



Pathways Out of Homelessness

R E G I O N A L S T U D Y 2 0 1 1

Prepared by CitySpaces Consulting for Metro Vancouver & BC Housing



This research study was undertaken and authored by Noha Sedky, Katherine Lambert and Brenda McBain of CitySpaces Consulting Ltd. The research and recommendations are the responsibility of the authors of the report and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Homelessness Partnering Secretariat.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research team would like to thank the individuals that generously contributed their time to participate in this research study. Individuals who had experienced homelessness and were now successfully housed were gracious enough to share some of their stories and experiences with us. Outreach workers from agencies throughout Metro Vancouver took the time to tell us about their techniques, challenges and successes. Their insights and reflections are greatly appreciated.

This study is a first step towards understanding the success factors that enabled homeless people to maintain their housing. The idea behind this research was developed by staff at the Homelessness Secretariat of Metro Vancouver jointly with BC Housing. The research provides a solid foundation upon which future studies can build, thereby advancing our collective understanding of the solutions to homelessness.

BC Housing provided aggregated data from the Homelessness Services System and staff contributed by providing ongoing review and expertise throughout the study.

Special thanks need to be given to the external reviewers, which include Sam Bradd from the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities and Lindsay Milburn from the Seniors Services Society.

This project received funding from the Homelessness Partnering Secretariat, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
Research Overview	1
Key Findings	1
Conclusions & Recommendations	2
SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION	4
Overview	4
Review of Relevant Research	4
SECTION 2 - RESEARCH METHODS AND TOOLS	7
Approach	7
Research Tools	8
Service Provider Interviews	8
Client Interviews	8
Homelessness Services Database.....	10
Study Limitations	10
SECTION 3 - THE FINDINGS	11
Primary Research Questions	11
Client Groups	14
Outreach Approaches.....	16
SECTION 4 - CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS	20
Conclusions	20
What are the key success factors?	20
Are some housing options better than others?.....	21
What is the role of support services?	22
Recommendations.....	22
Further Research	24
SECTION 5 - APPENDICES	25
Appendix A — Summary Report: Service Provider Interview Results.....	27
Appendix B — Summary Report: Client Interview Results.....	41
Appendix C — Homelessness Services Database Results	51
Appendix D — Interview Guides.....	61
Appendix E — Research Consent Form	67
Appendix F — Frequently Asked Questions.....	69
Appendix G — List of Documents & Reports	73
Appendix H — List of Participating Service Provider Agencies	77
Appendix I — Homeless Outreach Programs - Framework	79

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Homelessness work has been greatly enriched in recent years by the work of homeless outreach providers. The Pathways Out of Homelessness research study considers the post-homelessness situation of individuals housed through one of BC Housing's homelessness services programs — the Homeless Outreach Program, the Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program and the Emergency Shelter Program. The research was commissioned by Metro Vancouver, in partnership with BC Housing.

The study seeks to identify the key factors influencing the housing successes of people who were formerly homeless and those who maintained housing for six months or more. To answer this question, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in an attempt to understand what worked well for people and what were the main challenges they had to overcome.

The main data sources included key-informant interviews with service providers, key-informant interviews with formerly homeless clients, and aggregate level client data by municipality/sub region from the Homelessness Services System. In total, the research team conducted 23 interviews with outreach workers and 37 interviews with clients from throughout Metro Vancouver.

A number of client groups were under-represented in the research, including women, young clients and Aboriginal clients. Future research that focuses on these groups has been suggested.

KEY FINDINGS

The findings represent a synthesis of the results from each of the three components of the research — the interviews with service providers, the interviews with clients, and the analysis of the client data from the homelessness services database.

- The top housing challenge was affordability or finding housing that was appropriate for a client and was priced at rent levels that clients could afford.
- Other than the affordability challenge, the housing barriers vary from client to client and are directly dependent on the personal circumstances of each individual. As such, being client-centred and responsive to each client's particular needs was seen to be a critical aspect of outreach workers' approach.
- The main success factors in maintaining housing were found to be:
 - *Affordable and appropriate housing* — Finding a way to overcome the affordability challenge, most often by getting into social housing, finding suitable shared accommodation, or using a rent supplement.
 - *Access to support services* — Clients having access to regular support services that respond to their particular and personal needs. For some clients, this might be occasional contact and assistance; for others, it might involve frequent and intensive levels of support.

- *A commitment to pursue personal goals* — The conscious choice made on the part of the client to address the barriers to housing that had previously prevented them from staying housed. In other words, clients' willingness to accept support and begin pursuing their personal goals.
 - *Positive relationships and a community support network* — Having positive relationships and support from outreach workers and other individuals whom they trust. Also, having ties to other individuals, friends or family members with whom clients can connect on a regular basis gives clients a sense of belonging to a community.
 - *Other housing considerations* — Clients feeling safe and secure in their housing; finding housing that is of a reasonable quality and condition; and getting along with a room-mate and landlord. Having a place that feels like home also makes a big difference for clients.
 - *Access to rent supplements* — Rent supplements create flexibility in how the outreach workers provide support to their clients and makes housing options available that might not have otherwise been available.
- Each outreach worker and team applies different techniques and strategies to working with clients and landlords. Highlights of those approaches that have been most effective include:
 - Being client-centred
 - Flexibility and resourcefulness
 - Maintaining a good relationship with landlords
 - Matching clients to the right housing
 - Trying to address issues quickly before they become a crisis
 - Being accessible to clients or making sure that clients have the right supports in place

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Homelessness services providers have evolved considerably in recent years, from agencies that provide temporary assistance in the form of food and shelter to agencies that connect homeless individuals to the right mix of housing and support services. It can be concluded that homeless outreach work is in itself a large part of the success story. Beyond housing, homeless outreach providers and funders have recognized the fundamental role of support services and having a supportive environment in clients' successful exit out of homelessness.

The study makes a number of recommendations that are intended to support this role of homelessness service providers and to build on the successes described in the research. They include:

- *Recognition that outreach work is homeless prevention work.* Consideration of how the role of outreach services has evolved and how best to support this type of homelessness prevention work moving forward.

- *Continue to provide rent supplements.* An enabler for outreach workers, it is important to continue to support this tool and to enhance it by expanding and clarifying the guidelines of their use.¹
- *Continue to build the capacity of the outreach teams.* This could include:
 - Providing financial or technical support to facilitate regular meetings between outreach workers at a regional level.
 - Supporting the preparation and dissemination of rental listings and other housing resources.
 - Consider ways to provide professional support to individual workers, working in small outreach teams.
 - Facilitate and encourage access to skills training and knowledge-sharing opportunities for outreach teams.²
- *Support efforts towards gaining an adequate income.* Establishing the resources by which outreach workers can assist clients to gain access to additional income support or employment opportunities.
- *Consider establishing minimum housing standards.* It is important to investigate the problem of substandard housing in the region.

¹ Guidelines were recently added to the HOP/AHOP program framework.

² BC Housing hosts a semi-annual meeting for HOP/AHOP providers. In addition to working with emergency shelter providers, Shelter Net BC can now make its programs available to HOP/AHOP providers.

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

CitySpaces Consulting was commissioned by Metro Vancouver, in partnership with BC Housing, to undertake a research study on the pathways out of homelessness in Metro Vancouver. The study aimed to gain a better understanding of the outcomes and factors that influence successful housing for the homeless in the Metro Vancouver region.

The research focused on individuals who were housed with the assistance of front line staff or outreach workers from one of the homelessness services programs in BC, with the main research question being:

For those who were housed and were able to stay housed for six months or longer, what were the factors that contributed to their success in maintaining their housing?

In essence, the study attempted to understand what worked well for people and what the challenges were. Additional research questions included:

- * Which housing and service delivery models have been most effective at assisting individuals to stay housed?
- * To what extent does the availability of support services assist individuals to successfully stay housed?
- * What types of support services do people need in order to succeed in long term housing?

To answer these questions, three main data sources were used:

- Key-informant interviews with service providers;
- Key-informant interviews with formerly homeless clients; and
- Aggregate level client data by municipality/sub region from the Homelessness Services database.

It was envisioned that this combination of qualitative data (based on the key-informant interviews) and quantitative data (from the Homelessness Services Database) would inform the work that homelessness services providers were doing throughout the region. It would provide a picture of the individuals that have been successful, confirm what the key contributors were to this success, and, ultimately, provide some insight and lessons from the approaches that have been effective that could be shared across the agencies.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT RESEARCH

To inform the research methodology and development of the research instruments, a background review of documents and studies was undertaken, as well as meetings with researchers involved with similar projects. This section summarizes the findings from this review.

Research Papers & Reports

A comprehensive literature review was beyond the scope of this study. However, a set of international research studies and reports were reviewed by the research team, mostly research from Australia and Europe. These provided insights into the relevant or comparable programs and interventions in practice in different parts of the developed world and the range of factors and considerations affecting people's housing experience. As the team developed its research tools and finalized the methodology, this document review provided some useful insight into the types of research questions and approaches implemented elsewhere.

Based on the background review, a number of observations and considerations for the Pathways study were identified:

- There is very limited longitudinal information on successful exits from homelessness.
- Pathways out of homelessness were influenced by how individuals got into homelessness to begin with and what type of homelessness they experienced (chronic, long-term, situational).
- Pathways out of homelessness need to be seen in the overall context of preventing homelessness, addressing the needs of individuals and families that are at-risk of becoming homeless, remaining in homelessness or reverting back to homelessness.
- Other research studies on the pathways out of homelessness identified the following success factors:
 - Developing a relationship of trust between key support staff and the client is essential.
 - The quality and type of housing is a critical consideration, as is housing affordability and availability.
 - Support services are crucial to successfully sustaining housing and support must be practical, integrated and client-centred.
 - The availability of different levels of service and support helps support workers to respond more effectively to the specific and changing needs of each client.
 - Integration of services is key to facilitating access and assisting clients to navigate the system of services.
 - Having an adequate income is a prerequisite to success.
 - Networks of familiarity and community relationships are important.
 - Early intervention is key to successfully exiting homelessness. There is a greater complexity for clients who have been homeless for a long time.
 - For the Aboriginal population, culturally-appropriate services are needed.
 - Working with landlords and problem solving on behalf of clients are key aspects of client support.
- Some of the barriers to successful housing identified included:
 - Inadequate stock of appropriate and affordable housing.

- Limited availability of support services or funding for clients to access support services.
- Lack of specific services for youth and individuals with mental health or addictions issues.
- Other interesting findings included:
 - The perception of what “home” is will differ for men and women.
 - Implementing a case management approach has been effective at establishing longer term relationships, facilitating access to services, and assisting clients to pursue their personal goals.
 - The four primary areas attributed to people’s successful exit out of homelessness were found to be: housing, income, being in good health and supports.

Appendix G includes the list of documents and reports that were reviewed.

Research Initiatives

The team contacted individuals representing four research initiatives, currently under way in BC, that are considering different aspects of homelessness services, the effectiveness of those services and factors of success. Key findings from this background review include:

- Several organizations have been working collaboratively to amass and correlate client-specific information across multiple agencies through the Homeless Integration Project. This has been a complex and labour-intensive process. The *Pathways* study will not have the benefit of this level of data detail or integration.
- Other reports, namely the Greater Victoria Report on Housing and Supports, provided a summary of client statistics from the Homelessness Services Database. The *Pathways* study would benefit by including the same variables for Metro Vancouver and selected sub-regions as had been included in this report.
- Another research study focuses on effective homeless outreach practices in communities of various sizes throughout BC. Outreach models and approaches are referred to in the *Pathways* study as one of the factors for client success. However, this is only addressed in a preliminary way. This ongoing study, which is scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2011, will provide a greater level of depth and analysis regarding homeless outreach work.

SECTION 2 - RESEARCH METHODS AND TOOLS

APPROACH

The *Pathways Out of Homelessness* research study considered the post-homelessness situation of individuals housed through homelessness services programs in BC. Specifically, the research focused on:

- Individuals housed by one of the three homelessness service programs in BC — Homeless Outreach Program (HOP), Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program (AHOP) or the Emergency Shelter Program (ESP).³
- Service providers located in Metro Vancouver.
- Individuals continually housed for six months or longer (in one or more places).

The objective of the research was to examine the success and context factors behind people's housing experience. The study considered the housing outcomes for the subject group and which of the following factors were strongly connected to their ability to stay housed:

- *Demographic profile* — the age, sex and Aboriginal identity of clients.
- *Health status* — namely mental health and addictions issues, as well as physical health and wellbeing.
- *Type of housing* — the housing form and structure type, in other words, an apartment, suite in a house, single room occupancy hotel unit, social housing or recovery home.
- *Shared accommodation* — whether the client lived alone, had a room-mate, or shared a place with family or friends.
- *Affordability and suitability of housing* — the availability of housing that was appropriate to clients' circumstances and income levels.
- *Housing conditions* — the quality and condition of the suite or unit where clients were housed.
- *Type and level of support services* — the range of services made available to clients, such as counselling, meal programs, clinical support, and the intensity or frequency of needing those services.
- *Social connectedness* — the presence of positive social networks and community relationships.
- *Employment and income source* — having an adequate source of income, additional income supports and/or the capacity to work.

³ The qualitative research did not include individuals housed directly by ESP staff. The interviews only included outreach workers and clients of the two homeless outreach programs. However, the quantitative research (analysis of the client data from the homelessness services database) included information about clients housed by all three homelessness programs. An overview of the program framework for each of the two homeless outreach programs has been included in Appendix I.

RESEARCH TOOLS

There were three main components to the research:

- * **Key-informant interviews with service providers**
Interviews conducted with front line service workers and outreach workers who assisted homeless individuals to stay successfully housed for six months or more.
- * **Key-informant interviews with formerly homeless clients**
Interviews conducted with formerly homeless individuals who had been housed for six months or more.
- * **Aggregate level client data at a regional and sub-regional level**
Client data for individuals housed in 2009/2010 from BC Housing's Homelessness Services Database.

The key-informant interviews were designed to produce qualitative data which would give a more in-depth picture of people's experiences with finding and maintaining housing. This would supplement the quantitative results available through the Homelessness Services Database. Two sets of interview guides were developed and tested — one for outreach workers and the other for clients who were successfully housed. The interview guides can be found in Appendix D.

An overview of the three research components and the approach undertaken is presented in this section.

Service Provider Interviews

A total of 23 interviews were conducted with outreach workers from 17 service provider agencies across Metro Vancouver. The agencies, which were dispersed throughout the region, represent the majority of agencies providing homeless outreach services in Metro Vancouver. They work with different client groups and have a range of approaches to service delivery. Only a small number could not be reached.

The interviews were semi-structured in nature, using a set of questions to guide the discussion with the outreach workers. Most of the outreach workers were generous with their time, not only to complete a 45 to 60 minute interview, but also to assist the research team to connect with a number of their clients who fit the research criteria (namely those formerly homeless individuals that received assistance from the HOP or AHOP programs and had been housed for six months or more). On several occasions, however, the scheduled interviews were postponed due to a crisis or other client priority that the outreach team members needed to attend to.

The complete summary of the interviews with service providers is included in Appendix A.

Client Interviews

The research team completed 37 interviews with clients of ten service provider agencies. To reach clients, the research team relied on the service provider contacts to make the connection with individuals who fit the research criteria. The outreach workers were asked to identify two to five clients. Typically, they identified individuals who they knew well and/or connect with on a regular basis. Sometimes, they asked clients to participate who happened to be coming into the office to receive a rent supplement cheque or had another matter to address.

Client interviews were held at outreach offices or other locations and usually took between 20 and 30 minutes. They were short and conversational in nature, engaging clients in a relatively informal way. Individual clients were asked to sign a research consent form. However, each client was assured that their anonymity would be maintained. At the end of the interview with clients, a \$10 voucher to Tim Hortons was presented as a thank you gift.

