

PATHWAYS TO HOUSING: HOUSING FIRST MODEL

ADAPTED FOR USE IN THE
CANADIAN CONTEXT

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What is Housing-First?

As defined by The National Alliance to
End Homelessness in the USA:



“A client-driven strategy that provides immediate access to an apartment without requiring initial participation in psychiatric treatment or treatment for sobriety”

- Most current programs require homeless individuals to be “housing ready” with multiple requirements placed on clients before they can be housed (i.e. sobriety periods, medication compliance, involvement in multiple programs, free of criminal charges)
- Once the chaos of homelessness is eliminated from a person’s life, clinical and social stabilization occur faster and are more enduring
- No “flunk out” policy – allows clients dignity in failure & relapse

Housing First Principles

- Housing is a basic human right
- Individualized assertive engagement
- Separation of housing and services
- Prioritize the most vulnerable
- Harm reduction
- Scatter site housing or place based
- Recovery orientation



Cost of Homelessness

The average cost of homelessness in Calgary is estimated to be \$134,000 per person per year¹

- Costs incurred:
 - Hospital - average \$900/day = \$27,000/month
 - Shelter - \$50/day = \$1,500/month
 - Incarceration - \$110/day = \$3,300/month
 - Other: Police involvement, EMS, courts, out-patient health services

¹Data from research compiled by Calgary's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness



Cost of Pathways to Housing Calgary

- Pathways provides housing and support with an 24/7 Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team for \$30,000 per client per year
 - Cost includes monthly rent subsidy, furnishings, support team, 24/7 crisis on call, all medical and psychiatric care
- Key partners have recognized the *value* of this kind of collaboration for both the client (comprehensive service delivery), improved quality of life and the system (cost savings)

Outcomes

- Decline in days in jail: 79%
- Decline in days hospitalized (from one year prior to intake compared to one year in the program): 66%
- Decline in times in emergency room: 38%
- Decline in EMS use; 41%
- Decline in police interactions: 30%
- Increase in court appearances: 4%

*Positive statistic as P2H runs a provincial and federal Court Diversion Program

Pathways to Housing Calgary

- Pathways to Housing is an interdisciplinary Assertive Community Treatment Team (ACT)
- Housing First approach
- Harm Reduction
- Use Evidence Based Practices for this population
- Has been in operation since 2007
- Clients served have a significant Axis 1 mental health diagnosis: 91% also have an active addiction

Pathways Program Goals

- Enables clients to obtain immediate access to permanent, independent housing.
- Reduce hospitalizations, EMS, ER Visits.
- Reduce incarcerations and contact with police.
- Belief in recovery which rests on the knowledge that people with mental illness can and do recover their lives completely!
- Reconnection/involvement with family.

Program Design

- Team One: Mental Health and Addictions
 - 60 clients
- Team Two: Justice focus and Addictions
 - 60 clients
- Team Three: High Service Users
 - 60 clients
- Team Four: Targeted ACT
 - 20 clients



Client Requirements

- Desire to be housed
- Meet terms of a lease
- Pay for residential phone
- Agree to pay 30% of income or social assistance towards rent
- Agree to a visit by member of team once per week



Pathways Admission Criteria

- Axis I diagnosis
(major mental illness)
+/- addiction
+/- chronic health issues
- Homeless
- 18 years or older
- Willing to have a visit by Pathways staff a minimum of once per week
- Willing to pay 30% of income/financial assistance toward rent
- Client has a criminal history for Team Two, Justice Team



Pathways Admission Criteria

- Clients will be accepted into the Pathways Program even if any of the following are present:



- Current alcohol and/or drug use, abuse, or dependency
- Refusal to follow a medical and/or psychiatric medication regimen
- Refusal to engage in mental health and/or addictions counseling
- Extensive criminal record

Interdisciplinary ACT Teams

- Team Lead (Masters in Psychology or MSW)
- Substance Use Specialist
- Psychologist
- Mental Health Clinician
- Two Registered Nurses
- Vocational/Justice /Aboriginal Specialist
- Program Assistant





Canadian Adaptations

Family Supports

- Family Peer Support Specialist
 - 6 week family psycho-education group
 - Individual support to client's families and natural supports
 - Group activities for natural supports



Rec Therapist

- Daily lunch and psycho-ed group
- Weekly community wellness group
- One-on-one wellness activities
- Staff Wellness



Medical/Psych Enhancements

- Medical Office Assistant
- Nurse Practitioner
- Outreach Medical Doctors
- Psychiatric care



Targeted ACT

- 20 Intensive Case Management clients
- Step down in intensity of service
- Preparation for graduation



Graduations & Successful discharges

- Not just “act for life”:
 - Some clients graduate to independence
 - Some clients graduate to step-down programs
- This fiscal year we have had 10 clients graduate
 - 3 to less intensive programs
 - 2 to Pathways to Housing Edmonton
 - 3 to total independence
 - 2 moved out of geographic area to be with natural supports



Culturally Sensitive Programming

- Medicine wheel
- Smudging
- Diversity training
- Healing circles
- Annual Pow Wow



Corporate Culture

- Staff wellness days
- Team building activities
- Office time





Questions?



More Information

Contact the Program:

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Facebook: Housing First: Training, Support and
Consultation

