

COLLABORATIVE RESPONSES TO HOMELESSNESS



A "HOW TO" GUIDE

THE CHALLENGE

Organizations serving people experiencing homelessness often work in silos. This negatively affects unhoused people, especially people with co-occurring needs, who face challenges in accessing the services they need.

A SOLUTION: CROSS SECTOR COLLABORATION

Cross Sector Collaboration involves the liaison or sharing of information, resources, activities, and competencies by organizations from two sectors or more, to reach a common goal that could not be achieved by one sector alone. (Bryson et al, 2006, p. 46)



EXAMPLES OF COLLABORATION

- 1) Move physically closer but remain separate in vision and/or objective
- 2) Create pathways for users to move efficiently between organizations
- 3) Establish a navigator who steers users through institutions
- 4) Create an entirely new, fully integrated entity.



KEY FACTORS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Identify common goals. A key factor in collaboration is identification of shared goals that can only be achieved through the parallel delivery of services. The success of partnerships depends on shared vision of practice.

Have a plan. This plan should detail the role of actors in each sector, how responsibilities will be shared, and how resources will be equitably distributed.

Be patient. It takes significant time, energy, and open communication to build trusting collaborative relationships. A strong foundation is critical for smooth implementation of work across sectors.

Promote reflexivity. Ensure that space is created for dialogue and reflection, including with service users and across sectors. Identify what works, what doesn't, and how best to move forward.



WHAT TO AVOID

Failure to recognize **power differences** makes collaboration hard to implement. Effort must be made to recognize hierarchical distinctions and/or tensions between sectors before integration.

Follow up needs to be prioritized. Providers must not simply "dump" service users on other sectors through referral without follow up.

Sectors providing integrated services should eliminate **physical distance** between organizations and the community of users.

Punitive approaches are harmful to service users. Collaboration must promote therapeutic responses.