Originally, it was expected that the outreach workers would have to conduct some of the interviews directly, because of client sensitivities about discussing their recent history with homelessness. However, this was not the case. All the interviews were conducted by members of the research team. In some cases, the outreach workers sat in on the interviews and observed, but most of the time, they did not participate so that clients would be unbiased in their responses.⁴

When compared to all individuals housed through these programs (through the homelessness services database), the sample of clients interviewed had some notable distinctions.⁵

- Among the individuals interviewed, 84 percent were men and 16 percent were women. This reflects a greater proportion of men compared to the total client base in Metro Vancouver where 69 percent were men and 31 percent were women.
- While the age categories do not allow for a direct comparison, there was an over representation of older adults among those interviewed. To illustrate, 40% of the interviewed clients were over 50 years old compared to 13 percent of total clients who were over 55 years. Similarly, three percent of the clients interviewed were under 29 years of age and yet seven percent were under 24 among the entire database of clients.
- There was a smaller proportion of interviewed clients with a self-reported Aboriginal identity (16 percent) compared to the total client base, where 24 percent had an Aboriginal identity.
- Individuals housed in secondary suites (27 percent) and social/supported housing (32 percent) seem to have been particularly well represented among the interviewed clients. Among all clients housed, five percent were housed in secondary suites and 13 percent in social/supported housing. Variations in the housing form may in part be attributed to different interpretations of the housing types by different outreach workers throughout the region.

The client interviews thereby represent a sample of clients that under represents women, younger clients and Aboriginal clients. For this reason, future research may consider focusing on these particular groups. The complete summary of the interviews with clients is included in Appendix B.

⁴ For future research, it is suggested that the outreach workers participate in the interviews, allowing both the client and the outreach worker to respond to the questions about finding and maintaining housing. This would enrich the responses overall, but also allow the outreach worker to clarify some of the specifics around income source, rent and housing form which the client might not always be able to answer. Towards the end of the interview, the outreach workers could be asked to leave to allow the client to openly speak about the support they received from the outreach team.

⁵ Data from the Homelessness Services System was based on 2009/2010 client information, whereas the interviews conducted as part of this research study were completed between December 2010 and February 2011.

Homelessness Services Database

BC Housing provided a summary of client information reported by outreach workers in Metro Vancouver and compiled in the Homelessness Services System database. The data set includes a summary of the statistics for clients housed through HOP, AHOP and ESP during the 2009/2010 fiscal year.

The main variables included in the database were gender, age, Aboriginal identity, health status, the housing form in which the clients were housed, and municipality/sub region. Based on a sample of clients, the data set also included the demographic information of those who were *still housed* after a six month follow up. The *still housed* sample of clients does not include individuals who refused follow up or who could not be contacted. It includes only those clients whose housing status was verified by the outreach providers and may or may not be completely representative of the entire client base.

Overall, this data provides a snapshot of the client base that was successfully housed through one of the three homelessness services programs. It serves to supplement the mainly qualitative interview results with quantitative data and provides an overall understanding of the client demographics and other variables that may affect client success.

The complete set of tables and figures summarizing this data set are presented in Appendix C.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

This research study was completed within a five month period between October 2010 and March 2011. On account of the short time frame, the research had a very specific focus.

- The research presents a point-in-time account of the housing status of clients housed through the homelessness services programs and includes clients who have been housed for at least six months.
- A number of groups were under represented in the client interview portion of this study, specifically, women, youth and Aboriginal clients. Interests and perspectives that are unique to these groups may therefore be under-reported in the results.
- While previous research reported on challenges associated with housing couples and families, the factors affecting these groups were not specifically identified as part of this study.⁶
- The design of this research study did not allow for “length of homelessness” to be fully considered in this analysis. This was seen to be an important factor in previous research studies.
- The line of interview questions that dealt with support services did not differentiate between support services that clients received directly as part of their housing arrangements (through supportive housing or mobile support team) and support services that clients were able to connect with on their own or with the assistance of the outreach worker. As such, this study cannot describe the impact of integrated support services compared to having access to a broad base of support services through traditional referrals and community service links.

⁶ CitySpaces Consulting. 2007. *Vancouver Homeless Outreach Project: Evaluation Report & Provincial Homeless Outreach Program: Evaluation Report.*

SECTION 3 - THE FINDINGS

The following section includes a synthesis of the findings from each of three components of the research — the interviews with service providers, interviews with clients and the analysis of the client data from the homelessness services database.

PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What were the key challenges faced by clients as they try to maintain their housing?

One of the critical findings is that the housing barriers vary from client to client and are directly dependent on the personal circumstances of each individual. On the whole, however, the top challenge was usually related to poverty or housing affordability. That is, the housing that was available in the market was priced at rents that the clients could not afford and/or it was not appropriate to their personal needs or family situation.

To compensate for this, some individuals had to share housing with room-mates they did not get along with; moved into units that were of low quality; or had less income every month to spend on food or other basic needs. These less than ideal housing situations made it more difficult for clients to maintain their housing over the long term. Following that, the most common compounding factors were mental health issues, addictions and other behaviour-related issues which all contributed to the difficulties faced by clients in maintaining housing.

What are the key factors that helped homeless clients to stay housed?

In 2009/2010, there were approximately 4,000 records of clients housed in Metro Vancouver through the agencies providing homelessness services. Among the group whose housing status was verified after six months, 77 percent were still housed. One of the central questions of this study is to identify the factors that enabled this high ratio of clients to be successful. The main success factors were found to be:

- *Affordable and appropriate housing* — Finding a way to overcome the affordability challenge, most often by getting into social housing, finding suitable shared accommodation, or using a rent supplement.
- *Access to support services* — Clients having access to regular support services that respond to their particular and personal needs. For some clients, this might be occasional contact and assistance; for others, it might involve frequent and intensive levels of support.
- *A commitment to pursue personal goals* — The conscious choice made on the part of the client to address the barriers to housing that had previously prevented them from staying housed. In other words, clients' willingness to accept support and begin pursuing their personal goals.
- *Positive relationships and a community support network* — Having positive relationships and support from outreach workers and other individuals whom they trust. Also, having ties to other individuals, friends or family members with whom clients can connect on a regular basis gives clients a sense of belonging to a community.

Which housing forms were more effective at assisting people to stay housed?

To answer this question, it is important to consider the types of housing where clients of the homelessness services programs have been housed and where they have successfully stayed housed, as determined from the Homelessness Services System.

- The majority of clients (62 percent) were housed in private market housing, such as in an apartment, single room occupancy hotel unit, sharing a room in a house or in a secondary suite. Among these clients, there was a high propensity for them to stay housed in one of these private market options.
- Thirteen percent of all clients were housed in subsidized housing, such as social or supported housing. Among the clients still housed, 21 percent were living in this housing form, showing a greater likelihood that clients would stay in social or supported housing over time.
- Among those who moved into a recovery home or treatment centre, which would have been inherently transitional in nature, it was less likely that they would have stayed in this housing form after six months.

Overall, then, it can be said that there was a strong propensity for clients to stay housed in all forms of private market housing. There was, however, an even greater likelihood that clients would stay housed in social or supported housing. This is to be expected as social housing is available at the lowest rent levels, rents that households on income assistance can afford. Supported housing has the potential to provide additional housing stability in that each building includes 24-hour staffing and various levels of tenant support; this has not been verified.

There are other housing-related factors that are important to consider in terms of clients' housing stability.

- **Safety and Security** — Feeling safe and secure in their housing was an important consideration. Several of the clients living in downtown SROs reported that they did not feel particularly safe in their buildings because of certain activities in the building, such as overt substance use. In those cases where respondents felt that the housing unit was not of a reasonable standard, safe or suitable, clients and outreach workers reported that the unit was simply a means to an end. It was an interim step to finding better housing in the future.
- **Poor Housing Quality** — A concerning finding was the amount of poor quality housing that outreach workers (and clients) were accessing. There were numerous descriptions cited of buildings in disrepair, vermin, heating issues or other sub-standard conditions. Both clients and outreach workers accepted these situations as an alternative to living on the street. It was reported that these options were considered interim options until, hopefully, a better option could be identified.
- **Suitable Room-Mates and Landlords** — Getting along with a room-mate and/or the landlord was a key factor affecting people's sense of privacy and comfort at home and whether they wanted to maintain their housing over the long term.

What is the role for support services in assisting individuals to successfully stay housed?

It was reported that many clients not only rely heavily on the outreach worker or outreach team to find the housing and move into the housing, but then also, in many cases, to continue maintaining their housing. For many clients, part of the success story is having regular support from outreach workers or some other form of constant support.

The level and type of support required varies from client to client. For some, the support may involve very infrequent intervention related to an emergency or crisis situation, while for others it could involve multiple phone calls per week to allow a client to vent or connect with someone they trust. For many clients, the support is related to meeting basic needs, where an outreach worker helps a client to access the food banks or meal programs that help close the gap between their income and rent and food costs.

Outreach teams rely heavily on local community service agencies, in particular, agencies that provide food or household goods; mental health and addictions workers/teams; legal aid and advocacy groups; police or bylaw officers; transition houses and women's programs; employment and training programs among others.

Are there additional factors or considerations that are critical to individuals' housing success?

There were a number additional factors identified that form part of people's collective success stories:

- **Rent Supplements** — Outreach workers were emphatic in their statements regarding the role of rent supplements. While not all clients access rent supplements, they create flexibility in how the outreach workers provide support to their clients and makes housing options available that might not have otherwise been available. While rent supplements are used as transition funds for many clients, there are other clients who are expected to need the subsidy over the long term. The rent supplements had additional benefits in that they facilitated a regular (monthly) contact with the clients who received them and have also been used as a one-off grant to respond to a problem or crisis. Many of the clients whose rents exceeded \$375 per month were relying on a rent supplement in order to access housing in the private market. There was concern and anxiety among those clients about the possibility of losing the rent supplement.
- **Relationships & Social Connectedness** — Positive relationships and a community support network helps to create a sense of belonging and a feeling that other people care for the clients. Having a network also means that a client will have someone they can call to be by their side. This can be valuable in terms of preventing or managing a crisis that may have led to an individual losing their housing.
- **A Place That Feels Like Home** — The majority of clients interviewed (73%) reported that their apartment or suite felt like their home. These respondents reflected on the level of security or privacy that they felt in their units and the ability to keep pets or put pictures up on the walls. Those who set up furniture and household items (with or without the help of outreach workers) said that their place felt like a home. Having a good relationship with a landlord or room mate

seemed to be connected to this sense of feeling like it is home. It was reported to make a big difference when clients were “content” with their place.

CLIENT GROUPS

Are there factors and considerations that are unique to particular groups of clients?

Female Clients

Less than one third of total clients housed in 2009/2010 were women (31 percent). This is similar to (if not slightly greater than) the share of women counted among the total homeless population in Metro Vancouver in 2008 (27 percent). With only 16 percent of clients interviewed being women, women were under-represented as part of this study. However, a number of considerations and factors that specifically influence women’s pathways out of homelessness can be noted.

- The literature cites some of the reasons for women’s homelessness as including: “domestic violence, relationship breakdown, financial difficulties, eviction or ending accommodation.”⁷ In addition, women often have lower levels of participation in the labour force and familial responsibilities that are seen as compounding factors. To respond to this situation, women may need assistance in terms of learning how to navigate government agencies; managing their own finances and other life skills. This type of capacity building is reported to help women to better manage to live independently.⁸
- In addition to the above, having good relationships with extended family and/or support workers is important. Also, access to the right mix of support services and being in a supportive community environment are important in helping clients to maintain their housing. In particular, access to counselling, mental health services, employment and training services. Where there are issues with past relationships or abuse, outreach workers will assist women by connecting them with women’s centres and other women’s only services.
- In terms of the housing form or model, one of the main considerations for women is safety, security and privacy. The ability to close their doors and feel safe within a building is important, but also, the neighbourhood or location is a consideration. For example, one woman who was living in social housing in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside reported that she never goes out at night.

Older Clients

Compared to the total homeless population, where 9.5 percent of the population was over 55 years of age, there was a greater proportion of older clients (13 percent) housed by one of the homelessness services programs. This research study had a strong representation of older clients, with 40% of those interviewed over 50 years of age.

- Both the outreach workers and clients indicated that older adults may require long-term and, often, more intensive support. For many, it was their old age and declining physical conditions that led them to accepting the help of an outreach worker. Due to a range of age-related factors, for many clients it was reported to be too difficult for them to stay outside. For the

⁷ AHURI. 2003. *Women, Housing and Transitions*.

⁸ Casey, S. 2002. *Snakes and Ladders*.

elderly homeless, as well as individuals with physical disabilities, one of the challenges is finding housing that is ground-oriented, or otherwise accessible.

- Food is another important consideration for older clients as it becomes more difficult for older adults to seek out soup kitchens and line ups. One of the more critical types of assistance becomes getting help with groceries, food bank boxes or finding other ways to get daily nutritious meals.
- In many cases, older clients will often be dealing with a range of physical health issues, often alongside mental health and addictions. In these situations, the complexity of the individual's situation will warrant more intensive and multi-faceted support services.
- For this group of clients, the potential for future employment is less likely. As such, having a steady source of income in the form of disability assistance or pension is more critical. One of the important roles for outreach workers is trying to link clients with advocacy workers or others who can help with the necessary applications and procedures to apply for this level of income assistance. In the interim, outreach workers attempt to bridge clients' income needs by supporting them with groceries or other basic assistance.

Younger Clients

- Of all the clients housed in 2009/2010, seven percent were under 24 years which is comparable to the percentage of the total homeless population that was under 24 (9 percent). While this group was under-served, it was noted that younger clients face different set of challenges in terms of finding and keeping housing. For one, there can be a stigma towards young people that makes it more difficult for them to get housing. Many landlords hesitate to rent units to young people in anticipation of noise and parties. This is an even greater factor in suburban municipalities, where young clients are looking for market rentals in residential neighbourhoods.
- For young people, the focus on education, employment and training programs becomes more important. Income assistance is anticipated to support young people through a transition period until they are able to identify the next steps in their life. At the same time, young people may not be ready or have the skills to live independently, making it more difficult to manage their housing on their own. For young people, building positive relationships may also involve re-connecting with family or developing trusting relationships with support workers.
- In summary, supports for young people will focus on creating employment and training opportunities, gaining the right mix of life skills, building positive relationships and re-building family connections.

Aboriginal Clients

Almost one third of the total homeless population in Metro Vancouver were found to be Aboriginal (32 percent) compared to only 24 percent of the total client records for individuals housed by the homelessness services programs. It should be noted that the Aboriginal identity field in the Homelessness Services System database was not mandatory prior to February 2011.

Among the clients interviewed, Aboriginal individuals were under-represented with only 16 percent of clients reporting an Aboriginal identity. Based on the interviews with this small sample of clients, but also with outreach workers, it was reported that Aboriginal clients face additional complications:

- Once housed, many Aboriginal clients find that members of their family or extended family will choose to come and live with them. As they are usually housed in one or two-bedroom units through the private market, this can create tensions with the landlord and can also lead to evictions.
- It was also reported that it is not uncommon for Aboriginal clients to feel that they are not deserving of housing or do not have the basic life skills to be able to maintain their housing. As such, building a client's confidence and capacity to manage independently would need to be a priority focus. This could involve lifeskills training, cultural and community re-integration and establishing positive relationships.

Situational Homeless

Several outreach workers noted that a large number of their clients were individuals who had lost their jobs or housing, possibly because of mental health or addictions, but also because of the economy or other unique set of circumstances. This was particularly evident in the less urban areas, such as in Maple Ridge or Langley. Many of these clients had the capacity to manage largely on their own, often with a rent subsidy and other minor interventions.

