ISSUE:
Homelessness is a major issue linked to several health-related problems and impacting healthcare savings and welfare budgets. Much research exists on factors affecting homelessness. However, home stability – why those once homeless continue to not be homeless – has received little attention despite research suggesting individuals are likely to reduce drug related and sexual risk behaviors, and increase positive outcomes related to mental health and general health and wellbeing.

METHOD:
Researchers from the Murrow College of Communication engaged the Spokane Neighborhood Action Program to recruit individuals who had graduated a housing transition program and who had remained successfully housed for at least 6 months. Individuals participated in a “photovoice” project to identify factors perceived to affect home stability. Nineteen individuals were given disposable cameras and asked to photograph “things that help you remain home stable or challenge your home stability.” Fifteen individuals (averaging 22 months of home stability; range = 6 months to 5.5 years) shared their photos in consensus group interviews and conducted collaborative analysis of “what it takes to be successfully home stable.” Interview transcripts were analyzed using a grounded theory approach and images were analyzed using the SHOWeD framework.

FINDINGS:
Preliminary conclusions suggest among the facilitators of home stability are the opportunity to cultivate a sense of “normalcy,” personal support systems, and “life skills” training centered on motivation, organization, and “follow through.” Perceived challenges include catastrophic health care, child care, public transportation, stress of “living on the edge,” and a system of agencies that treat individuals like “cattle through a shoot.”

Peterson, J.C., Thomas, R., Antony, M.G. (2010).