Reviewer's report

Title: Moving from rhetoric to reality: Adapting Housing First for homeless individuals with mental illness from ethno-racial groups

Version: 1 Date: 10 April 2012

Reviewer: Tatiana Taylor

Reviewer's report:

This paper aims to evaluate the fidelity and implementation of a Housing First intervention adapted for ethnic minorities. I find the topic to be interesting and highly relevant to cities outside of Canada. However, there are several issues which make it difficult to judge its appropriateness for publication. Through a clearer description of methodology and findings this paper may be of great use to researchers and policy makers.

Major compulsory revisions

1. Neither the research question nor the aims are included in the paper. Although the objectives of the paper are given as (1) to describe the intervention and its underlying theory and (2) to evaluate the intervention fidelity and implementation, there is no discussion of whether or not the intervention was successful. I understand that these results may be presented in another paper (Hwang et al). However, they need to be at least generally stated here.

2. Greater detail is required in the methods section. The paper would be strengthened by a description of the intervention and control arms. Details including outcome(s) of interest, data collection procedures, description of interviews/focus groups and analysis of qualitative data are missing and make it difficult to understand the process the researchers followed in collecting and analysing their data.

3. The results do not provide a balanced picture of the experiences of those in each study arm. The qualitative data presented does not seem to include comments from staff and service users in the control group.

The authors make claims (e.g. “hiring of staff members from ethno-racial backgrounds that mirror the clients’ own background allowed the clients to have role models”) which are not corroborated by service user quotations provided in the paper. No consumer quotations mention the importance of the ethno-racial aspect of the intervention.

4. The discussion and conclusion sections make claims as to the importance of adapting HF to better support ethnic minority groups. However, as no evaluation of participant outcomes is provided there is no evidence to support this statement.
Several of the key elements discussed as important for ethnic minorities (e.g. family member support, empowerment and choice) seem important regardless of the service user’s ethnicity.

6. Limitations of the study are not addressed.

Minor essential revision
1. It would be helpful to the reader if the term "ethno-racial" was defined.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.