OUTREACH APPROACHES

Working within the program framework of the HOP and AHOP programs, each outreach worker and outreach team has developed their own approach to undertaking homeless outreach work. (See Appendix I for the outreach program frameworks). Studying the different types of homeless outreach practice was not the subject of this study, but it is recognized that the way that these teams work with homeless clients is in itself a critical factor of client success. It also serves to set the context within which the services were provided.⁹

- **Team Size** — The outreach workers typically work as part of a team of two, three or four people. A handful of agencies have an outreach worker that works alone, who must then rely more heavily on the support of other staff or outreach teams. It was evident that the one-person teams were burdened by the heavy caseload, lack of support and the emotional weight of not being able to adequately respond to client needs.
- **Case Load** — The active case loads range from 20 to 100 clients at any given time. On average, however, the outreach teams reported having approximately 500 clients in their database. Increasing case loads was a concern as some clients require a lot of ongoing support and the case load size never declines. As total client numbers increase over time, each of the teams' active case load inevitably also increases.
- **Urban Versus Less Urban** — In the more urban areas, such as Vancouver or Surrey, where there are multiple teams, there is a greater division of labour and variation in the outreach models. For example, one team might focus primarily on intake and finding housing for

⁹ A study is under way by Eberle and Associates that focuses on effective homeless outreach practices in BC communities of varying sizes. The study is anticipated to be completed by the end of June 2011.

people. Some teams might include staff with specific training on mental health work or family services and are better able to respond to the needs of clients with those issues. Equally, the teams may refer clients to each other. In less urban areas, such as Port Coquitlam or Langley, the teams are often the only resource available and they have a greater breadth of tasks.

- AHOP versus HOP — There are two AHOP teams working in Metro Vancouver, each with one worker per agency. These service agencies have chosen to work closely with one another. One of their considerations is the importance of making connections to culturally appropriate services. In fact, the AHOP teams are mandated to refer 60% of Aboriginal clients to at least one culturally appropriate service. This does not officially limit the range of services that AHOP staff can make referrals to, however, it was reported by the outreach workers that they find this requirement limiting.

What are the approaches for assisting homeless individuals to find suitable housing?

Different outreach teams had different approaches to finding housing for clients. In the less urban communities, the teams relied heavily on accessing private market housing such as secondary suites or apartments. In the Downtown Eastside, SROs were an important housing source, as were the social housing buildings that are managed by BC Housing.

- The techniques applied to finding housing reflected the type of housing available in the community at the time as well as the particular needs of the client. Since outreach workers' have a client-centred approach to their work, they would identify the needs of the client as the first step in the housing search. Craigslist.com and other online rental listing providers were typically used to find housing. This was a main source in the suburban communities.
- In some cases, the outreach worker played a direct role, contacting property managers and landlords they know, helping connect clients with possible room mates as well as assistance with moving and making arrangements for direct payment to the landlord. In other cases, the client may have been better suited to making the contact directly. Outreach workers may have then provided the recent rental listings and left the client to make direct landlord contact.
- Several clients moved a number of times before they settled on a place that they were satisfied with. The ability to successfully transition from one accommodation to another, without losing their housing, was often attributed to the help of the outreach worker or other support worker. The other central feature was access to a rent supplement that gave the clients additional flexibility in selecting alternative housing options and made available some units at market rents, such as basement suites or older apartments.

What are the follow up strategies commonly used by outreach workers?

Half the outreach teams reported that they would regularly follow up with clients, but each organization seemed to have a different approach to this. Many reported that they do not do as much follow up with clients as they would like to do because of their heavy case loads and regular intake work with new outreach clients. On the whole, it seems as though the majority of clients that need regular support contact the outreach teams directly, by dropping in to the office, phoning or emailing. Many outreach workers make regular visits to the drop-in centres and community service agencies where they can connect with their clients who frequent these places. Less often, an

outreach worker may make direct visits to selected buildings where they have multiple clients. See some of the outreach workers' suggested strategies in the box below.

Following Up With Clients - Tips & Suggestions

- Set up an email account and show clients how to use it so you can easily keep in contact.
- Go to local agencies that your clients frequent regularly, such as the food bank, drop-in centre or club house.
- Where multiple clients are in one building, get in touch with the landlord to find out how clients are doing.
- When you are in the neighbourhood, make a point to stop in and check on clients.
- Give clients a rent supplement. They will have to meet you every month to receive the cheque.
- Make a point to follow up with every client after six months.

What strategies for working with landlords are commonly used by outreach workers?

Working with landlords and building a good relationship with landlords is a common technique used by outreach workers. This is often seen to be useful in not only helping clients get into housing, but also helping them to stay housed. Some outreach workers have a group of landlords or property managers with whom they work on a regular basis. There was quite a lot of emphasis on maintaining a good relationship with these landlords. The main techniques for building trust with landlords include: matching clients to the right housing, being honest with landlords, and trying to address issues quickly before they become a crisis.

Working with Landlords - Tips & Suggestions

- Stop in to say hi when visiting a client.
- Give them your card and encourage them to call.
- Always answer a call from a landlord.
- Establish a relationship with landlord so client won't get evicted until after landlord has spoken to outreach worker.
- Getting one good client into a building helps to establish a good relationship.
- Repair bridges quickly if a client screws up.
- Have clients observe interactions with landlord so the client understands the importance of living up to the reputation established by the outreach team.
- Try to match clients and housing as best you can so that landlord does not have any surprises.

What techniques are most effective in terms of providing support to outreach clients?

In many cases, it was evident that the outreach teams relied on their intuition and people skills to assess how much or how little support a client needed and the best course of action that is needed for each individual.

- Being Client-Centred — Most outreach workers recognize that each client has a unique set of needs and circumstances. The appropriate mix of housing and supports need to be tailored to each individual. This ability to be client-centred is one of the most important aspects of outreach work.
- Flexibility and Resourcefulness — Outreach workers have a wealth of experience and insight into the best approaches and techniques for working with homeless individuals, helping them to find housing, dealing with crises and managing the expectations of clients and landlords. They are creative in their use of existing tools and community resources. Some outreach workers are particularly good at doing this work. It is valuable for these strengths and approaches to be passed on to new outreach workers over time, ensuring there is continuity and consistency across the region.

Supporting Clients - Tips & Suggestions

- Establish an honest and trusting relationship with the client.
- Use a client-centred approach. Work collaboratively with the client to identify their specific needs.
- Be available. Set up a regular and consistent way of communicating with clients, e.g. email and cell phone.
- Get informed about local resources and service providers. Attend inter-agency meetings.
- Pass on information and resources to clients that best respond to their needs and goals.
- Help clients to make the connections to other agencies and support workers that will help them to achieve their goals.
- Encourage clients to volunteer as a way of building social connections.
- Encourage clients to reconnect with friends and family, where appropriate.

SECTION 4 - CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

In British Columbia, homelessness work has been greatly enriched in recent years by the work that emergency shelter and homeless outreach providers are doing. Homelessness services providers have evolved considerably, from agencies that provided temporary assistance in the form of food and shelter to agencies that connect homeless individuals to the right mix of housing and support services. Beyond housing (or shelter), it has become widely accepted that providing access to support services is essential in helping homeless individuals to address their personal problems and pursue their life goals.

This study considers the role of homeless outreach services, in particular, and its relationship to people's housing successes. It attempts to identify *what is working well* and *what is working less well* by examining the experiences and the challenges facing the formerly homeless and their outreach workers.

One of the main conclusions is evident. It is that homeless outreach work is in itself a large part of the success story. The effectiveness of homeless outreach practices are the subject of another study. However, it is evident that homeless outreach providers have recognized the fundamental role of support services and a supportive environment as an essential part of the pathways out of homelessness. Outreach services begin by helping individuals to exit homelessness. In order for the now formerly homeless individuals to maintain their housing, they require continued support at varying levels of intensity. At this point, outreach services become homelessness prevention services.

What are the key success factors?

The most significant conclusion of the study is that access to safe, affordable, appropriate housing is the key ingredient to success for people who have moved from homelessness to stable housing. This is the critical first step towards housing stability.

Access to social/supported housing and availability of rent supplements are making a huge difference in the work of front-line staff and in the lives of formerly homeless individuals. Lack of affordable housing options continues to be the most significant barrier to successful housing. The greatest anxiety for those individuals who have maintained their housing for six months or more is that a change in their financial circumstances (losing the rent supplement, raise in rent, no longer qualifying for current financial benefits) will return them to homelessness.

In summary, the key factors behind client success with maintaining their housing are:

- *Availability of affordable and suitable housing.* The combination of finding housing that is adequate or appropriate to the particular needs of each client and housing that is affordable relative to their income. Having the right mix is essential to client's success. For example, social housing may be affordable to a client receiving income assistance. However, the location, unit size or environment within that building may not be suitable for every client. For some, sharing housing may be acceptable; for others, this arrangement might be too difficult.
- *Adequate income support or access to a rent supplement.* Where social housing is not available, having additional income support, such as through disability or pension, or a rent

supplement enables clients to cover the costs of their housing. This way, clients do not have to reduce the income available for food and other basic necessities.

- *Access to client-specific support services.* This regular or constant support addresses the specific needs of each client, be they related to mental health issues, physical wellbeing, addictions treatment, re-integration with family or other needs. Outreach workers or other support workers can provide constant support for chronic issues, but they are also available to respond to one-off problems that could have otherwise resulted in a crisis. Having this form of constant support, that is tailored to client's specific needs, has been identified as a major aspect of client's housing success.
- *Client's readiness to make changes.* From the perspective of the outreach worker, it was framed that the client's success was largely driven by their willingness to accept help. From the client's perspective, they described this shift as a conscious decision on their part to seek help, begin pursuing their personal goals, and actively working to stay housed. Either way, it is this active involvement on the part of the client that is a critical piece of the success story.
- *Having positive relationships and community connections.* Forming supportive relationships and community connections helps clients to build confidence and prevent crises. This includes getting along with room-mates, neighbours and landlords in order to feel comfortable in their home. It also includes having a place to go on a regular basis, such as a club house or drop-in centre, or having someone to talk to on a regular basis, such as an outreach worker, friend or counsellor. That sense of belonging that comes from having a familiar social network and positive relationships in a client's life was reported by outreach workers and clients to be invaluable.
- *Quality and condition of housing.* Many clients moved into housing that was reported to be sub-standard in quality. This was always seen as a temporary solution to homelessness, an interim step to a better housing option. However, this tenuous housing form may not be the ideal place from which to pursue life goals and is inherently less stable. Those clients that described their housing as being safe and welcoming were more likely to say that they intend to stay there for a significant period of time, making it their "home".

Are some housing options better than others?

One of the research questions asked if certain housing and service delivery models were more successful than others at assisting individuals to stay housed. It was difficult to draw a conclusion from this research study as to the effectiveness of various models. Clients had varied needs and experienced success in a range of housing forms.

Some individuals were successfully housed in social housing, that is, congregate housing that is subsidized by the government, with or without on-site support. Many clients were successfully housed in private market housing in scattered units in the form of secondary suites or apartment units in residential neighbourhoods. Others were living in private market housing in the form of an SRO unit or rooming house.

While there was a greater likelihood that individuals would maintain their housing if they were living in social housing (due to the affordable rents), the success factors listed earlier, including

affordability, client-focussed support, client willingness to engage, and the condition of the housing, appear to be equally significant factors.

What is the role of support services?

The research study sought to answer to what extent the availability of support services assisted individuals to successfully stay housed. Both clients and outreach workers reported that a trusting relationship with a key support worker and accessibility to a range of services, from food programs to health and employment assistance, were key components of maintaining stable housing.

The study also looked at the types of support services that people need to succeed in maintaining housing. This was found to be very dependent on the individual needs of each client. Some clients, particularly those who became homeless due to economic or exceptional circumstances, described in the literature as situational homelessness, required only a rent supplement and other services like the food bank and access to household goods in order to maintain their housing. Those with more complex needs, however, relied on a range of health services, like clinics, mental health or addictions service providers, and required more intensive and more frequent support. In all cases, having access to places like drop-in centres or clubs where clients can maintain social connections was valuable.

The duration and intensity of these services was also dependent on the needs of the client. It was reported that many clients would require a broad range of support on a daily or near daily basis for the rest of their lives. Many other clients will require these services only occasionally.

While there are many different approaches and working styles, the outreach workers appear to be adept at identifying the particular needs of each client and responding in the way that is most appropriate to that client. Each individual's situation is unique and as such, having a client-centred approach to the outreach work appears to be critical in assisting people to get housed, but also to helping them to stay housed successfully.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are intended to celebrate and build on the successes experienced by outreach workers and the clients who have been able to maintain stable housing.

- *Recognition that outreach work is homeless prevention work.* The ever-increasing caseloads for outreach teams will hinder their ability to offer client-focussed services, do regular follow-up and maintain landlord relationships. The sheer number of people that outreach workers are assisting makes it difficult for some teams to provide the required level of intervention and support. It is important to consider how the role of outreach services has evolved and how best to support this type of homelessness prevention work moving forward.
- *Continue to provide rent supplements.* Having access to a rent supplement fund has been an enabler for outreach workers. To further support this work, guidelines have been developed around the use of rent supplements to eliminate the time limits and to clarify that they can be used to help clients with one-off expenditures such as moving costs, buying groceries, or responding to a crisis.
- *Continue to build the capacity of the outreach teams.* In general, outreach workers are resourceful and responsive to client needs. Many have the natural skills and the experience to

be able to appropriately support their clients. Having the flexibility in their jobs as well as the access to information and resources will help outreach teams to continue to be effective.

- Providing financial or technical support to facilitate regular meetings or exchanges between outreach workers would be valuable. This could take the form of monthly gatherings or web-based forums. Ongoing communication of this kind would facilitate the sharing of successful strategies and may alleviate some of the challenges experienced by smaller outreach teams.¹⁰
- Several outreach teams prepare weekly rental housing vacancy lists using a huge variety of sources of information and sharing these lists with other agencies in the community. This type of effort can be supported to ensure that each community has a process in place to gather rental vacancy information and share it broadly and quickly.
- While most outreach workers work in teams of two or more, several agencies have only one or one and a half positions. This limits the accessibility of the program and puts serious stress on the individual workers who have no one to cover on days off or to provide day-to-day emotional and professional support. Ways of further supporting these workers who work alone should be considered.
- The outreach teams are made up of individuals. These individuals have varied skills and backgrounds. It would be useful to further support all teams with access to training programs to assist them to build their individual capacity and abilities.
- *Support efforts towards gaining an adequate income.* Basic income assistance levels in the province are often inadequate for the majority of low-income households. For clients who are unable to work, it is often difficult to access disability assistance. Establishing the resources by which outreach workers or other service providers can assist such clients would be helpful. Similarly, young clients or those who are able to work, often find it difficult to access employment or training opportunities. Improving the links between housing services and employment programs may be advantageous.
- *Consider establishing minimum housing standards.* While the majority of clients are satisfied with the condition of their housing, a portion of clients have been living in housing that is of a substandard quality. The outreach workers, in particular, remarked on the poor quality and condition of some of the housing in which their clients are living. It is therefore suggested that the quality and condition of housing for homelessness services clients be further investigated. Outreach workers need to have flexibility around where to house their clients, but it is important to acknowledge the low quality of housing where some clients are living and to seek ways to address this. One approach might be to limit the provision of a rent supplement to units where a minimum standard of housing quality is confirmed.

¹⁰ This would be in addition to the semi-annual meetings hosted by BC Housing for HOP/AHOP providers.

