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Introduction

Martha's Vineyard is a year-round rural community characterized by high rates of unemployment, poverty, substance abuse, and housing instability. The year-round population is faced with the "island factor" – starting with higher prices of everything (housing, food, services) and limited or no access to the safety net services generally available on the mainland. These factors have led to a perceived increase in the number of homeless individuals and families on the island. Various local organizations, including Island Clergy, the Dukes County Commissioners, local businesses and police provide support to the people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The collaboration and communication between these local agencies is incidental without any comprehensive plan or unified approach to monitor and address homelessness on the Island.

Objectives

- Define Homeless on Martha's Vineyard
- Identify underlying causes of homelessness
- Map out available resources to address the issue
- Identify gaps in resources and make suggestions on how to fill them
- Research approaches used by other rural communities
- Develop a survey to be used as a data collection tool
- Identify main themes from interviews



Fig 1. Methods and deliverables

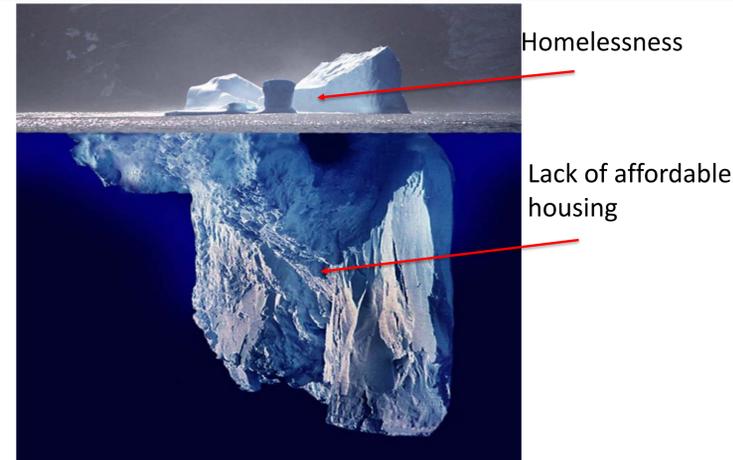


Fig 2. The scope of the housing issue on the island

Key Findings

- We found that **overt homelessness** is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to **housing instability** on the island. The island lacks affordable housing and the gap between median income and median housing price continues to grow.
- The previous **point-in-time counts** have failed to successfully quantify the number of homeless individuals
- Young professionals and other involved community members are **leaving the island** because they can't afford to live there
- There is **debate in the community** over how big of an issue homelessness is and how many services the island should provide.
- While there are a lot of **motivated homeless advocates** on the island, there isn't enough **communication and collaboration** between the organizations.
- The island is **disconnected** from the resources and funding available on the mainland that are supposed to be serving the Cape and the Islands.
- The **Brazilian population and other marginalized groups** are not currently being included in the discussion of housing instability



Fig 3. Holes in services for homeless individuals on the Island

Recommendations for Moving Forward

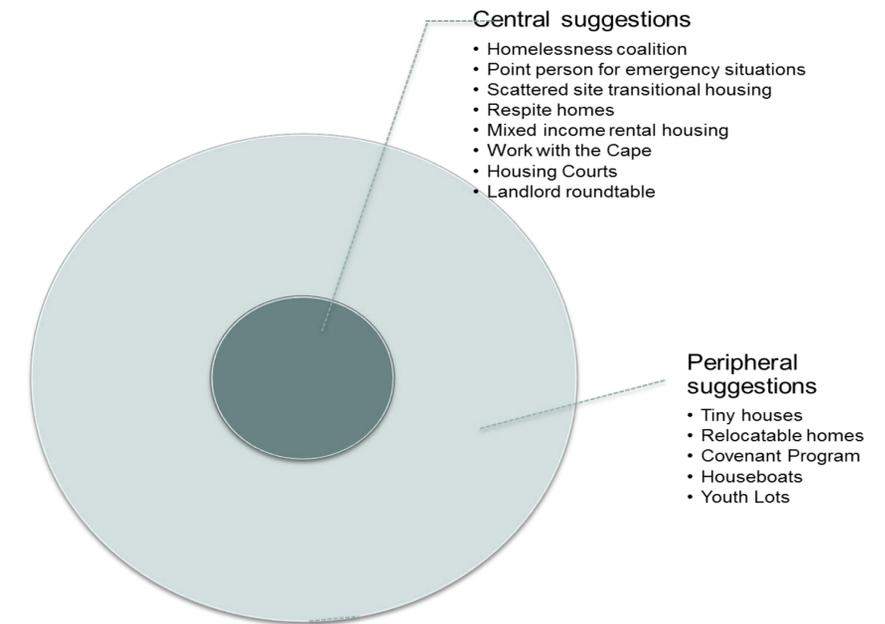


Fig 4. Recommendations for future steps in targeting homelessness



Fig 5. Group of friends and interprofessional colleagues working in a team

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