

Background

HOMELESSNESS AND COVID-19

- Ohio has approximately 60,000 people experiencing homelessness each year, and Hamilton County had the 3rd highest homeless population in the state in 2019.
- Residents of homeless shelters have high COVID-19 prevalence: a study of COVID-19 patients in an urban safety-net hospital in March-May 2020 found that hospitalized patients were more likely to be experiencing homelessness.
- People experiencing homelessness are at higher risk for COVID-19 due to shared communal spaces, lack of healthcare resources, and limited access to hygiene supplies.
- Homeless individuals face barriers such as limited healthcare literacy, misinformation spread through social media, and delayed primary/preventative care.

SHELTERHOUSE

- The mission of Shelterhouse is to “provide basic human services for the men and women of the greater Cincinnati area who are currently experiencing homelessness.”
- Shelterhouse has limited PPE to distribute and is struggling to comply with social distancing and masking guidelines.
- Shelterhouse has also been affected by the limited capacity in the shelters due to reduced capacity guidelines, difficulty isolating symptomatic clients, and eviction moratoriums that have made finding permanent housing for clients more challenging.
- Our goal was to reduce the COVID-19 education gap among Shelterhouse clients to help lower the risks to their health by improving their compliance to current guidelines.

Methods

(1) COLLECTING DATA FOR INFORMATIONAL PRODUCTS

- The CDC website was consulted to collect up-to-date information and recommendations for COVID-19 and COVID-19 prevention.
- The CDC website was consulted multiple times throughout the ongoing projects to ensure the most current information was provided.
- The information gathered from the CDC website was used to produce educational flyers and an educational video.

(2) DISTRIBUTION OF EDUCATIONAL FLYERS

- Multiple educational flyers were produced containing information about COVID-19 symptoms, COVID-19 prevention, and COVID-19 vaccines.
- Flyers were graphically designed to be accessible to individuals of all literacy levels.
- Flyers were provided to Shelterhouse to be posted around both the men’s and women’s shelters.

(3) VIDEO INFOMERCIAL

- A fully-narrated video was produced containing general information about COVID-19, COVID-19 prevention, COVID-19 vaccine topics causing vaccination hesitancy, COVID-19 vaccine side effects, and steps to prevent post-vaccination infection.
- This video was televised on repeat in the common spaces of both the men’s and women’s shelters.

(4) “MEET THE MED STUDENTS” IN-PERSON DISCUSSION

- An in-person session was held at the women’s shelter.
- Clients were incentivized with food during the discussion.
- 1 pre-session and 1 post-session survey was distributed to each participant.
- Data from the surveys was collected and analyzed.

Results

- Initially, two-thirds of surveyed clients were not interested in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine if it was offered to them.
- After the informational session, clients indicated they were more willing to receive the vaccine and had a better understanding of COVID-19.
- Clients reported a relatively high level of concern about the impacts of COVID-19 on their health and general lifestyle.
- Clients reported being less concerned about the health impacts of COVID-19 after the session, and the level of concern that COVID-19 would make life more difficult did not change appreciably.

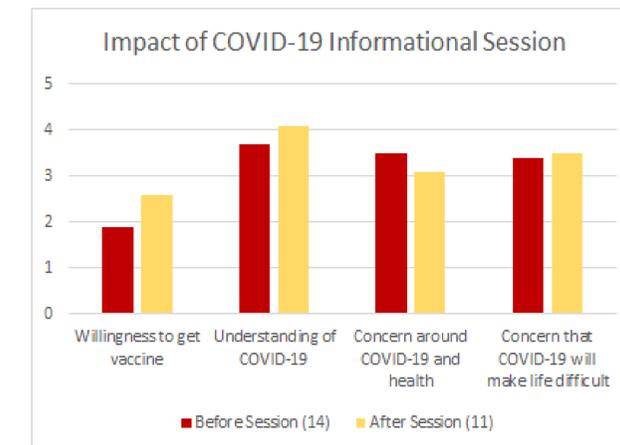


Figure 1. Subjective data collected after the in-person vaccine discussion Average change in willingness to get vaccine was +0.7 points out of 5 (14% increase), average change in understanding of COVID-19 was +0.4 points out of 5 (8% increase), average concern around COVID-19 was -0.4 points out of 5 (8% decrease), and average change in concern that COVID-19 will make life more difficult was +0.1 points out of 5 (2% increase) following the “Meet the Med Students” informational session.

Service and Learning Objectives

Identify challenges faced by homeless community that are exacerbated by COVID-19

Produce updated informational materials for use at Shelterhouse facilities

Host an in-person discussion about the COVID-19 vaccine for Shelterhouse clients

Conclusions

- ✓ The posters and videos containing educational content have been provided to Shelterhouse for continued use throughout and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ✓ A casual, conversational format to the information sessions in contrast to a presentation-based, highly-structured format provided a comfortable environment that promoted client involvement and encouraged questions.
- ✓ The impact of the one-hour educational session indicates that setting up multiple sessions to educate clients about future topics may prove even more beneficial. Future Shelterhouse support groups should highly consider using this format.
- ✓ Resources and educational materials that were distributed to Shelterhouse were also offered to other Learning Community groups to use with their own community partners.
- ✓ Moving forward, the educational materials produced can be more widely distributed to other community organizations beyond those partnering with other Learning Community groups to promote community-wide COVID-19 education and prevention.
- ✓ Overall, the in-person discussion was well received by the Shelterhouse clients and the casual, conversational format of the session was identified as the preferred structure for client engagement by the Shelterhouse staff.