FURTHER RESEARCH

To supplement and build on the Pathways Out of Homelessness Research, areas of further research have been identified:

- There is little longitudinal research available on successful exits from homelessness. It would be interesting and valuable to be able to follow a sample of clients over a longer period such as with the Mental Health Commission demonstration project.¹¹
- Future research could focus on clients who were under-represented as part of this study, namely Aboriginal clients, women and younger adults.
- This study did not identify homeless couples and families that have been assisted through the homelessness services programs. It may be worthwhile to target this particular sub population in future research to better understand the challenges and opportunities they face.
- Similarly, the design of this research study did not allow for “length of homelessness” to be fully considered as a factor in the analysis. This was seen to be an important factor in other research studies and could be considered as part of future research.
- What were the barriers to successful housing for clients? This question was partially addressed in this research study. Future research could further focus on the individuals who were not able to maintain their housing and the reasons behind this. This may help to identify solutions to those barriers. For example, what are the reasons that hinder housing success for Aboriginal clients? Is it the type of housing or blend of services that are available? What are the particular challenges faced by young people in getting housing? What level and type of support is needed to prevent them for falling back into homelessness?

¹¹ The Mental Health Commission’s *At-Home/Chez Soi* project is investigating the impact of living in different “housing first” environments for homeless people with substance abuse problems and living with a mental illness.

SECTION 5 - APPENDICES

Appendix A — Summary Report: Service Provider Interview Results

Appendix B — Summary Report: Client Interview Results

Appendix C — Homelessness Services Data Tables

Appendix D — Interview Guides

Appendix E — Research Consent Form

Appendix F — Frequently Asked Questions

Appendix G — List of Documents & Reports

Appendix H— List of Participating Service Provider Agencies

Appendix I — Homeless Outreach Program Frameworks

Appendix A – Summary Report: Service Provider Interview Results

Summary Report: Service Provider Interview Results

INTRODUCTION

Interviews were conducted with 17 service provider agencies from throughout Metro Vancouver. Each of the agencies had an outreach worker (or team) that is being funded by the Homeless Outreach Program (HOP) (Table 1). The majority of the interviews were conducted in person and on-site at the outreach office or other location convenient to the outreach workers. A small number of interviews were completed over the phone. On several occasions, more than one outreach worker participated in the interview. In total, the responses and perspectives of 23 outreach workers were recorded and are summarized in this report.

Table 1: Service Providers

Municipality/Region	Service Provider
North Shore	Lookout Emergency Aid Society - North Shore
Burnaby/ Port Coquitlam	Progressive Housing Society
	Hope for Freedom Society
Surrey	Options Community Services Society
	Front Room - South Fraser Community Services Society
	Kla How Eya Aboriginal Centre
Vancouver	Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services Society
	Carnegie Outreach
	Coast Foundation Society
	Kettle Friendship Society
	Raincity Housing and Support Society
	Lookout Emergency Aid Society - Vancouver
	MPA Society
Langley/ Chilliwack/ Maple Ridge	Canadian Mental Health Assoc - Simon Fraser Branch
	Alouette Home Start Society
	Stepping Stone Community Services Society
	Salvation Army - Chilliwack
17 Agencies, 23 outreach workers	

QUESTIONS

Understanding the Outreach Work

The outreach workers had varied approaches and working styles. In most cases, the outreach workers will meet and connect with clients, new and old, at community agencies such as the local food bank or drop-in centre. Many teams actively do walkabouts on the streets or in outlying forests/wooded areas where some homeless individuals camp out. Some teams, particularly in the Downtown Eastside, work primarily on site, with clients dropping in to see them.

Outreach Team Size — The outreach teams vary in size from as few as one person per agency to as many as 12 people on a team.

- Five of the teams consist of only one person or one full time and one half time outreach worker.
- Four teams are made up of two outreach workers each.
- Six teams have three or four outreach workers on the team.
- The largest team is made up of a core of six to eight individuals, although the entire team comprises of part time staff and can be as large as 12 people.

Client/Case Loads — Case loads vary greatly. It was also difficult for outreach workers to distinguish between their entire client base versus their active case load. Some individuals require a lot of ongoing support and attention, while others are far more independent and only require the workers' time to get their rent supplements or to address a crisis. As client numbers increase over time, each of the teams' active case load inevitably also increases. Outreach workers reported that any of their past clients can, at any time, become an active client again. This growing client load makes it more difficult to continue to do new intake work.

- Based on the outreach workers' estimates, the active case loads range from 20 to 100 clients at any given time, with an average of 50 clients across the reporting agencies.
- On average, the outreach teams reported having around 500 clients in their database. One team reported having as many as 1400 clients in total.

The Outreach Approach — The approach to the outreach work depends on the size of the outreach team, which community the team primarily works in and the size of their case load.

- Outside of Vancouver, there is a much greater reliance on accessing private market housing, working with other teams and service agencies in neighbouring communities and cultivating relationships with a range of landlords and property managers. In the Downtown areas, there is a greater concentration of homeless people but also there are several active outreach teams working in the same area. This allows for outreach roles to be defined more narrowly, where some workers might focus on housing, for example, and others on mental health work or family services. Similarly, some outreach workers are primarily street-based, others are based out of an agency/centre and are, therefore, more office-bound.
- Outreach workers who do walk-about prefer to work in teams of two. This is challenging for small teams and, of course, not possible for the AHOP workers.

- The Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program (AHOP) includes only two teams in Metro Vancouver. AHOP staff are mandated to refer 60% of Aboriginal clients to culturally appropriate services. While this may not officially limit the range of services to which Aboriginal clients can be referred to, Aboriginal outreach workers have reported that they feel this is a restriction that limits the resources available to them. With only one outreach worker per team, the two service agencies have chosen to work closely with one another. They also work closely with local HOP teams who may be able to assist clients to access a broader range of services including a rent supplement.
- Where there is only one worker per agency, the level of new intake or coverage of an area becomes limited. Plus there appears to be a greater strain on the individual outreach worker because of the lack of support, difficulties with taking holidays and pressures related to a growing client base. These individuals, however, tend to work closely with other staff from within their agency (e.g. a mental health worker or crisis worker) or an outreach worker from another agency.

What are the primary issues or challenges faced by your clients in terms of staying housed?

- Poverty-related issues are the main challenge faced by clients. This refers to an inability to afford housing that is of a reasonable standard and appropriate to clients' individual needs. This may be viewed as a lack of affordable housing on the one side or as an income limitation on the other side. Either way, the challenge remains the same.
- The compounding factors are addictions, mental illness or concurrent disorders. Other behavioural or lifestyle issues also contribute to the challenge of staying housed. For example, hoarding, fire starting or unusual interactions with landlords.
- Other issues were also noted:
 - Lack of social skills in dealing with room-mates and neighbours and the inability to liaise with landlords.
 - Facing prejudice of landlords against people who are on income assistance.
 - Having pets requires a larger damage deposit. It takes a longer time to find a place that will accept pets.
 - Many tenants are not familiar with their rights and responsibilities as tenants and do not take action against their landlords, for e.g. when their privacy is not respected or they are evicted without notice or they may not retrieve their damage deposit
 - Landlords and property management firms that manage multiple buildings will sometimes blacklist individuals who have been evicted, making it difficult for some to find housing in a particular community.
- Most clients reported that they were satisfied with the condition of their housing. However the poor quality of some private market units is an area of serious concern. Outreach workers reported helping clients to get into housing that is in substandard condition and is sometimes, in their words, "marginally better than living on the street." And yet, this is often all that is available for clients. Some clients, particularly those who have been homeless for

long periods of time, were reported to continue to live outside and use their place for storage given the low quality of the housing.

“Sleeping indoors is usually really hard. One client started out sleeping one day in and three days outside and then slowly increased the time inside.”

“Sometimes, the places are really grotty or room-mates or the landlords are difficult.”

- Suitability of housing is another factor. For some clients, the only option available to them is to live in shared housing, which may not be suitable for them, making it more difficult for them to maintain their housing. Several outreach workers reported that they encourage and support clients to survive the housing (regardless of its condition) for six months or even up to a year so that they can get a reference letter, that would open up other housing options for them. In these cases, the client accepts the poor quality housing as a stepping stone to better housing in the future.
- Based on the responses, a distinction can be made between the suburban communities and the Downtown core. Many of the individuals who were homeless in the suburbs (e.g. Maple Ridge, Port Coquitlam, Langley) faced what has been called “situational homelessness” — individuals who had lost their jobs and housing due to economic or unforeseen circumstances. Comparatively, the outreach workers in the Downtown areas referred to a complex set of behaviour issues, typically related to mental health and addictions, and that these issues were more prominent among the population living in the core.
- Aboriginal clients face several additional complications:
 - Often once they are housed, they find that members of their family and extended family will choose to come in and live with them. Eventually, this can lead to evictions.
 - Having low self esteem and not feeling deserving of housing is not uncommon. The lack of basic life skills is then a major challenge for Aboriginal clients and their ability to manage their housing once they are housed.

What are some of the resources or community services that you regularly rely on as part of your work and that you connect clients to?

In most cases, the first thing that outreach workers will do is to assist a client to get on income assistance if they do not have a regular income. Therefore, the relationship and connections with staff at the local office for the Ministry of Social Development (formerly Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance) becomes essential. Other key resources or services include:

- Agencies that provide free food or household goods are a main resource. This would include meal programs, food banks and thrift stores that give away furniture or supplies.
- Access to the continuum of services for mental health and addictions, e.g. street clinics, nurse practitioners, drug and alcohol counselling, detox and recovery, health services.

- Putting clients on housing waitlists, namely BC Housing’s provincial registry of non-market housing or the Downtown Supportive Housing Registry. In both cases, it was reported that the waitlists are so long that they are ineffective.
- Working with police or bylaw officers to find people in “the bushes” or developing a relationship with authorities so that the outreach teams receive the first call when there are problems with a landlord. In many cases, this can prevent an eviction for a client.
- For women, some outreach workers mentioned that transition houses, women’s centres and neighbourhood houses are useful resources, particularly for women with children. Seniors programs and services are also a resource for the older clients.
- Other community service agencies include employment services and training programs and legal aid and or other services to deal with disputes and arbitrations.

“I look for places close to a bus stop and to amenities like a laundromat, cultural services and support programs like AA etc.”

“We’ve identified 26 websites to find housing and we prepare a list each week. We send this out in a mass email to other agencies and individuals each Tuesday. Clients can pick up the list.”

“It’s easier to place people and they do better in units where the team has good relationships with the landlords and building managers. The key to success is to get the right person in the right building.”

“Careful who to place in certain housing so as not to damage the relationship with the landlord. eg. one rooming house owner is fine with people on disability and/or with an alcohol addiction, but not severe drug addictions. Some apartment managers do not mind two people in a one bedroom, others will only take singles or couples. Try to put people where they feel safe and where they have community support.”

How do you find/select housing that you place your clients in? Is some housing better suited to some clients?

There was a range of approaches and practices described, with two main variables affecting the search — the type of housing available in the community at the time and the client’s circumstances and needs. In many cases, clients are housed in what ever housing is available and affordable as a stop gap measure. This is viewed as interim housing until a better option can be achieved. Sometimes the interim option is a recovery home or transition house. Approaches to finding housing including:

- Outreach workers will work with the client to identify what type of housing they are interested in and then will tailor the expectations of the client to what they can afford.
- Using Craigslist.com and other online rental listing sites is common with outreach workers in the suburban communities. Many clients are reported to do their own search with some assistance from the outreach worker. One outreach worker reported that she asks her clients to report back on the condition of the housing before taking it.

- In many cases, where the clients are higher functioning or have enough self-confidence, the outreach worker will assist with finding the housing but then the clients will go to the appointments on their own so that it is less obvious that they are homeless. In other cases, the client is unable to speak effectively for themselves and the outreach worker will assist with finding the housing and make all the arrangements.
- Several agencies maintain a weekly housing list and distribute it to the other agencies. This task becomes part of their role as a housing outreach team.
- Some outreach workers have a group of landlords that they work with on a regular basis. In these cases, they know what the landlords' preferences are and will house people that are a good fit for the building. For example, some landlords will be uncomfortable with certain behaviours and not others. Having an understanding of what different landlords will tolerate means there will be better matching.
- Some buildings have age or gender restrictions, but also landlords in private market housing can be selective about the types of tenants they are willing to house. In order to maintain a good relationship with the client and create a more positive environment for the client, it is important to place people in housing that is a good fit for them.
- Matching with room mates is another key aspect of the housing work. Matching clients who are at a similar stage of life, age or have similar goals will be more successful in keeping their housing than two people who don't get along for various reasons.

In your view, is there a role for rent supplements?

Outreach workers spoke about rent supplements as being a critical component of the outreach service. Rent supplements enable outreach workers to find alternatives for those clients who cannot get into subsidized housing and are reliant on housing through the private market. Rent supplements have greatly helped the outreach teams to be more effective and responsive to their clients.

- Based on the interviews, the rent supplements range from as little as \$25 per month to as much as \$300. Most typically, they fall in the \$80 to \$120 range.
- In many cases, the rent supplements serve as a bridge for clients for a period of time, e.g. helping them to stay housed in private market housing and then transition into subsidized housing or assisting them while they complete their persons with disability (PWD) application.
- Several outreach staff reported that they begin to scale down the rent supplement after an agreed upon period of time. For example, someone might have their rent supplement cut back by \$20 to \$40 increments depending on their income and how stable they have become in their housing. Clients are always given notice and clients have the opportunity to appeal or negotiate for another arrangement.
- In some cases, the individuals have little prospect of getting housed without the supplement and some of these clients have little prospect of being able to maintain their housing without the rent supplement. The potential loss of support remains a major concern for these individuals and their outreach workers.

- Some outreach workers use the rent supplement as a crisis supplement/grant to help clients to recover from problem situations, such as damages to their suite or to buy food or other basic necessities sometimes.
- Many outreach workers expect their clients to develop a case plan and work towards achieving certain goals as a contingency for receiving the rent supplement. As part of the clients' case plans, one of the goals would be to identify a means to eliminate the need for a rent supplement and become self sufficient. They also help staff to keep regular contact with clients and have become a tool for engagement and goal-setting.
- Several outreach workers struggled with the subjectivity of the nature of rent supplements. Who decides who gets it and for how long? When should the rent supplement be taken away from a client? What happens to those clients who will likely be unable to maintain their housing without the rent supplement?
- Rent supplements can, in some cases, be a disincentive for landlords to upgrade their rental accommodation.

"Rent supplements are absolutely key for us in placing people in housing. We now have 40, \$120/mo. supplements. This is an increase from 20 and has made a world of difference. Supplements are provided on an individual basis, e.g. someone waiting for disability allowance can be housed with a supplement and the supplement reduced when they start getting their disability cheques."

What follow up strategies or activities have been most helpful?

Among the outreach workers, 50% reported that they regularly follow up with their clients. The approach to follow up varies greatly from one team to another and depends on the client load, the size of the outreach team and the community the team works in. The follow up strategies will vary depending on the individual, outreach team and community. In many cases, clients do not have phones, although many are active email users and are able to connect with outreach staff that way. Most often, outreach workers see clients at different locations or agencies around town.

Highlights of the follow up strategies or activities, as well as other comments include:

- A six month housing review is required of the outreach agencies funded through HOP and AHOP. However, every organization has a different approach to doing this part of the follow up. For some agencies, the follow up might involve contact with the Ministry of Social Development to ensure that the rent cheques are still being sent to the same address. This type of follow up may be undertaken by an administrative staff person. Few outreach teams are able to follow up with their clients by going to their houses to check in on them. If clients do not contact them, outreach workers may not see them very much.
- Follow-up is reported to be very challenging due to high caseload and time demands. The majority of clients keep in regular contact by dropping in, emailing or leaving a phone message. Several outreach workers mentioned that they assist their clients to set up email accounts so that they can do their own housing search and keep in contact. Email is reported to be an effective tool for follow up.

