

Building
Connections

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message from BC Housing

Welcome to the first issue of Building Connections, a newsletter for and about agencies funded by the Emergency Shelter Program. Since taking responsibility for the program last year, BC Housing has been working to integrate shelters within the province's housing continuum, to build links between shelter providers, and ultimately between shelters and more permanent housing.

We know emergency shelters alone will not integrate people back into housing and the greater community, but shelters are the first line of access to the support services and stability that can help people move toward self-sufficiency.

We are currently conducting a capacity and demand review to identify gaps and address issues in the program. A shelter program review is also underway. You can read more about both these reviews in this issue.

BC Housing is facilitating these initiatives, but we see our work on the Emergency Shelter Program as a partnership with you. Likewise, this newsletter is an opportunity for you to share ideas with your colleagues. Please provide us with feedback to help shape its content and scope, and welcome to BC Housing.

Shayne Ramsay
CEO



One of the purposes of Building Connections is to provide important information about the Emergency Shelter Program to shelter and service operators. It will be published four times a year: in March, June, September, and December. Be sure to read each issue and share it with your staff. It's the best way to get the latest information about the Emergency Shelter Program to help you operate your shelter.

You can sign up to automatically receive copies of the newsletter by email through BC Housing's website. Visit http://www.bchousing.org/news/email_notification, click on "Register to receive email notifications," fill in the required information, select "Homeless Shelter and Drop-In Updates," and then click "Register."

Capacity and Demand Review

The Emergency Shelter Program is currently reviewing the capacity needs of the emergency shelter sector. Once complete, we expect the review to be the most complete inventory of shelter services in B.C. ever compiled. Over the summer, you were asked to complete a survey focused on current capacity, demand for services, and the range of operational issues faced by providers in the emergency shelter sector. CitySpaces Consulting is now compiling the data from your responses. This review will give us a better understanding of the existing capacity of the emergency shelter sector as well as the demand for emergency shelter beds and related services across the province.

Program Review

BC Housing will soon be working with a consultant to review the Emergency Shelter Program and the services provided by the funded agencies. The purpose of the review is to fully integrate shelters and other program-funded agencies into the continuum of housing and ultimately to help re-connect homeless clients with more permanent kinds of housing. With the shift of responsibility for the Emergency Shelter Program from the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance to BC Housing last fall, this is also an opportune time to develop program standards to ensure consistent services across the province. We expect the review to get underway soon and to be completed in spring 2007. As part of the review, we expect the consultant may be in contact with some of you. We appreciate your co-operation and look forward to sharing the results with you.

Funding for sundries

The list of sundry items now covered by the \$2 million one-time funding announced by the Province in April 2006 has increased. For example, you can now obtain women's underwear, several personal care items (e.g. first aid supplies, small packets of laundry detergent), and several non-prescription pharmaceuticals. And, the deadline for spending the money has been extended from March 31, 2007 to March 31, 2009.

To place orders for these items, visit the Product Distribution Centre (PDC) at <http://pss.online.gov.bc.ca/pdc>. You will need your login and password to enter the site (if you have forgotten these, please contact the PDC at 604-927-2000 (toll free: 1-800-988-1155) as this is the fastest way to determine these). If you do not have internet access, call the PDC and ask them to send you a form. If you are faxing in your order, the number is 1-800-373-2662.

Please note that eight items requiring sizing are not included in the shopping cart. There is a special order form for these items that can be downloaded from the website, filled in and then either emailed to PDCCustomerService@gov.bc.ca. or faxed to 604-927-2025 (toll free: 1-800-373-2662).

You may notice that some items in the shopping cart have a price listing of \$0.01. This is not the real price; rather this indicates that the item is subject to availability and the actual price will be determined at the time of purchase.

We need your stats!

Operators are reminded that it is extremely important to fill in and submit your reports accurately and on a monthly basis. Reports are due no later than the 15th of each month. These reports provide us with statistical information that we use for program planning and funding.

