

STIGMA IN HEALTHCARE



The background reading *Barriers to Accessing Healthcare* outlined why those experiencing houselessness might not access healthcare services and some of the repercussions of this. This discussion focuses on one particular concern – **stigma**.

Once at a healthcare facility, stigma is present. This is well-documented and can cause individuals to be denied care, provided with sub-standard care or passed off to less-experienced colleagues, subjected to longer waits for treatment, physically removed from emergency departments, and in some instances experience verbal and physical abuse (Dodor et al., 2009; Khandor & Mason, 2007; Nyblade et al., 2009; Ross et al., 2009; Hamann et al., 2014).

This **stigma is present within different areas of the health care system, from health care professionals to hospital security** and can result in a sense of shame and stereotyping for those experiencing houselessness (Khandor & Mason, 2007; Purkey & MacKenzie, 2019).

These reports are concerning, given that people experiencing houselessness use hospitals more frequently than the general population and have longer stays (Treglia et al., 2019).

Indigenous peoples in particular have also described how anti-drug stigma and racism has resulted in poor treatment and service delivery in hospitals (Khandor & Mason, 2007). With data suggesting Indigenous peoples are more than eight times more likely to be houseless than non-Indigenous (Belanger et al., 2013), they are positioned to be greatly impacted by barriers to healthcare and stigma.

Thoughts



- 1 Stigma and discrimination experienced by people experiencing houselessness in medical settings lowers the prospect that they will seek medical help.
- 2 Substance use creates a stereotype of people experiencing houselessness. This causes them to feel their medical issues will not be treated.
- 3 Indigenous peoples may experience greater stigma within healthcare settings.
- 4 People experiencing houselessness use hospitals 5x more frequently than the general population, have longer stays, and usually receive their health care from emergency departments.



References:

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