- For many clients, follow up work is linked to the rent supplement as many clients have to meet the outreach worker in order to pick up their cheque.
- Many outreach workers go to local agencies such as the food bank or drop-in centre on a regular basis where they are able to connect with new and former clients. This is one of the most common ways for workers to see their clients.
- Where outreach workers have established a relationship with a landlord or have housed several clients in one building, then they may get in touch with the landlord on occasion to find out how their clients are doing. Or, they may visit multiple clients when placing a new client in a building where several others are housed.

“We do personal follow ups as much as possible and follow up with landlords. This is very challenging due to the volume. Clients also come to the outreach office as they have needs. The more supports we are able to have in place for our clients, the less follow up needed.”

“We are always on the street ... It is easy to follow-up with people who use services, much harder for those who don't.”

“Some of the people with the greatest challenges are staying housed because a huge amount of energy is invested. Some people we need to give a lot of support to - help with groceries or laundry. Some you have to talk to daily to let them vent. ”

“Some will transition and need less support over time, some will need support till they die and some will only need support on a crisis basis.”

Have you been working with landlords to help your clients stay housed? Do you have any recommended strategies for doing this well?

The majority reported that they work with landlords on a regular basis to help their clients to stay housed; others reported that they only work with landlords sometimes. The strategies noted were:

- Developing a good relationship with landlords.
- Being 100% honest at all times so that the landlord does not lose trust in the outreach worker.
- Working to repair bridges when the client makes a mistake, e.g. paying to fix damages to a suite.
- Trying to address issues before they become a crisis. This might involve talking to the client about being a better tenant, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a good relationship with the landlord for the benefit of all clients. Clients may then feel responsible to not damage the relationship.
- If there is a good relationship, a landlord may contact the outreach worker when they have a vacancy.
- Making an effort to match the client to the right type of housing and to each landlords' tolerance level.

Tips & Suggestions for Working with Landlords

- Stop in to say hi when visiting a client.
- Give them my card and encourage them to call.
- Always answer a call from a landlord.
- Establish a relationship with landlord so client won't get evicted until after landlord has spoken to outreach worker.
- Getting one good client into a building helps to establish a good relationship.
- Repair bridges quickly if a client screws up.
- Have clients observe interactions with landlord so that client understands the importance of living up to the reputation established by the outreach team.
- Try to match clients as best we can so that landlord does not have any surprises.

Thinking about those clients who successfully stayed housed for this period of time, what were the factors that led to their success?

The outreach workers noted some of the main factors of success for individuals who have stayed housed to be:

- Availability of affordable and adequate housing, which for some clients might have been because they got into subsidized housing and for others it was having access to rent supplements.
- Connecting clients to support services and clients' willingness to accept support. Those clients who were willing to identify their personal goals and begin to meaningfully pursue them were more successful. This may include, for example, taking medication for a mental illness or going into treatment.
- Getting along with landlords and/or room mates.
- Having regular contact from outreach teams or other form of constant support is a key factor.
- Having appropriate housing and access to client-specific support services.
- Availability of a rent supplement and support with meeting basic needs. For example, food banks help to close the gap between the income and rent and food costs. Having the rent supplements helps to prevent clients from using up all their support dollars to pay for rent, which improves their quality of life and ability to make ends meet.
- Positive relationships and a community support network helps to create a sense of belonging and a feeling that someone cares about them. Having a network means a client will also have someone they can call who will be on their side. This can also be valuable in terms of preventing or managing a crisis that may have led to an individual losing their housing.

- Those clients who were set up with furniture and household items (with the help of the outreach workers) helped to make a place feel more like home. It is reported to make a big difference when clients are “content” with their place.
- The ability to maintain housing is greatly increased for those in BC Housing subsidized buildings.

“When rent is paid directly to landlord it helps clients manage because they can’t spend the rent money before it’s due.”

“It helps to link housing with the location of the services they need to access. It prevents isolation if they can continue to access the same services and people.”

“Having good people in a client’s life is very important. Good clean people provide support, a negative social network leads to money being spent on things other than rent (e.g. drugs) and the need to engage in illegal activities or prostitution to get money.”

For clients who moved during this time (without becoming homeless again), what were the factors that supported their success?

Some of the responses to this question include:

- Clients’ ability to ask for help before a small problem or situation becomes a crisis.
- Received assistance with finding the housing, finding a room mate where necessary and then physically moving into that housing.
- Living at one place for a long enough period of time so that they can get a rental reference that allows them to move somewhere else, typically to a better housing situation.
- Clients had the social connections to find another room mate or skills to look for another place.
- Achieving some stability in initial housing helps clients to make another successful move.
- Having access to resources to do a housing search and the transportation to help them to get around to look at new places. Other logistical issues include having help in covering the damage deposit, help with moving or storing belongings, etc.

Some of the barriers noted were:

- Outreach teams do not often have the resources to move clients’ belongings.
- The Ministry requires three quotes from a moving company before they agree to cover the moving costs.

“Welfare might stop paying the landlord directly even when we had agreed that they would do this. The workers then say “We’re just teaching them responsibility.”

What role does the client's personal or social networks have in helping them to stay housed successfully?

Social networks were identified to be very important. They can have a positive or a negative influence on the client's wellbeing.

- For those who lose their housing, often it is reported to be because of the influence of their friends. In other words, having friends who come over and bring drugs and alcohol, cause a disturbance or break house rules can be to the detriment of the client.
- For those who keep their housing, it is often said to be because they were able to establish a more positive supportive network.
- Having positive connections in the community or close friends and family was noted to be an important aspect of maintaining stable housing. Outreach workers have worked to help clients to find places where they can more easily connect with people who provide positive support. Having consistent support was also noted to be important. For example, regular access to a club house or drop-in centre where a client can connect with others can provide a consistent and stable support network.
- Several clients were reported to have been doing volunteer work at a local agency as one way to begin building a positive social network.
- Aboriginal clients often have many family members move into their housing. The noise and partying often causes the client to be evicted.

For those clients who could not stay housed, what were the reasons behind that? What were the barriers to successful housing for them?

Some of the reasons given include:

- The client was no longer able to afford their housing; e.g. a relationship ended, a room mate moved out or they spent their rent money. When the Employment and Assistance (EA) office does not pay the shelter allowance directly to the landlord, certain clients have difficulty managing their finances and will spend this money.
- Behavioural issues related to an undiagnosed/untreated mental illness or addictions or other lifestyle issues that are problematic to a neighbour or landlord. For example, someone who has lived outside for a long time may have poor hygiene or collect and keep cans, bottles and shopping carts in their apartment.
- Clients who have been to jail previously will often face stigma against them making it harder to find employment and/or housing. This type of rejection can exacerbate a client's low self esteem, resulting in negative behaviours.
- Housing circumstances were intolerable to a client, e.g. not getting along with room mate or landlord, lack of privacy.
- Housing conditions were intolerable to a client eg. the building or suite had bedbugs, rodents, poor/no heating etc.
- Having a group of friends that comes over to use the place for parties or extended family that come and stay with the client leading to eviction.

- Lack of insight into behaviours that lead to eviction or ability to accept responsibility. This may be as a result of a brain injury or other medical reason such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).
- Lack of housing post-treatment for individuals leaving detox or a recovery home. There are few suitable housing options available to such individuals.
- When the Employment and Assistance (EA) office does not pay the shelter allowance directly to the landlord, certain clients have difficulty managing their finances and will spend this money.

For those clients that lose their housing, outreach workers sometimes run into them at local agencies, but others they do not see for a long time or at all. Many of the clients will cycle through the outreach program and receive assistance with getting housed again.

Appendix B — Summary Report: Client Interview Results

Summary Report: Client Interview Results

INTRODUCTION

The research team completed 37 interviews with clients of 10 service provider agencies. The clients were housed for no less than six months throughout Metro Vancouver. The clients were continuously housed, although not necessarily in the same place.

Where were the clients from?

- Interviewed clients were living in Vancouver , Burnaby, Surrey, Maple Ridge, New Westminster, Port Coquitlam, Langley and Chilliwack.
- The research team was connected with clients who had received outreach services by the following agencies: Kettle Friendship Society, Coast Foundation Society, Carnegie Centre, Raincity Housing & Support Society, MPA Society, Progressive Housing Society, Options Community Services Society, South Fraser Community Services Society, Canadian Mental Health Association (Simon Fraser), Salvation Army and the Hope for Freedom Society.

Who are the clients?

The interviewed clients represent a good cross section of the formerly homeless population. However, when compared to BC Housing’s homelessness services database, it appears that women, youth (under 29) and Aboriginal individuals were under-represented. It also appears that individuals who were living in social/supported housing as well as those living in secondary suites seem to be especially well-represented in this sample compared to the overall database of clients.

Table 1: Client Demographics and Housing Statistics

Variables	Category	%
Gender	Male	84%
	Female	16%
Age	19-29	3%
	30-49	57%
	50+	40%
Ethnicity	Caucasian	70%
	Aboriginal	16%
	Other	11%

Variables	Category	%
Where Housed	Social/supported	32%
	Secondary suite	27%
	Room in house/apartment	8%
	Hotel/rooming house	16%
	Apartment in market housing	11%
	Recovery home	5%
Shared Living	Live alone	61%
	With friends / room mates	31%
	With family / relatives	8%

The “Other” ethnicities included: Nigerian, Iranian, Jewish

Rents & Rent Supplements

Through the client interviews and cross-referencing with service providers, the researchers were able to confirm that nine people out of 37 (23%) were receiving a rent supplement at the time of the interview. Fifteen clients (41%) pay \$375 or less in rent, which is the basic shelter amount. The remaining 22 clients (59%) pay between \$400 and \$1000 in rent.

None of the clients paying \$375 or less were receiving a rent supplement, as most are in supportive/subsidized housing units. For these clients, rent is on par with the shelter allowance and in most instances is paid directly to the landlord. Of the 22 clients paying more than the basic amount, nine were receiving a rent supplement. This means that 24% of all clients interviewed received additional assistance to pay rent and 41% of clients paying more than \$375 received a rent supplement. A few of the clients interviewed pay more in rent than they receive in income assistance. For these people, the rent supplement is essential.

Incomes & Income Sources

All the clients interviewed were receiving income assistance of some type. The most common sources were basic Income Assistance and Disability. Others were receiving a pension or Workers Compensation funding. While some clients had jobs, none earned enough money to support themselves without assistance.

Please describe the condition of your accommodation. Do you feel safe? Is it large enough?

Most clients stated they were generally satisfied with the condition of their accommodation. In some cases, further probing revealed that their unit or building had mice, bugs, no heat, poor plumbing or other issues. Researchers observed a large number of clients who maintained their housing for six months or longer, but who were still living in substandard housing. In these cases, clients were choosing to maintain this housing because it was what was available and what they could afford.

Most clients felt safe in their place, but several noted their building or neighbourhood was not safe, indicating they do not interact with neighbours (who may be drug addicts or have erratic/unstable behaviour) or do not leave their apartment at night. Some also reported theft is common in

downtown SROs. Alternatively, several clients living in secondary suites in suburban locations reported having positive relationships with their landlords and feeling safe and very satisfied with the condition of their housing. The ability to “lock the door” seemed to contribute significantly to a feeling of security, no matter what the condition of the unit or building was.

Most clients were satisfied with the size of their accommodation although some felt their housing was too small. This was a more common complaint among people living in SRO accommodation than in secondary suites or private apartments.

“Former motel converted to supported housing. It is small, but big enough for me. It is safe. There are bedbugs and mice.”

“Two bedroom, ground level basement suite. In excellent condition. Spacious, safe and secure.”

“Basement suite, one bedroom and a den. In good condition. It is safe. I have a good relationship with the landlord.”

“Adequate condition. Rent too high for what it is/what you get. I would rather be outside getting full support.”

“Its a dump. 40-unit old apartment building. Not well maintained. Low grade construction.”

Do you consider this place to be your home? What are the things that make it feel like home/not feel like home?

There were three general responses to this question. Clients either felt that their unit a) feels like home, b) is only a temporary home, or c) does not feel like home.

More than 50% felt that their unit feels like home. Comments from these clients tended to focus on the fact that they have their own space that is secure. Other contributing factors included the condition of the housing, their relationship with their landlord, having their own bathroom and kitchen, and having the flexibility to have friends over or have a pet. For some people who have come directly off the street, being warm and secure inside was reported to be enough to make any accommodation feel like home.

“Yes, it's home. I can close the door and have privacy. I can do what I want.”

“It feels comfortable. It's a place I can let my guard down.”

“It's safe and secure, comfortable, warm, clean. It's liveable. And has a locking door.”

“Being warm, inside, and able to lock the door makes it feel like home.”

Less than one third of interviewees did not consider their current accommodation to be their “home”. Those who did not consider their unit to be their home, or felt it was a temporary home, gave some of the following reasons or responses:

- The unit is too small.
- There was nothing better available.

- It is only a stepping stone.
- There's not enough privacy.
- The client did not like the building or the neighbourhood.
- The client did not want to have a room mate.

Selected quotes from respondents illustrate the range of views about “home”:

“This is a temporary home, but it’s home for now.”

“Yes its a de-facto home. For the time being. Home is wherever I hang my hat.”

“Not home, just a place to stay. There's nothing better available.”

“It's not a home. Just four walls. Like a jail cell without being a jail.”

How long have you been living in your current place? Where were you before that? What happened this time that made the move work for you?

The length of time clients had been living in their current place varied greatly, from 3 days to two years. It was common for clients to have moved one or more times before finding their way to their current unit. Some clients had started out in a hotel and moved to more stable accommodation (e.g. placement in a BC Housing unit), while others had found acceptable accommodation directly from being in a homeless situation.

Some clients were still living in sub-standard units or otherwise temporary situations and would likely move again. Although these people had not found permanent or stable housing yet, they had been housed for six months, and in some cases, considerably longer, without a break of homelessness between moves. As a result, some people did not have an answer to the question of “what happened this time that made the move work for you?” Clients who had moved sometimes mentioned the benefit of receiving help from an outreach worker to find the accommodation or to move their possessions.

When asked what happened to make this move work, clients mentioned personal decisions to find and keep housing, receiving help from outreach workers, and finding affordable and/or appropriate housing. Living in a house with a good landlord was also a success factor for some clients.

Receiving ongoing support was another factor helping people to maintain their housing. While it was not always mentioned directly as an answer to this question, it became apparent through the conversation and in answers to other questions that ongoing access to support services was very important. Additionally, some clients received a rent supplement through the service provider, which contributed to their ability to access and maintain housing that worked for them.

“One year and three months in current SRO. Chose to move from previous hotel because of drugs, violence, prostitutes etc.”

“Four months in current suite. Previously I was in a basement suite with roommate for one year. Was in shelter at one point when I came to Vancouver. I get a rent supplement to afford better quality place than I had before.”

“I was homeless for 3 years after losing my home due to my drug and gambling addictions. I met the outreach team and realized I wanted to get better. My current place is a good fit for me.”

“When E.I. ran out I was not eligible for assistance so was homeless for two or three months. I have been able to stay in this place because I can manage the rent and get meals at the Front Room.”

I’ve been in BC Housing for six months. Before, I was in SROs for one year. When I became a member of Coast an outreach worker helped me find housing.

How long do you plan to stay there? What, if anything, worries you about your future housing?

Among clients who had found stable housing, many reported they had no intention of leaving. This was especially true for people who were living in BC Housing buildings or other supportive/ subsidized housing units, but also for some clients who found housing through the private market. The key factors for clients who intended to stay in their housing were:

- Affordability — the housing was affordable relative to their income.
- Condition — the housing was in decent condition (no bugs, mice or significant building issues such as lack of heat or flooding).
- Comfort — the housing is secure and they felt comfortable (not threatened by neighbours or landlord).