NEW

Excel versions of the forms have been created and are available from your Property Portfolio Manager. Forms may now be submitted electronically or in hard copy to them. The Excel forms are intended to reduce your work and stress; but if it is easier for you to continue to use the original forms, please do so. We also would like to remind you to read the instructions carefully, so that we have consistent reporting across the province.

The new forms are also available from BC Housing's website.

Extreme Weather Response Policy

An Extreme Weather Response Policy has now been established to outline clearly BC Housing's role in funding Extreme Weather Responses so that both the communities organizing these and BC Housing will be prepared to respond to serve people who are homeless during weather emergencies.

BC Housing must be able to verify that invoices submitted to be paid under the Extreme Weather Response are part of a large community plan to provide services in times of extreme weather. BC Housing must also ensure that there is a continued need for such services.

Community planning groups must submit an updated version of their Extreme Weather Response Plan to BC Housing by October 31. In addition, participating shelters must also submit to BC Housing by October 31 an Extreme Weather Shelter Nightly Budget form for prior approval.

To obtain a copy of the Extreme Weather Response Policy, contact homeless@bchousing.org.

After-hours emergency contacts

If an emergency arises that threatens your ability to provide services when BC Housing offices are closed and you need to reach your Property Portfolio Manager, please call our Emergency Services in your region:

Vancouver Coastal Region: 604-682-4852

Fraser Region: 604-682-4852

Vancouver Island Region: 250-213-8798

Interior Region: 1-800-834-7149

Northern Region: 250-562-9251

Exemptions from MEIA's three-week work search for income assistance

The Province recognizes that people in emergency situations need help now. That's why people who have a genuine urgent need – individuals who are homeless or without the basics of food and clothing; those who are physically ill and in need of medicine; or people who cannot seek work due to physical or mental impairment – are exempt from work searches and independence tests.

Clients who are homeless do not need to perform a work search and are met on a priority basis to determine their needs and process their application for assistance. In an effort to reach out to help those who for whatever reason won't or can't come into MEIA offices for assistance, ministry staff work in ongoing collaboration with community partners. In addition to their connection with emergency shelter providers, MEIA staff routinely attend hospitals, drop-in centres and drug and alcohol treatment centres to find those in need and connect them with income support and other services available through government.

If you have a client who you believe is eligible for assistance, contact your nearest MEIA office to see how their application can be processed quickly.

Lower Mainland regions' names change

BC Housing has recently changed the names of its Lower Mainland regional offices to better demonstrate their alignment with the health authorities and other ministries. Lower Mainland West Region is now known as Vancouver Coastal Region; Lower Mainland East Region is now known as Fraser Region.

Homelessness Awareness Week

October 16 to 22 is Homelessness Awareness Week in a number of communities around the province. The week offers the chance to raise public awareness and understanding of homelessness and to keep the issue on the public agenda. It is also an opportunity to involve homeless people as planners and participants, thus ensuring that events are meaningful to the clients.

This is the first year of the Greater Vancouver Homelessness Awareness Week and the week's events will emphasize solutions and successes already working in the region. The theme is Homelessness and Health. Information about events is available at stophomelessness.ca.

agency profile

Social enterprise at the New Life Mission in Kamloops

The New Life Mission in Kamloops offers a long list of programs and services to the community, including several social enterprise ventures.

One of the most successful initiatives is a dental clinic, which serves low-income community members and those with no dental coverage, often the homeless or those with mental health and addictions issues.

Located at the New Life Outreach Centre in downtown Kamloops, the dental clinic recently expanded to a two-chair facility to accommodate the demand. The dental clinic complements

other outreach programs including The New Life Health Centre at the Outreach Centre – a partnership with Interior Health.

The dental clinic started with volunteer dentists and all costs were underwritten by the New Life Mission. At the time, the clinic was limited to providing service one day every three weeks. Now, seven years later, it runs five days a week and generates enough revenue from paying clients to sustain itself and provide pro-bono work for many of the New Life Mission's clients.

