Houseless Water Insecurity During COVID-19 Pandemic

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Hypothesis: There are more positive perceptions of grassroots services and there are fewer barriers and impacts with grassroots services.

METHODOLOGY
Walking Interviews: walk with unhoused participants around downtown Portland, Oregon and conduct a semi-structured interview about their perceptions of water sources (public and grassroots), barriers and impacts.

Data Collected:
• Audio recordings
• GPS data
• Photos

Analysis:
• Audio recordings will be transcribed
• Transcriptions will be coded for emerging themes
• Emerging themes will be cross-checked with participants to ensure accuracy

ANTICIPATED RESULTS
• It is expected that there will be relationships between sources, barriers, and impacts (inter-relationships)
• It is expected that there will be relationships within barriers and impacts (intra-relationships)
• Example: Legal impacts may also have financial impacts
• It is expected that there will be a difference between the perspectives on public water versus grassroots water sources
• It is expected that there are different barriers and impacts to water sources during the COVID-19 pandemic than before

In order to find solutions to water insecurity among the unhoused it is crucial to amplify their voices and understand their resilience.

BACKGROUND
Problem: More information is needed to understand how the houseless population—one of the most vulnerable populations in the nation—has been resilient to water barriers related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Purpose: Understanding houseless individuals’ perceptions of public versus grassroots water sources, and the barriers and impacts of these sources during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sources
- Public water
- Private water
- Bottled water
- Illegally accessed
- Surface water
- Rain water

Barriers
- COVID-19
- Health
- Accessibility
- Infrastructure
- Financial
- Criminalization of houselessness
- Houselessness stigma
- Hygiene stigma
- Fear of “strings attached”

Impacts
- Health
- Financial
- Lowered social status
- Legal
- Mental deterioration
- Curtailment job interviews
- Poor hygiene (body and dental)
- Food preparation
- Cleanliness of living space