A few clients who intended to stay in their housing may not have been entirely satisfied, but they could not afford anything better, or a better unit was not available to them. They did not want to go back to the street so they opted to stay in their housing as long as they could.

For other clients, their current housing was seen as a temporary stop for a variety of reasons:

- Plan to move on to better housing.
- Want to find something more affordable.
- Want to move in with friends, family or children.
- Plan to move to another community.

The common concern people had for the future was affordability. They wondered what would happen to them and their ability to remain in their housing if they lost their income assistance, could not find a room mate, if the rent went up or they lost their rent supplement and had no means to replace it. Several clients interviewed were older or physically disabled and had concerns about being able to manage on their own as they age or as their level of disability increases.

“Plan to stay till I die. No worries about future housing, as long as I can pay the rent.”

“I would like to stay here with my girls. I am worried about money. My rent supplement will end soon.”

“Plan to stay. Would like to get into seniors living - making applications now. I Don’t want to end up outside again.”

"I would move if there was a cheaper option available."

"I will stay here for the rest of my life. I don't worry about housing any more."

"No plans to move. Concerned about finding and keeping a good roommate."

"I will stay until I get a job somewhere else. I worry about having enough income to pay rent."

Do you feel as though you could choose what kind of housing you would live in or what area you would live in? Did you have help with finding this accommodation? What kind of help?

People coming directly off the street, from shelters or recovery programs, often reported not having much choice in their accommodation. Similarly, many people who are in BC Housing units felt they did not have a choice — they accepted the unit that was available. Those who had some form of housing to begin with had more flexibility to work with outreach teams or do their own housing search.

Many clients used Craigslist and other listings to find housing, either with the assistance of an outreach worker or on their own. This allowed them to define the type of unit, the cost, the location and to compare units that met their criteria. The potential "choice" might have been between two units, or they may have had a greater range of choices, depending on the clients' income level and other criteria. Some people waited for weeks or months to find housing that was appropriate/affordable/in the area of their choice, while others had to take what was available.

The majority of clients interviewed (approximately 60%) had help from an outreach worker to find housing. The level of involvement varied:

- The outreach worker helped to prepare the BC Housing application and facilitated the placement.
- The outreach worker found a privately owned unit and arranged for the client to move in.
- The outreach worker helped with the search for appropriate units, then the client contacted landlords and made the rest of the tenancy arrangements.
- The client found the units, but received support from the outreach team in some other way (e.g. help with negotiating, getting a ride to appointments).

Clients also had help from outreach workers to obtain a rent supplement if they had a chance to improve their housing, for emergency placements, to help with a damage deposit, or while waiting for income assistance to be approved.

The remaining clients were able to arrange housing independently, through word of mouth, their own internet/newspaper search, by speaking to building managers directly, or through some other means.

"I was looking for a cheaper place. I had to wait quite a while for this place, but I stayed in my old place even though it was a "crack shack" so that I could get this place."

"Found the unit on Craigslist. I looked at a few other options, but this one was the best."

“The outreach worker at Progressive knew the manager of the apartment building. I couldn’t have gotten the place on my own and needed a room mate.”

“It was very hard to find a place that I could afford and that would allow a pet. I found the place, but Options pre-approved the rent subsidy.”

“No choice for BC Housing - I just got what came up.”

Do you have help/support now? If you needed help/support to find housing in the future, do you think you would easily be able to access that help?

Many clients access a range of support services, including food banks, meal programs, and programs through facilities such as Coast, MPA and Kla-How-Eya. Some people have support from mental health teams, addiction services or recovery programs. In some cases, the only support people mentioned was income assistance, which might also include a rent subsidy from a service provider. Almost all clients interviewed indicated they could count on support from an outreach worker if they needed help with housing or other issues in the future. Some people also mentioned family as an ongoing or potential source of help.

Examples of common supports/services:

- Outreach workers
- Mental Health teams
- Health clinics
- Food banks
- Meal programs
- Legal advocates
- Recovery programs e.g. Alcoholic/Narcotics Anonymous
- Family

A selection of quotes from clients reflect the range of resources they reported accessing:

“I come to Caring and Sharing (Salvation Army) for bread and can get help here if I need it.”

“I use the services at Coast. I can count on the people at Coast for everything.”

“The outreach team helps us get food if we’re low on money but we try not to ask very much.”

“We spend a lot of time at Kla-How-Eya. It is a great place for families. And the boys like the programs at the Metis Family Centre.”

“I get meals at the Front Room. I use the foodbank and I get lunch at one of the churches.”

“No formal help. I could get help from Coast if I needed anything.”

“AA is still my main support. I go every day. A treatment worker visits the house once a week. I would ask [outreach worker] for help if I needed to move.”

When you are having a really good day, who do you contact or reach out to? How about on a rough day?

Sometimes family or relatives were mentioned. Often, the club house, drop-in facility or resource centre that the client frequented was the most common source of support or social contact. Some people had friends that they turn to, but other people did not seem to have a social network and spent much of their time alone.

Examples of client strategies and experiences:

“I go to [Resource Centre] on good and bad days. Sometimes I can count on relatives.”

“On a good day, I go to classes. On a bad day, I will stay home. I sometimes call the crisis line.”

“I have nobody. On a bad day, I stay home, on a good day I go out and do stuff.”

“On a good day I might spend time with my neighbours. On a bad day, I might just ride through it and talk to my psychiatrist about it the next time we meet.”

“I count on my sponsor, friends, support network. I’m on Facebook to keep in touch with other people in recovery, people who are positive and supportive, and my family. I’m getting back in touch with family now.”

“On good days I’ll visit friends. I stick to myself otherwise.”

“I have a small circle of friends and my dog. They are there for me to share good and bad times.”

What has made a difference for you in keeping your housing? What challenges did you face/overcome?

Affordability is a significant success factor in keeping housing. Clients managed to overcome the affordability challenge in a variety of ways: by finding a place they could afford, receiving a rent supplement, getting a room mate or getting into a BC Housing subsidized unit. Sometimes they had to stay in sub-standard accommodations in order to afford housing, or modify their criteria (e.g. look outside their chosen neighbourhood or look for a smaller unit). Clients who had found housing that was affordable and met most of their needs or expectations tended to maintain housing for a period of time, and said they had plans to stay.

The support and assistance they received from outreach workers made a big difference for many of the clients interviewed. Many cited ongoing support from the outreach team or trust in the support they could count on if needed as a factor in their success. Other services such as mental health teams, drop-in and resource centers, and addiction/recovery programs were additional examples of ongoing services clients count on.

For some people, making a conscious decision to move inside or “clean up” and seek treatment for their addictions contributed to their success. Others identified finding a good room mate or having a good landlord as other factors that made a difference.

A combination of affordable housing, access to support services and a personal commitment (to staying housed, staying off drugs, dealing with issues) seem to have been the most important factors for people who maintained housing for six months or longer.

Client comments and quotes about what made a difference for them include:

“I’m getting older and it is becoming too difficult to be outside now.”

“Getting along with the landlord and sense of security.”

“I made the decision with a friend to get clean and get off the streets. We went into recovery. I’ve stayed housed in part because I’m sober. We removed ourselves from a negative social network. We’re really happy with our accommodation.”

“Staying in supportive housing with access to the support services.”

“Having a landlord that doesn’t care what I do as long as the home looks clean. She leaves me alone.”

“Finding an affordable place. Dealing with my addictions.”

“Affordable housing and regular support from case workers [mental health and outreach]”

“Keeping to a schedule, having a safe place to go home to and following a twelve-step program.”

Do you have any advice for individuals who are homeless or those having a similar experience as you? Or suggestions for homeless outreach workers?

Selected responses include:

“I am so concerned that the province will not continue to fund social housing. It is so important that they do.”

“Be here, but don’t live here.” i.e. accept the services when you need them, but don’t become dependent on them.

“Be who you are. Don’t give up on yourself. Talk to somebody. Accept some help.

“Try to get as much information as you can about what government programs, services and funding are available to you. This can happen to almost anyone, so you just have to get over your embarrassment and seek help.

Appendix C — Homelessness Services Database Results

HOMELESSNESS SERVICES DATABASE RESULTS

BC Housing provided a summary of client information reported by outreach workers in Metro Vancouver and compiled in the Homelessness Services System database. The data set includes the number of clients housed during the 2009/2010 fiscal year through the Homeless Outreach Program, the Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program and the Emergency Shelter Program.

The main variables included in the database are: gender, age, Aboriginal identity, addictions, mental health issues, and the housing form in which the clients have been housed. This data provides a snapshot of the client base that has been successfully housed by the three homelessness programs. Based on a sample of clients, the data set also includes demographic information for those who remained housed after a six month follow up. This sample includes only those clients whose housing status was verified by the outreach teams.

The analysis of this data set supplements the other research results and provides confirmation of who was successfully housed and if they differ from the individuals interviewed as part of this study.

Understanding the Data

- The data is based on client records for those who were housed between April 1, 2009 and March 31, 2010. The database is “live” meaning that shelter and outreach workers may update the client data at any time. This data is a snapshot taken on September 30, 2010 and reflects what was known to be true based on data entry on the day of the snapshot.
- The service provider agencies - “the sites” - do not communicate with each other via the database. As such, the data represents records as opposed to individuals as it is possible that the same individuals may have accessed services across different agencies.
- The reference to clients who are “still housed” refers to those who were still housed after a 6-month follow up. This may include those who moved during this time, but did not revert back into homelessness. People who refused follow up or who could not be contacted were excluded from the still housed calculations. For this reason, the *still housed* category is an unrepresentative sample that was not randomly selected.
- For confidentiality reasons, individual sites were not identified and communities were aggregated where there was only one site in the community. For the purposes of this report, three sub geographies were considered — City of Vancouver, City of Surrey, and the rest of Metro Vancouver.
- Cross tabulations resulting in less than five client records were merged with other categories to ensure client confidentiality. For this reason, it is not possible to present detailed age categories and housing types at the sub regional level.
- The data has been entered by staff at each of the sites. The accuracy of the data is dependent on the quality of the data entry. For the questions around Aboriginal identity, mental health and addictions, the responses were self-reported by clients. The categories for “housing form” appear to have been interpreted differently across the sites/communities. This information is therefore considered to be less reliable.

- The percentages that follow are based on the records for which data was available, and not a total number of records. Missing responses were excluded from the analysis.
- While there were a total of 39 sites included in the data set, roughly half of these sites were emergency shelter providers. Given the mandate and scope of work of the emergency shelters, it is anticipated that the number of clients housed through the shelter system would be relatively small. It is therefore expected that the majority of client records refer to individuals housed through one of the outreach programs. For the same reason, emergency shelter providers were not included in the interview component of the research.

The Data - Region Wide

In 2009/2010, there were approximately 4,000 records for clients housed in Metro Vancouver through one of the agencies providing homelessness services. One third of the clients (34%) had the status of their housing confirmed after a six month period. A summary table of the statistics follows:

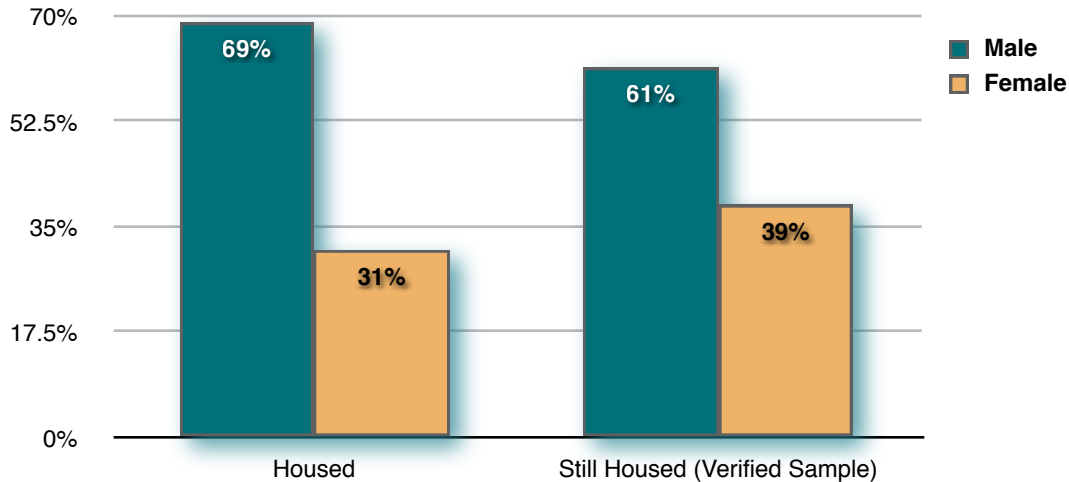
Table 1 - Summary of Statistics - Client Records in Metro Vancouver

Variables	Category	% of Total Clients
Gender	Male	69%
	Female	31%
Age	19-24	7%
	25-34	57%
	35-44	40%
	45-54	31%
	55-64	10%
	65+	3%
Other Characteristics (Self-reported)	Aboriginal Identity	24%
	Addictions	63%
	Mental Health Issues	53%
Where Housed	Apartment in market housing	23%
	Apartment in market housing w. rent subsidy	4%
	Hotel/rooming house (SRO)	18%
	Moved in with friends/family	8%
	Recovery/treatment	10%
	Room in house/apartment	9%
	Secondary suite	5%
	Social/supported	13%
	Other	11%

While this *still housed* group may not be representative of the entire client population, it provides some indication of the demographics of the population that successfully stayed housed for six months or longer. Among this group, 77% were still housed after six months.

The following figures (Figures 1 to 4) show the distribution of client records by gender, age, three key characteristics (Aboriginal identity, addictions and mental health issues) and housing type.

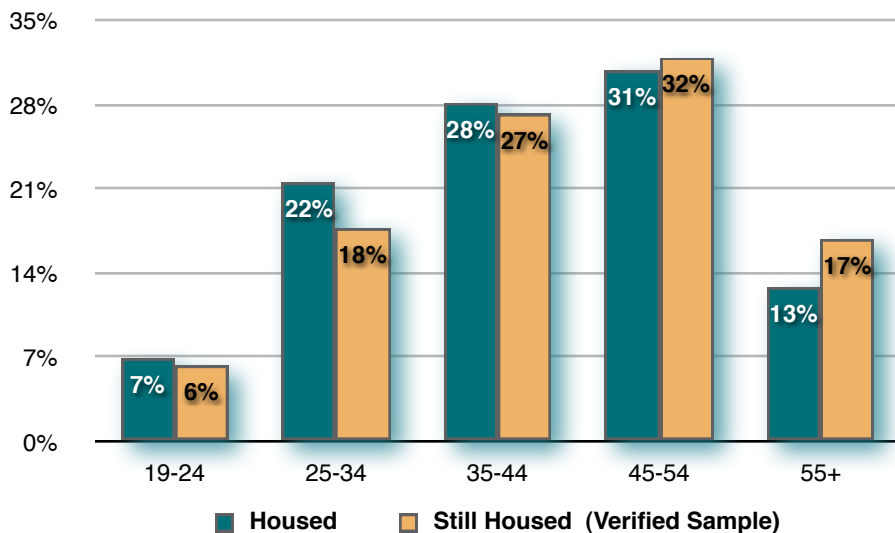
Figure 1 - Distribution of Client Records by Gender (2009/2010)



Over two thirds of the clients were men (69%), compared to one third who were women (31%). It would appear that there is a slightly greater proportion of women housed through these programs compared to the total homeless population. In the 2008 homeless count in Metro Vancouver, 73% of the homeless population was male and 27% was female.

A slightly greater percentage of women were reported to be *still housed* among the group whose housing had been verified.

