

S1.07 The Role of Street Outreach in Supporting Pathways from Unsheltered Homelessness to Housing



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In this session, you will learn about key facilitators to housing efforts from the perspective of different outreach providers, including the importance of cultural and peer representation among outreach staff. We'll also dive into some challenges, such as those posed by criminalization of homelessness, and how outreach staff are adapting their strategies in response.



Equitable Pathways from Unsheltered to Housing: A Mixed Methods Participatory Study of Outreach Innovations in Miami-Dade County



1. Ethnography (observation and interviews) with street outreach teams and their unsheltered clients
2. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data analysis
3. PhotoVoice with persons moving from being unsheltered to housing



GREEN SCHOOL

POLICY REPORT

HOUSING FIRST AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO CRIMINALIZATION:

Preliminary Findings from Interviews with Unhoused and
Formerly Unhoused People in Miami-Dade County



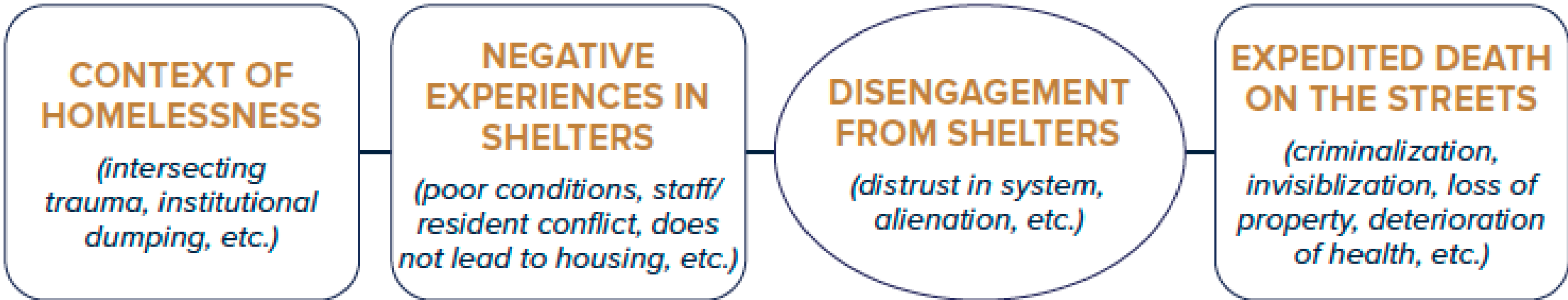
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A Grounded Model of Shelter Disengagement (Not “Shelter Resistance”)



What do people experiencing unsheltered homelessness see as effective street outreach?

How is effective street outreach enabled by local and political environments?

Methods and Data

- *Semi-structured interviews* with 20 people with recent experience of unsheltered homelessness in Miami-Dade County
 - 9 people who were **recently housed with a voucher and specialized outreach**
 - 5 people who were **unhoused but had a voucher and specialized outreach**
 - 6 people who were **unhoused without vouchers and specialized outreach**
- About 100 hours of observation among three outreach teams

Key Characteristics of Effective Outreach

Listening, caring, and following through

“If it wasn’t for (Organization 1), I don’t know where I would be because there is no help out here. When I tell you I have been to every shelter, it is like they just don’t care. It’s like you’re just another number in there. I didn’t have any kind of good feeling in myself until these guys started. I started seeing evidence of them helping me, and that’s what kept me going.”

— Jaime, who had been unsheltered for most of the previous two decades

Key Characteristics of Effective Outreach

Doing “everything”

- Obtaining documentation like birth certificates and IDs
- Submitting applications for benefits and housing vouchers
- Finding short-term shelter and treatment (when appropriate)
- Following up with bureaucracies (housing authorities)
- Finding rental housing and resources to cover move-in costs
- Securing furniture, food, and other household items
- Helping move-in
- Coordinating service providers, providing food and transportation
- And more!

Key Characteristics of Effective Outreach

Providing equitable treatment

“Michael, KC, Connie (outreach workers)— All three have been really awesome since from the beginning. They were super welcoming. And they made me feel really comfortable, like there was a light at the end of the tunnel. Because I was really in a dark place mentally at the end of my pregnancy. I was really depressed and really sad to be putting my two-year-old through that. They were so polite and nice, not judging me for being homeless or not being able to provide for my family.”

—Maria, mother of 2, who had been living in her car for six months

Key Characteristics of Effective Outreach

Lived experience

“It’s a lot easier to relate to somebody when you’ve been there, through it, or a family member has been through it. They seem to work a little better when you can relate a lot better with that person. Things just go a lot smoother. Connie (outreach worker) has a lot of connections and plugs with people. That’s because of what she’s been through and the help that she’s gotten. All that plays a role. She keeps in touch with people and knows how to get things done. That didn’t come from phone calls made over night. No. That’s because of what she’s been through and where she’s at now.”

