

Abstract: Involving homeless persons, those who serve them, and persons who have exited homelessness in needs assessment and service planning will help tailor services to deal with the problems homeless persons face and promote a shared understanding among stakeholders. Homelessness is a widespread and disturbing phenomenon that results from a variety of causal factors. For this reason, simplistic intervention strategies that do not take into account the multiple perspectives of stakeholders involved in the problem are unlikely to be successful. Prevention and intervention strategies often derive from assumptions about the causes of homelessness, though there is substantial disagreement whether individual characteristics or structural forces are to blame for the problem. This exploratory qualitative study compares the perceptions of these three groups regarding the needs of homeless persons in an urban community in southwest Missouri in an effort to enhance service delivery and promote a shared understanding among stakeholders of the problem. Areas of agreement between the perceptions of service providers are identified, and recommendations are made for additional services needed in the community to fill gaps identified by participants.