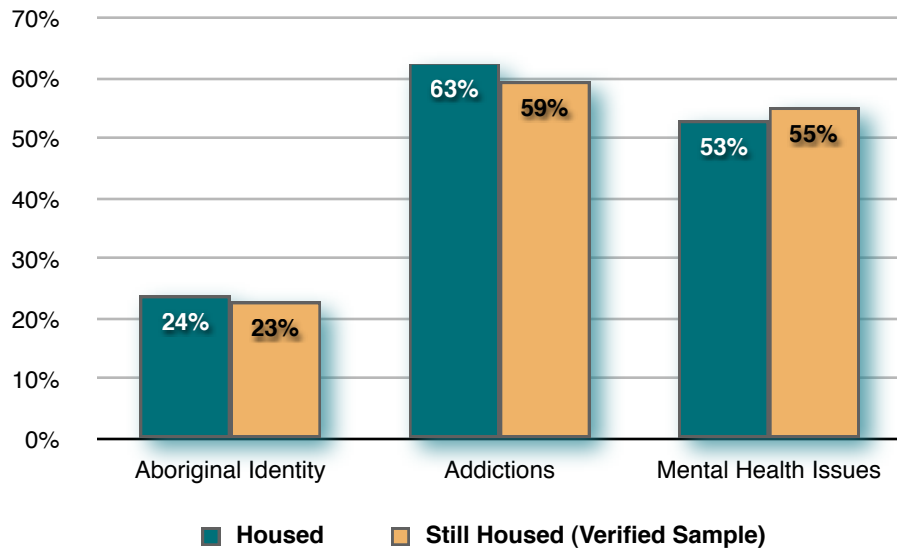
Figure 2 - Distribution of Client Records by Age (2009/2010)



Among the clients, the majority were in the 35 to 54 age categories. A smaller proportion were under 34 years (29%) or over 55 (13%). The older age groups seemed to have a greater propensity to stay housed compared to the younger age groups.

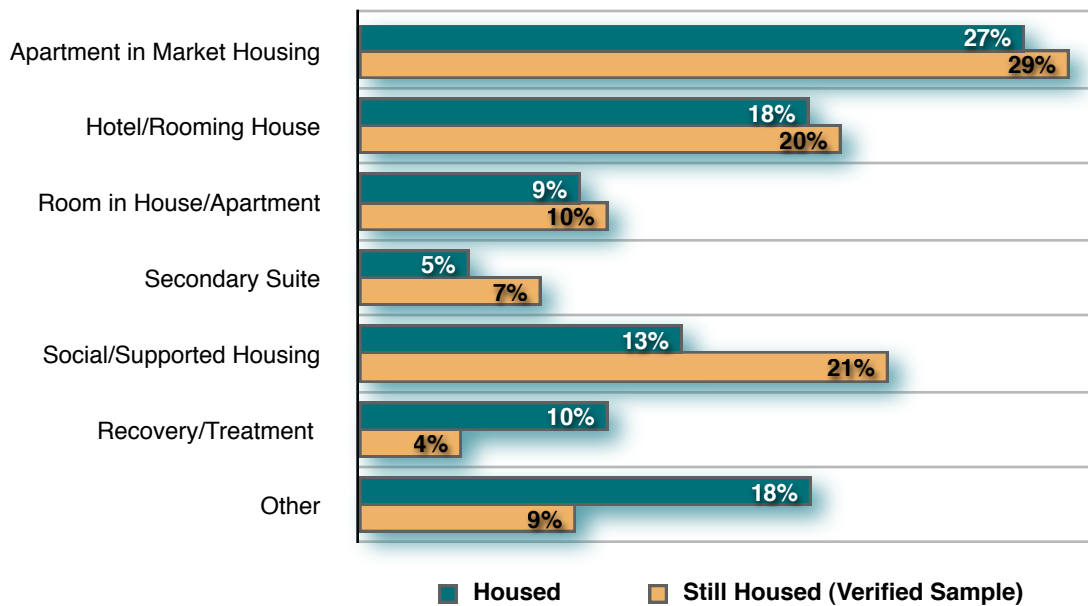
The age split is a reasonable representation of the homeless population (as counted in 2008). There is, however, a greater proportion of older clients (55+) and a smaller proportion of young clients (< 25).

Figure 3 - Distribution of Client Records by Other Self-Reported Characteristics (2009/2010)



The percentages show slight variations from homeless count numbers. For one, there was a smaller percentage of Aboriginal clients successfully housed — 24% compared to 32% of the homeless population. The health characteristics are likely less comparable due to the challenges of reporting on these characteristics based on a point-in-time count. Nonetheless, the percentage of clients with addictions is comparable to the homeless population in the region. Those with reported mental health issues, however, seems to be lower among the group housed.

Figure 4 - Distribution of Client Records by Housing Type (2009/2010)



Where have clients been housed? The greatest proportion of clients found housing in private market apartments (27%) and single room occupancy hotels (SROs) or rooming houses (18%). Also through the private market, shared housing and secondary suites were common housing options (14%). There was a greater likelihood that clients housed in social or supported housing would stay housed, with 21% of the *still housed* group living in this housing form, compared to the original 13%. The most transitional options were recovery houses or treatment centres and *other* housing options.

The Data - By Sub Regions

To find out if there are any distinctions by sub regions, three areas were considered — the City of Vancouver, the City of Surrey and the rest of the Metro Vancouver region. Vancouver and Surrey were selected, in part, because of the size of the homeless populations in these communities. The remaining sites/communities had smaller numbers and were collectively seen to represent less urban and more suburban areas.

Table 1 - Summary of Statistics - Client Records by Sub Geographies

Variables	Category	City of Vancouver	City of Surrey	Rest of Metro Vancouver
Gender	Male	66%	66%	76%
	Female	34%	34%	24%
Age*	19-34	28%	30%	28%
	35-44	30%	28%	26%
	45+	42%	42%	46%
Other Characteristics (Self-reported)	Aboriginal Identity	29%	24%	15%
	Addictions	56%	61%	76%
	Mental Health Issues	53%	28%	67%
Where Housed	Apartment in market housing	26%	16%	34%
	Hotel/rooming house (SRO)	26%	4%	9%
	Shared house or secondary suite	7%	31%	13%
	Social/supported	18%	5%	7%
	Other**	23%	44%	37%

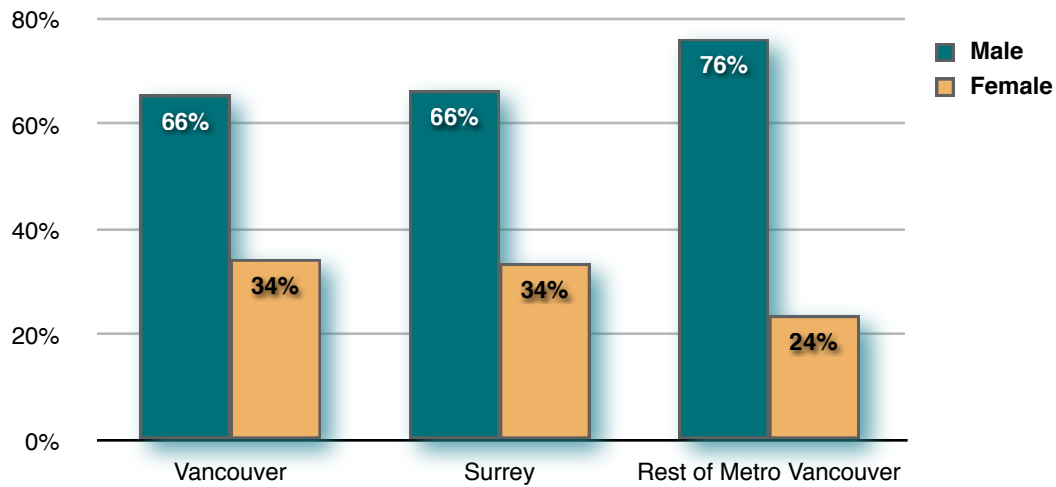
* The age categories were aggregated due to small numbers across some of the sites.

** “Other” includes persons in recovery/treatment, those who moved in with friends/family, and other housing forms.

On the whole, the rest of Metro Vancouver sub region appeared to have fewer women and fewer Aboriginal clients than the urban centres of Vancouver and Surrey. At the same time, there were more clients with addictions and mental health issues in those communities. In the suburban municipalities, where there are fewer SROs, there was still a greater reliance on low-cost apartments through the private market. Comparatively in Surrey, there was a greater reliance on secondary suites and shared housing.

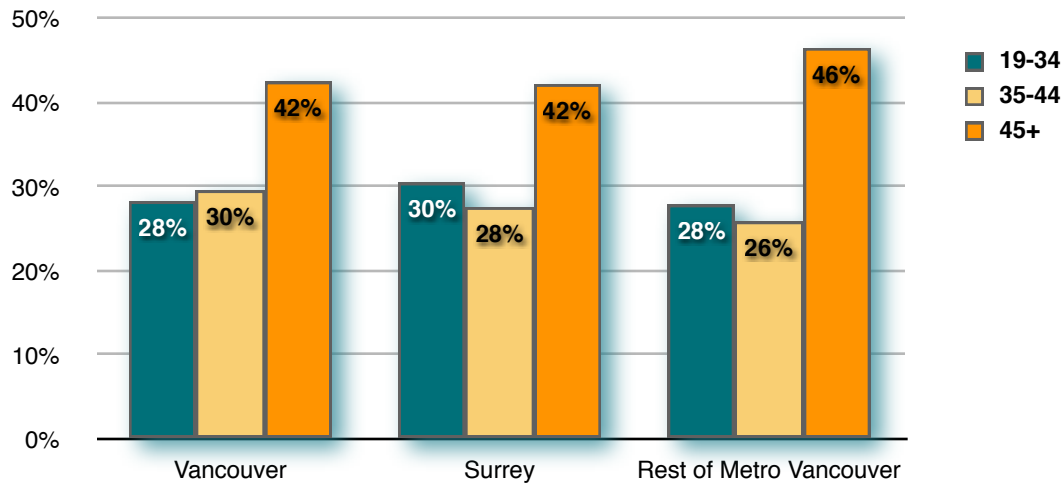
The following figures (Figures 5 to 8) provide a visual comparison of the clients across the different sub areas.

Figure 5 - Housed Clients by Gender (2009/2010)



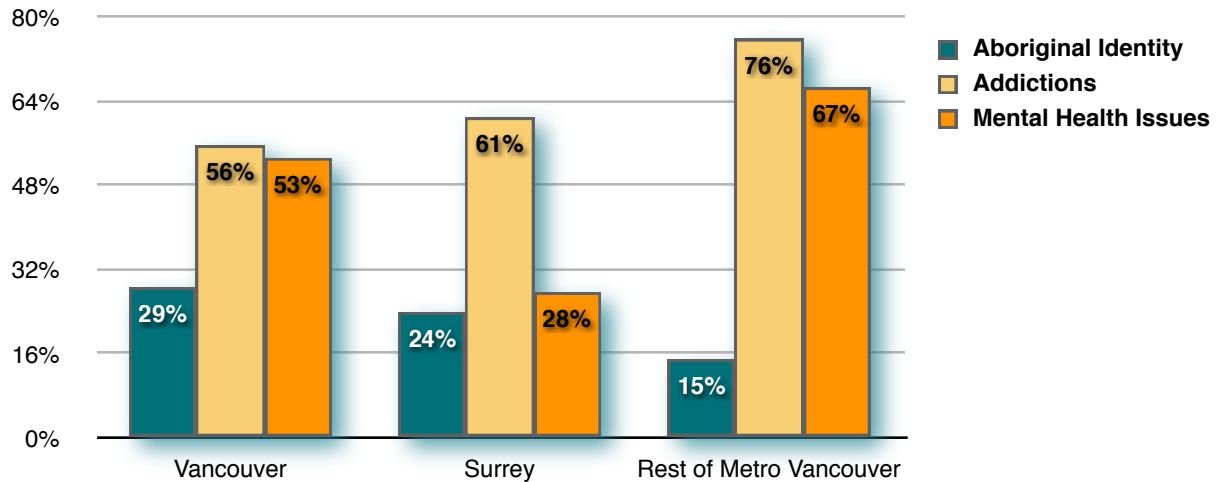
A greater proportion of men were housed in the rest of Metro Vancouver (76%) compared to the two more urban centres (66%).

Figure 6 - Housed Clients by Age (2009/2010)



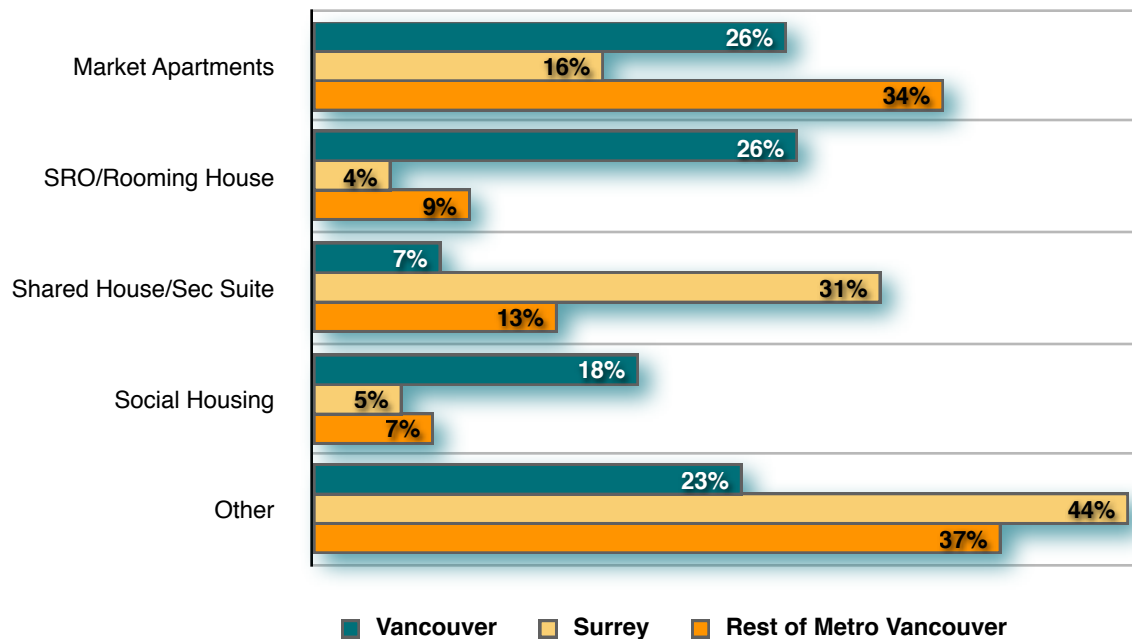
There was little variation in the age groups across the sub regions. A slightly greater proportion of older individuals is noted in the rest of Metro Vancouver communities.

Figure 7 - Housed Clients by Other Self-Reported Characteristics (2009/2010)



There were marked differences in the characteristics of the populations housed in the three sub areas. There was a much greater proportion of Aboriginal clients who found housing in Vancouver and, to a lesser extent, Surrey. Surrey had a greater proportion of clients housed who were dealing with addictions, but a very small percentage that were reported to have mental health issues. In the rest of Metro Vancouver, the prevalence of clients with addictions or mental health issues was notably higher than Vancouver or Surrey.

Figure 8 - Housed Clients by Type of Housing on September 30, 2010



It is difficult to confidently summarize the differences in the housing types across the sub regions. This cross tabulation results in small numbers in each of the categories, which inherently is less reliable. There is also some indication of a misinterpretation of the categories. For example, when no clients are reportedly housed in secondary suites in suburban communities known to have a large supply of this type of rental housing. Also, the data set included a category for “moved in with friends and family” which does not identify the type of housing and weakens the results overall. That said, there appears to be a strong reliance on market apartments in all sub regions and SROs in Vancouver.

