



University of the
West of England

Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Sleeping spaces in United States homeless shelters: an analysis through the lens of trauma-informed design principles

- **Format:**

I would like to present in person and also submit a written paper. If attendance funding from my university proves difficult, I would like to present via Skype.

- **Author(s) Name:**

Jill Pable, Ph.D., FIDEC, ASID, Educator IALD

- **University or Company Affiliation:**

Department of Interior Design + Architecture

Florida State University

- **Abstract (300 words):**

Homelessness remains a persistent problem in the US, and philosophies vary in how to best manage these persons' recovery. Emerging expert consensus suggests that homelessness will not be solved until underlying trauma is effectively addressed. The design of architectural facilities serving the homeless represents a potential opportunity to activate trauma-informed design, a philosophy which shows evidence of promoting residents' sense of empowerment, sense of calm, and supporting their progress to secure employment and housing.

This paper describes preliminary progress on an evaluation tool that references trauma-informed design principles. The tool is tested with three currently common styles of sleeping arrangements within United States homeless shelters: 1) an open plan with bunk beds for 30 or more persons, 2) cluster arrangements for groups of 20 or fewer, and 3) individual partial-wall pods. The goal was to evaluate these facilities for their attendance to trauma reduction using the six measures of dignity, empowerment, security/privacy, stress management, sense of community, and beauty. The tool prompts a numerical assessment of each measure's indicators, permitting an analysis of each sleeping type's attendance to each indicator and a final score for overall holistic support of the measures.

Results identify that none of the examined sleeping arrangements exceeded 76% in overall attendance to the measures. The sleeping pods yielded the highest average on each of the measures, suggesting that increased floor space and heightened privacy may be aligned with trauma-informed concepts. However, modest gains in the cluster plan score were observed versus the open plan, with only small increases necessary in square footage and attendant increased construction expense.

This preliminary evaluation tool requires further refinement and testing, but suggests that applying the tenets of trauma-informed design to bear on architectural designs may bring to light benefits to human experience that were previously undocumented and likely undervalued.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Jill Pable is a professor in the Interior Architecture and Design Department at Florida State University and a fellow and past national president of the Interior Design Educators Council. She holds B.S. and M.F.A. degrees in Interior Design and a Ph.D. degree in Instructional Technology with specialization in architecture. Her research focuses on the design of environments for the disadvantaged and she is the originator of the *Design Resources for Homelessness* initiative, a research-informed non-profit online information source for architectural designers and organizations creating environments for people recovering from homelessness. She is the author and co-author respectively of *Sketching Interiors at the Speed of Thought* and *Interior Design: Strategies for Teaching and Learning* and was included in the DesignIntelligence list of 30 Most Admired Design Educators in the United States in 2015. She believes that design can make life more interesting, fulfilling and humane.