Homelessness, Survival Sex and Pregnancy

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Total homelessness = 116,427
• F = 49,017 (42%)
• M = 67,407 (58%)

Improvised dwellings/tents/sleeping out
• F = 2,762
• M = 5,443

Supported accommodation for the homeless
• F = 10,430
• M = 10,800

Other households
• F = 7,338
• M = 10,388

Boarding houses
• F = 4,653
• M = 12,834
Women’s experiences of homelessness

• Family violence
• Income inequity
• Affordable housing
• Relationship breakdown
• Financial knowledge
• Pregnancy, parenting, family planning
• Access to space
• Lack of safety/homelessness-based violence
• Earning capacity while homeless
What is survival sex?

- Also referred to as: transactional sex, sex for favours, opportunistic prostitution, sex for shelter
- Exchange of sex for necessities such as food, accommodation, drugs, safety etc.
- Most research links survival sex with commercial sexual activity rather than as an aspect of intimate relationships
- Viewed as indicator of ‘risk behaviour’
Key findings:

• Exists within relationships
• Material support
• Physical protection
• Belonging/stability
Key findings:

• No accurate data on number of women who are homeless and pregnant in Victoria
• Some homelessness services do not account for pregnancy in providing support until late term
• Specialist support services are available to Aboriginal women and young women but fewer available than required
• Women aged 25 years and over are the least likely to receive a specialised response
• Many pregnant homeless women have experienced family violence but may not receive a service due to overburdened service system
• Women may seek terminations due to homelessness
• Stigma for women in mainstream services
Key findings:

• Specialist health programs that provide wraparound services, continuity of care, and outreach
• Doulas, homeless nursing service
• Peer support programs with young women
• Homelessness workers located in hospitals
Recommendations

**Support**

- Locate specialist housing support workers in hospital settings to assist pregnant homeless women to access housing support
- Ensure homelessness and health services are aware of family violence
- Flexible Support Packages and the ways that they can provide support to pregnant homeless women experiencing family violence
- Promote homelessness, health and other services working together to provide long-term support to women during pregnancy and early parenting
- Enable services to provide relevant good practice elements of: continuity of care, outreach, wraparound provision of services and peer support
- Raise awareness of the needs of women who seek a termination rather than continue with a pregnancy
- Underpin service provision by trauma-informed care
Training and education

• Develop and implement a training package that assists housing and homelessness services staff to collect information about pregnancy status

• Building on current good practice, develop and implement specialised training for homelessness and housing service workers in relation to homelessness and pregnancy

• Promote understanding of the circumstances and needs of pregnant homeless women through education of generalist staff