The large percentage of clients housed in social or supported housing in Vancouver is also prominent, which is likely attributable to the large number of older buildings acquired by BC Housing in the Downtown Eastside in recent years. These units are available to tenants at income assistance shelter rates of \$375/month. In the other areas, there is much less opportunity to house clients in social housing.

Appendix D – Interview Guides



Interview Guide – Service Providers

We are conducting a research study on behalf of Metro Vancouver and BC Housing on the pathways out of homelessness. Through this study, we are seeking to better understand the factors that contribute to an individual who was homeless achieving stable housing. We have contacted you because of your role working with the homeless and assisting homeless individuals to get housed. Thank you for taking the time to meet with us.

Name of Interviewer			
Date		Location	
Name		Organization	

[Pre-Question]

Do you have clients that have been housed for six months or more? Do you continue to stay in contact with them and can confirm the status of their housing?

[If key-informant has not had any success with housing clients or has not remained in contact with her/his clients, then the interview can be concluded.]

1. Please tell us about your work. How many people are on your team? How many people are in your client/case load?
2. What are the primary issues or challenges faced by your clients in terms of staying housed?
3. What are some of the resources or community services that you regularly rely on as part of your work and that you connect clients to?
4. How do you find/select the housing that you place your clients in? Is some housing better suited to some clients?
5. In your view, is there a role for rent supplements in helping people find housing or stay housed?
6. Do you follow up with your clients on a regular basis? What follow up strategies or activities have been most helpful?
7. Have you been working with landlords to help your clients stay housed? Do you have any recommended strategies for doing this well?
8. Have many of your clients been able to stay housed for six months or more?

[Questions 9 to 12 consider clients who have stayed housed for 6 months or more.]

9. Thinking about those clients who successfully stayed housed for this period of time, what were the factors that led to their success?
10. For clients who moved during this time (without becoming homeless again), what were the factors that supported their success?
11. What role does the client's personal or social networks have in helping them to stay housed successfully?
12. For those clients who did not stay housed, what were the reasons behind that? What were the barriers to successful housing for them? Do you know what has happened to those individuals?

As part of our research, we would like to speak with individuals who were homeless and have been housed for six months or more. Do you think we could speak with any of your clients who fit this description? Would you be willing to connect us to them?

For those clients who we interview, can you tell us a little bit about their history of homelessness and the status of their health and addictions? Are they receiving a rent supplement?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME



Interview Guide – Clients

We are conducting a research study on behalf of Metro Vancouver and BC Housing on the pathways out of homelessness. Thank you for agreeing to speak with us. We understand that you have stable housing today. We would like to ask you some questions about how you achieved this in order to help other people to do the same.

Name of Interviewer			
Date		Location	
Name		Organization	
Client Gender		Client Age (approximate)	

1. What type of place are you currently living in?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apartment in market housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary suite |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel/rooming house | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/supported housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Room in house/apartment | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

2. Do you share/live alone/live with a partner/your family or relatives?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Live alone | <input type="checkbox"/> Live with family or relatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Live with friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

3. Describe the condition of your accommodation? Does it feel safe? Is it large enough?

4. How much rent do you pay?

5. What is your income? Do you receive income assistance?

6. How long have you been living in your current place? Where were you before that? What happened this time that made this move work for you?

7. How long do you plan to stay there? What, if anything, worries you about your future housing?

8. When you were looking for housing, did you have much choice? Did you have help to find this accommodation? What kind of help?

9. Do you have help/support now? What would you do if you needed help (with housing or other)?

10. What has made a difference for you in keeping your housing?

11. When you are having a really good day, who do you contact or reach out to? How about on a rough day?

12. Do you consider this place your home? What are the things that make it feel like home/not feel like home?

13. Would you mind telling us a little about yourself? Do you identify with a racial, cultural or ethnic group?
14. Do you have any additional comments, advice or suggestions you would like to share with us?

Appendix E – Research Consent Form



RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

The Pathways Out of Homelessness Regional Study is a partnership of Metro Vancouver and BC Housing. The purpose of the study is to find out what factors have helped people keep stable housing in the Metro Vancouver region. We are interested in talking to you because you have achieved stable housing and other people might be able to learn from your experiences.

The interviewer is going to record some information about you and ask you some questions about where you live and the type of support you receive. The project team will use the information you provide to determine what factors help people successfully keep stable housing and what some of the challenges are.

We will not use your name or any of your personal information in the report. This means you will not be identified.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate, you will still receive the exact same service from your outreach worker. If you sign this form, you are consenting to let us use the information you share with us in this study.

Interview No

Participant's Signature

Date

Interviewer's Initials

Appendix F – Frequently Asked Questions



Pathways Study Q & A

The Pathways out of Homelessness Regional Study was initiated to establish an understanding of what factors contribute to successfully maintaining housing for formerly homeless clients.

The following points provide a quick overview of the study and answers to common questions.

Who is conducting the study?

- The Pathways study is a partnership of Metro Vancouver and BC Housing.
- CitySpaces Consulting has been hired to conduct the study. CitySpaces is a planning consultancy with offices in Vancouver and Victoria. The firm has experience studying issues surrounding homelessness, housing strategy and affordability in many communities throughout B.C.

What is the purpose of the study?

- The objective of the research is to examine the success factors behind the experience of people who have been housed for six months or more. The study will establish a better understanding of the strategies and factors that contribute to successful housing, with the intent of sharing knowledge between agencies operating in the Metro Vancouver Region and other parts of BC to help more people stay housed.

What is the scope of the study?

- The study will focus on information gathered from the following sources:
 - Key-informant interviews with outreach workers and other front-line staff
 - Key-informant interviews with clients who have been housed for six months or more
 - Aggregate data for Metro Vancouver Clients from BC Housing's Homelessness Services Database (this information is not client-specific)

Who will be consulted?

- The research team will interview outreach workers from service providers operating throughout Metro Vancouver. The research team will also conduct interviews with formerly homeless people who have been housed for six months or longer - in some cases outreach workers will conduct the interviews with clients.

How will the key-informant interviews be selected?

- Service providers will be selected from across the region in an effort to include a cross section of service agencies and different subregions in Metro Vancouver. Outreach workers will be asked to assist the research team to identify formerly homeless clients who have been housed for six months or more, and to assist the team with scheduling the interviews.

How will the findings of the study be used?

- Information about success factors will be summarized and presented in a final report. The report will also suggest recommendations to maximize the success of outreach workers, individuals entering housing programs, and individuals who have been housed through programs such as HOP, AHOP, ESP.
- Pending Metro Vancouver and BC Housing review and final approval, findings from the final report will be shared with outreach workers and service providers and may also be made public.

How will privacy and confidentiality be protected?

- No identifying personal information about the study participants will be recorded (e.g. name, address, S.I.N.). All responses to the interview questions are completely confidential. Information gathered for the report will not be linked to an individual client or outreach worker.

Is participation mandatory?

- No. Participation in the study is completely voluntary. Choosing not to participate in the study will not have an impact on the housing or services currently received by an individual.

Will clients be compensated for their participation?

- Yes, clients will receive a \$10 gift certificate for a local restaurant or grocery store as a thank-you for participating in the study.

Why would a client be interested in participating in the study?

- We recognize that successfully maintaining housing is a significant achievement and would like to encourage people to share their experiences and the factors that led to their success so that the programs and services offered in the Region can incorporate this knowledge and other people can benefit from the experiences of others.

More questions?

If you have questions about the study, or want to be involved, please contact Noha Sedky at CitySpaces Consulting.

Telephone: 604.687.2281 x224

Email: nsedky@cityspaces.ca

Address: 585-1111 West Hastings Street
Vancouver BC, V6E 2J3

Appendix G – List of Documents & Reports

DOCUMENT REVIEW

Research Papers & Reports

The following research papers and studies reviewed:

- Ann Rosengard Associates. 2002. *Routes of Homelessness*. Scottish Executive Central Research Unit.
- Anucha, Uzo. 2003. *A Study of Tenant Exits from Housing for Homeless People*. Centre for Urban and Community Studies. Prepared for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.
- Casey, Sue. 2002. “Snakes and Ladders: Women’s Pathways Into and Out of Homelessness.” In T. Eardley and B. Bradbury, eds. *Competing Visions: Refereed Proceedings of the National Social Policy Conference 2001*. Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales. 75-90.
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. 2002. *Evaluating Housing Stability for People with Serious Mental Illness at Risk for Homelessness*. Prepared for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.
- Cooper, Lesley and Morris, Mary. 2005. “How to help Indigenous families into stable housing and sustainable tenancy.” *AHURI Research and Policy Bulletin*. Issue 56.
- Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. June 30, 2010. *Greater Victoria Report on Housing & Supports*.
- Greenberg, Teya. 2007. *Pathways Into and Out of Homelessness in Small BC Communities*. Canadian Mental Health Association.
- Gronda, Hellene. 2009. *What makes case management work for people experiencing homelessness? Evidence for practice*. Prepared for the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. AHURI Final Report No. 127.
- Johnson, Guy. 2006. *On the Move: A Longitudinal Study of Pathways In and Out of Homelessness*. Thesis. School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning, RMIT University.
- LenMac Consulting. 2005. *Sustaining Housing After Homelessness: Final Research Report to the National SAAP Coordination and Development Committee*.
- Mission Australia. 2009. *An Icon For Exit: The Mission Australia Centre 2005 -2008*.
- Patterson, M. et al. 2008. *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and Mental Illness in British Columbia*. Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction.
- Pilinger, Jane. 2007. *Homeless Pathways: Developing Effective Strategies to Address Pathways Into, Through and Out of Homelessness*. Focus Ireland.

In addition, a set of local documents and relevant reports were reviewed:

- Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness. 2010. *Homelessness in Metro Vancouver: A Comparative Community Profile*.
- BC Housing. 2010. *Case Planning Guide for Homelessness Services Providers*. http://www.bchousing.org/programs/ESP/shelter_operators/CPT
- BC Housing. 2008. *Emergency Shelter Program - Program Framework*. http://www.bchousing.org/programs/ESP/shelter_operators/framework
- BC Housing. 2009. *Homeless Outreach Program - Program Framework*.
- CitySpaces Consulting. 2007. *Vancouver Homeless Outreach Project: Evaluation Report*. http://www.bchousing.org/resources/Programs/HOP/VHOP_October_07.pdf
- CitySpaces Consulting. 2007. *Provincial Homeless Outreach Program: Evaluation Report*. Prepared for Canadian Mental Health Association. http://www.cmha.bc.ca/files/Outreach_Evaluation.pdf

Appendix H – List of Participating Service Provider Agencies

LIST OF PARTICIPATING SERVICE PROVIDERS

Service Providers*		City	Program
1	Alouette Home Start Society	Maple Ridge	HOP
2	Carnegie Centre Outreach	Vancouver	HOP
3	Lookout Emergency Aid Society- North Shore	North Vancouver	HOP
4	Canadian Mental Health Association - Simon Fraser Branch	New Westminister	HOP
5	Coast Foundation Society	Vancouver	HOP
6	Front Room - South Fraser Community Services Society	Surrey	HOP
7	Hope For Freedom Society	Port Coquitlam	HOP
8	Kettle Friendship Society	Vancouver	HOP
9	Kla How Eya Aboriginal Centre	Surrey	AHOP
10	Lookout Emergency Aid Society - Vancouver	Vancouver	HOP
11	MPA Society	Vancouver	HOP
12	Options Community Services Society	Surrey	HOP
13	Progressive Housing Society	Burnaby	HOP
14	Raincity Housing and Support Society	Vancouver	HOP
15	Salvation Army - Chilliwack	Chilliwack	HOP
16	Stepping Stone Community Services Society	Langley	HOP
17	Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services Society	Vancouver	AHOP

* This list represents the majority of service provider agencies providing homeless outreach services in Metro Vancouver. A small number of additional service providers were contacted, but could not be reached or the interviews could not be scheduled within the study time frame. The emergency shelter providers were not contacted as part of the study.

Appendix I – Homeless Outreach Programs - Framework

HOMELESS OUTREACH PROGRAMS – PROGRAM FRAMEWORKS

The following program framework descriptions have been provided by BC Housing for the two homeless outreach programs in BC.

HOP Context

BC Housing’s Homeless Outreach Program (HOP) provides people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness direct access to housing. Outreach services provided by non-profit organizations in communities across the province, directly engage people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness by assessing client need, assisting with personal goals, and connecting individuals and families with stable accommodation and appropriate services.

HOP is often the first point of contact for individuals and families with the provincial system of housing and support services, and provides the opportunity to find long-term or more stable housing options, and provides referrals to appropriate services in the community to support independence along the housing continuum (see Figure 1). The program, grounded in client’s strengths and in the context of each local community, ensures that individuals and families establish stable accommodation and connect with services to support independence along the housing continuum.

Goals

13. To provide people who are homeless or at the risk of homelessness with access to housing and support services in order to reduce the likelihood of continued homelessness; and
14. To provide services which are person-focused and promote long term housing stability.

Objectives

1. For people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness:
 - Connect them with secure, stable accommodation
 - Connect them with community based support services that address their immediate needs
 - Connect them with income assistance, where appropriate
2. Where clients have been placed as tenants, help them maintain their housing and their ability to live independently:
 - Provide direct support and tenancy skill training to maintain their housing
 - Liaise with community based service providers to maintain appropriate services to clients
 - Liaise with landlords and provide support to landlords where appropriate

Outcomes

1. Increased number of clients referred to support services.
2. Increased number of clients connected with appropriate, stable housing.
3. Increased number of clients who develop case plans. This is a new outcome for 2011/12.

AHOP Context

BC Housing's Homeless Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program (AHOP) provides urban and rural off-reserve Aboriginal peoples who are homeless or at risk of homelessness direct access to housing. Outreach services provided by non-profit organizations in communities across the province, directly engage people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness by assessing client need, assisting with personal goals, and connecting individuals and families with stable accommodation and appropriate services.

The AHOP will enable Aboriginal individuals and families who are homeless or at the risk of homelessness access to housing and other community based resources in a culturally sensitive manner, while pursuing their goals towards improved health, well being and housing stability. AHOP is often the first point of contact for individuals and families with the provincial system of housing and support services, and provides the opportunity to find long-term or more stable housing options, and provides referrals to appropriate services in the community to support independence along the housing continuum. The program, grounded in client's strengths and in the context of each local community, ensures that individuals and families establish stable accommodation and connect with services to support independence along the housing continuum.

Goals

1. To provide Aboriginal individuals or families who are homeless or at the risk of homelessness with access to housing, culturally appropriate services and other support services in order to reduce the likelihood of continued homelessness; and
2. To provide services which are person-focused and promote long term housing stability.

Objectives

1. For Aboriginal peoples who are homeless or at risk of homelessness:
 - Connect them with secure, stable accommodation.
 - Connect them with community based support services that address their immediate needs.
 - Connect them to their culture, community and culturally appropriate services.
 - Connect them with income assistance, where appropriate.
2. Where clients have been placed as tenants, help them maintain their housing and their ability to live independently:
 - Provide direct support and tenancy skill training to maintain their housing.
 - Liaise with culturally appropriate services and other community based service providers to maintain appropriate services to clients.
 - Liaise with landlords and provide support to landlords where appropriate.

Outcomes

1. Increased number of Aboriginal clients referred to support services.
2. Increased number of Aboriginal clients connected with appropriate, stable housing.
3. Increased number of Aboriginal clients are connected with culturally appropriate services.
4. Increased number of Aboriginal clients who develop case plans. This is a new outcome for 2011/12.

