

Signature _____

Appendix B: Interview Guide

The present interview is part of our study to identify how completion of a transitional housing program affects an individual's subsequent experiences of homelessness.

You are the expert; I am the learner. I have a list of questions to ask you, but if you find yourself wanting to share something that I haven't asked but you feel is important to understanding your experiences please do so. If you have questions as we go, need clarification, or want to take a minute to think, just let me know. Ultimately, we hope to learn more about your housing experiences after completing the Dismas house program. If at any point you are uncomfortable answering a question, I have asked you, want to remove a response from the record, or want to stop the interview altogether, please let me know.

While your responses will remain confidential, your privacy is important to me, so let's make up a name for you - we will use this name in our research instead of your real name. If you don't mind, I am going to record this conversation so that I can listen to you rather than take notes. Is that okay? If there are any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering, it is fine to skip them. Or if you would feel comfortable answering a question but would like it to be off the record, we can turn off the tape recorder for a moment and turn it back on when you are ready. Do you have any questions for me? Are you ready to get started?

<div align="center">Introductory Questions</div>

1. Do you have any questions before we get started?
2. To start things off, can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
   a. How old are you?
   b. Where did you grow up?

      c. Can you tell me a little bit about your employment status? Are you working right now? Are you looking for work? Are you not looking for work?

3. How would you describe your current living situation?
      a. Can you tell me more about (anything potentially insightful they mention - unconventional arrangement, potential hidden homelessness, complaints or gratitudes they bring up?

Homelessness: Temporarily and Type

I'd be really curious to know how your living situation evolved to its current point. Would it be ok if we delved a little bit deeper into the different living situations you have experienced since leaving Dismas House?

4. How would you define homelessness? Have you experienced homelessness since leaving Dismas House?
      a. How long after your departure from the program did you first experience homelessness? Can you tell me a little bit about that experience?
           i. Was there anything specific that caused this to happen?
      b. Have you ever experienced (any of the following they do not include in their definition of homelessness: stays in a shelter, in the outdoors, in a vehicle, in the home of a friend or loved one, or when you had no sure place to stay for one night or more)?
           i. How many days, weeks, or months was your longest episode of homelessness (by these definitions)?
          ii. During the times you experienced homelessness, were you employed?
        iii. How would you describe your living situation during that time?
               1. Were you, for example, staying in a shelter, in the outdoors, in a vehicle, in the home of a friend or loved one, or in another living arrangement?
          iv. Were you living with anyone else?
               1. Did that impact your experience in any way?
               2. Would you have made different decisions if you did (or did not) live with someone else?
           v. Can you give me a rough estimate of the total period of time you have experienced any form of homelessness since your completion of the Dismas House transitional housing program?
               1. Was this all in a long block of time, or separated into different episodes of homelessness?

Personal Well-Being During Homelessness

I really appreciate you sharing those experiences. It sounds like you have had a [parrot previous responses back to the respondent to give them an opportunity to correct you], and I am [grateful you are in a good place now, hopeful that you will find more stability soon, etc.]. I know that these experiences can have a really large impact on your personal health, and was hoping we could talk about that for a little bit.

1. Physical Health
    a. Has your housing situation ever impacted your ability to maintain the level of physical health you wanted?
    b. Has your housing situation ever directly caused a physical health difficulty?
    c. Do you have any preexisting conditions? Have those played a role in your ability to get access to housing or stay in certain places?

2. Mental Health
    a. [Baseline mental health questions to understand the person's current and overall self-perception.]
        i. Would you describe yourself as a happy person? Why or why not?
        ii. Are you unsatisfied with your life? What would you change if you could?
        iii. Would you say today is an average, good, or bad day for you?
    b. Do you worry about your housing situation?
        i. How much? What do you worry about?
    c. Have you ever been diagnosed with a mental illness?
        i. What might have been some of the causes of this condition?
        ii. When did this occur?
    d. Has your housing situation ever impacted your mental health?
        i. How did that manifest? How much of your life did it affect?
3. Social Integration
    a. Are you a part of any communities?
        i. Why do you choose (or are forced) to be a part of these?
        ii. Do you enjoy your membership in a community? Does it benefit you in any way?
    b. Would you feel comfortable going to a neighbor if you ever needed help?
        i. How well do you know your neighbors?
        ii. How do you think your neighbors perceive you and why?
    c. Do you feel safe in your current living situation?
        i. What are some of the things that make you feel safe in a dwelling place?
        ii. Are there any things that are deal breakers for you in living somewhere?

Assessment of Dismas House Programs

Thank you again for sharing these experiences. If we could shift to a completely different topic for the final part of our conversation, it would be really insightful for me to understand your experience with the program you were a part of in Dismas House. None of these opinions will be linked to you in any way, so feel free to be as candid as you like. After this I will give you some time to ask me any questions you might have that came up as we were chatting.

[Further expand on any of the following questions by asking for specific stories]

1. In what ways did Dismas House prepare you for permanent housing?
    a. Were there programs, training, or seminars you found particularly helpful?
    b. Did you find the mandatory meal times to be helpful in building a sense of community?
    c. Were there individuals who helped you in particular and, if so, how did you find their assistance useful?
2. In what ways did Dismas House not completely prepare you for obtaining and maintaining permanent housing?
    a. Were there any unhelpful programs or activities?
    b. Were any policies of Dismas House that you found hindered your ability to maintain a job or find housing upon completing the program?
    c. Did you find the work requirements to be helpful to your transition?
    d. Did you find Dismas House's inclusion of community members in the house to be helpful?