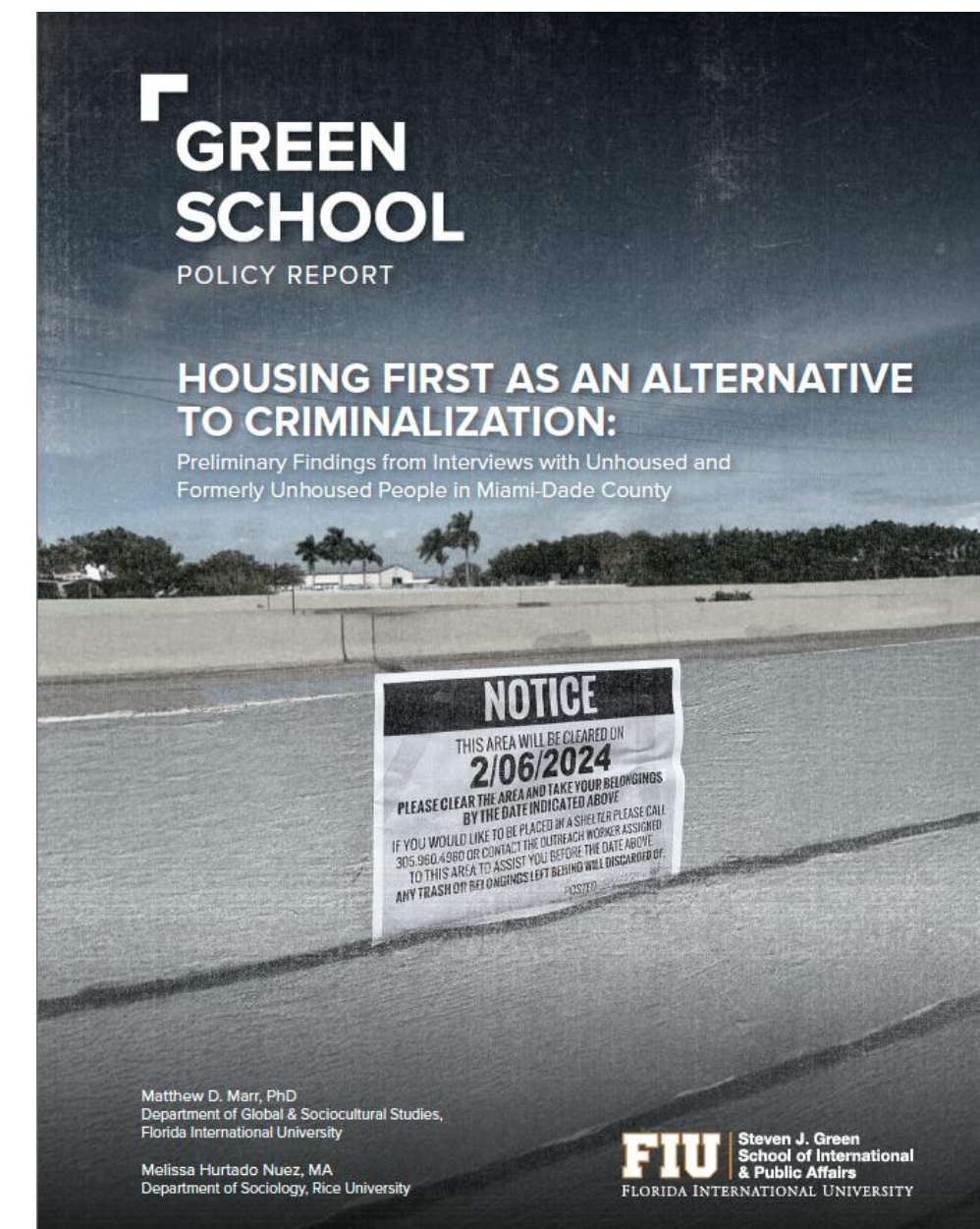
Kathy, who was unsheltered and struggling with addiction for 3 years

Local and Political Factors Enabling Effective Street Outreach

- Local leadership and coordination (CoC)
- Increased availability of vouchers, including “stability vouchers” and funding for outreach innovations (HUD SNOFO)
- Coordination of multiple service providers, Housing Authorities, technical assistance, private funding
- Organizational culture (fidelity to housing first)
- Coordination with law enforcement— back off, refrain from “complaint-driven” sweeps

Conclusion

How can we shift the balance towards more people securing housing with the help of effective street outreach?



“Housing First as an Alternative to Criminalization:

Preliminary Findings from Interviews with Unhoused and Formerly Unhoused People in Miami-Dade County”