

January 2021

## Impact of COVID-19 on Service Utilization by Those Experiencing Homelessness in Detroit


Anneliese Petersen

Wayne State University, gf6104@wayne.edu

Richard Bryce D.O.

Henry Ford Health System, RBRYCE1@hfhs.org

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/som\\_srs](https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/som_srs)

 Part of the [Community Health and Preventive Medicine Commons](#), and the [Family Medicine Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Petersen, Anneliese and Bryce, Richard D.O., "Impact of COVID-19 on Service Utilization by Those Experiencing Homelessness in Detroit" (2021). *Medical Student Research Symposium*. 81.  
[https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/som\\_srs/81](https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/som_srs/81)

This Research Abstract is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Medicine at DigitalCommons@WayneState. It has been accepted for inclusion in Medical Student Research Symposium by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@WayneState.

# Impact of COVID-19 on Service Utilization by Those Experiencing Homelessness in Detroit

Anneliese Petersen, MS3; Richard Bryce, DO

## Background:

Current research has demonstrated increased levels of fear and anxiety due to the Coronavirus pandemic. While fear can have a significant impact on any individual, fear among individuals experiencing homelessness is particularly impactful as this may affect service utilization and thus the ability of to access basic necessities such as food, shelter and water. This study seeks to understand the impact of fear of contracting COVID on service utilization among those experiencing homelessness in Detroit, MI.

## Methods and Results:

From July-August 2020, 35 individuals who self-identified as homeless participated in a multiple-choice survey. 40% of surveyed individuals stated that they experienced fear of contracting COVID-19. None of the individuals who primarily stayed in shelters over the last six months reported such fear, whereas 48% of rough sleepers reported experiencing fear. 83% of those who did not stay in a shelter stated that they chose not to stay in a shelter that they otherwise would have due to fear of COVID-19. Of those who primarily relied on community resources for food, 23% stated that they did not use these resources during March, April or May of 2020, and 60% of these individuals said that this decision was due to fear of contracting COVID.

## Conclusions:

Fear of contracting COVID-19 is present among the homeless population and impacted the use of community resources in Detroit. Specifically, individuals who normally rely on community shelters and food distributions chose not to frequent these services out of fear of contracting the coronavirus.

**Key Words:** Coronavirus, homelessness, community resources, service utilization