Now, if you have any questions for me, the floor is yours. If at any point in the future, you don't want this interview to be used in this research, please let me know and we will make sure that all your data is dealt with in the way you specify.

Appendix C: Definitions & Conceptual Model

CRITERIA FOR DEFINING HOMELESS	Category 1	Literally Homeless	(1) Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning: (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); <u>or</u> (iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less <u>and</u> who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution
	Category 2	Imminent Risk of Homelessness	(2) Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that: (i) Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance; (ii) No subsequent residence has been identified; <u>and</u> (iii) The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing
	Category 3	Homeless under other Federal statutes	(3) Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who: (i) Are defined as homeless under the other listed federal statutes; (ii) Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing during the 60 days prior to the homeless assistance application; (iii) Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during in the preceding 60 days; <u>and</u> (iv) Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers
	Category 4	Fleeing/ Attempting to Flee DV	(4) Any individual or family who: (i) Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence; (ii) Has no other residence; <u>and</u> (iii) Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing

Figure 1: Our definition of homelessness for this study using HUD's Definition of Homelessness
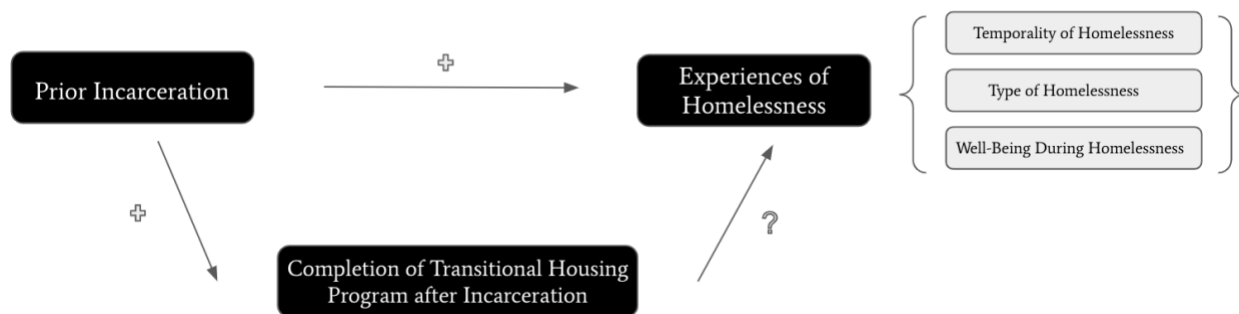

Figure 2: Conceptual model of our variables

Appendix D: Template for Analysis of Results

<u>Sample Codes for Analysis of Interview Transcripts</u>

1. Codes for Temporality of Homelessness
    - i. Chronic
    - ii. Episodic
    - b. Proximity to Incarceration
        - i. Six months or less after
        - ii. Between six months and a year after
        - iii. Between a year and two years after
        - iv. More than two years after
        - v. Does not apply
    - c. Proximity to other discrete experiences of Homelessness
        - i. One to two weeks between episodes
        - ii. Two weeks to a month between episodes
        - iii. One to three months between episodes
        - iv. Three to six months between episodes
        - v. Greater than six months between episodes
    - d. Proximity to completion of transitional housing program
        - i. Six months or less after
        - ii. Between six months and a year after
        - iii. Between a year and two years after
        - iv. More than two years after
        - v. Does not apply
2. Codes for Type of Homelesness
    - a. Literal
    - b. Hidden
    - c. Transitional
        - i. Instigating Incident:
            1. Eviction
            2. Job Loss
            3. Health Emergency
            4. Domestic Violence
            5. Other
3. Codes for Personal Well-Being
    - a. Physical Well-Being
        - i. Instances of Physical Ailments
        - ii. Instances of Physical Well-Being
    - b. Mental Well-Being
        - i. Mentally Unhealthy Days

        ii.   Instances of Contentment
- c. Social Well-Being
  - i.   Instances of Isolation
  - ii.   Feeling of Belonging
4. Miscellaneous
   - a. Location in which the respondent experienced homelessness
     - i.   New Hampshire
       1. Lebanon
       2. West Lebanon
     - ii.   Vermont
       1. White River Junction
       2. Hartford
   - b. Season in which the respondent experienced homelessness
     - i.   Winter
     - ii.   Spring
     - iii.   Summer
     - iv.   Fall
   - c. Services Sought
     - i.   Emergency Shelter
     - ii.   Case Management
     - iii.   Food Assistance
     - iv.   Job Training
     - v.   Education
   - d. Employment
     - i.   Unemployed
     - ii.   Service Job

Appendix E: Recruitment

Hi (*name of respondent*),

I am conducting a research study that will help identify how completion of a transitional housing program affects an individual's subsequent experiences of homelessness. I hope to learn more about your housing experiences after completing the Dismas House transitional housing progra,. I believe you have a valuable perspective to offer and would love to invite you to participate in the study. Participants will take part in an in-person interview lasting from 30 minutes to an hour.

Please respond to this email if you'd like to participate. You are also welcomed to reach out to (*phone/email*) if you have any questions.

Best,
(researcher name)