“The dental clinic is an integral part of combined services at the health care centre,” said Tim Larose, Executive Director for the New Life Mission. “It's one more way the New Life Mission can act as a social community providing people with resources and assistance accessing services they wouldn't typically access on their own, or sometimes even qualify for.”



The New Life Outreach Centre's dental clinic.

The clinic, which is run by Dr. Holly Schweiger, is a full-service dental clinic, thanks to equipment grants from both the federal and provincial governments. It also offers dental services to members of the general public who have dental coverage with private plans. This provides revenue for the clinic, as well as covers the overhead, including paying the dentist and his staff, a receptionist and a Certified Dental Assistant.

After paying for wages and supplies, the clinic makes a modest profit, which is used to purchase supplies, pay overhead and repair equipment. This past year Dr. Schweiger has provided approximately \$30,000 of pro-bono dental work.

tips and tools

This section of your newsletter is intended to give you simple ideas for operating your shelter or drop-in centre. In this issue, BC Housing Property Portfolio Manager Catherine Williams shares some tips. If you have suggestions that you would like to share with your fellow operators, contact the editor: glunde@bchousing.org; 604-439-4135.

- Are the screens in your bathroom taps going missing? Stop replacing them and instead buy faucets that do not have screens.
- Are your light bulbs getting smashed? It may not look great, but you might want to put cages around them.
- Instead of replacing your metal spoons, stock up on plastic ones at your closest discount supplier.
- Want to stretch your food budget? Planning meals that match the season will help.
- Theft is a fact of life in some shelters. Contact your local school board and ask them to donate lockers from schools that are being closed. If they are in rough shape, talk to an auto body shop about donating the cost of powder coating them.

- Do not use or purchase beds with box springs. These can be used as hiding places for illicit weapons or drugs.
- For the same reason, screw down your heat vents.

statistics

Homeless counts

Across the province, both formal and informal homeless counts have been conducted.

Kelowna

November 2004: 420

Nanaimo

April 2005: 149

Victoria

January 2005: 700

GVRD count

March 2005: 2,174

More

Several informal homeless counts have taken place in several communities across the province. These communities include Saltspring Island (28), Cowichan (76), and Williams Lake (64).

Do you have interesting statistics to share? Send them to the editor: glunde@bchousing.org; 604-439-4135.

frequently asked questions

Can we get more funding for our shelter or expand the number of beds that are funded?

BC Housing is conducting a review of the existing emergency shelter bed supply and the demand for those beds. Based on the results, we will be developing a proposal to address identified gaps in shelter bed availability. If you would like to submit a proposal for increased funding, please do so and it will be included in the analysis of the needs and gaps. Decisions will not be made on proposals until after the review is complete.

Our shelter requires minor repairs or minor capital improvements. Will BC Housing provide funding for this?

Currently BC Housing does not provide capital funding through the Emergency Shelter Program.

Who you gonna call?

Wondering who's who at BC Housing and who you should call when you need certain information? In most instances, your Property Portfolio Manager is your primary contact. You may also want to contact the program's Administrative Assistant if you require new forms. Here's a listing of who's who.

Vancouver Coastal Region



Dale McMann
Regional Director



Susan Wong
Property Portfolio Manager
604-694-2627
Swong@bchousing.org

Fraser Region



Darin Froese
Regional Director



Hartley Lee
Property Portfolio Manager
604-519-2320
hlee@bchousing.org



Valerie Smith
Property Portfolio Manager
604-519-2316
vsmith@bchousing.org



Diana van den Camp
Property Portfolio Manager
604-519-2317
dvandencamp@bchousing.org

Vancouver Island Region



Roger Butcher
Regional Director



Chuck Braun
Property Portfolio Manager
250-978-2906
cbraun@bchousing.org



John Cavelti
 Property Portfolio
 Manager
 250-978-2904
 jcavelti@bchousing.org

Ted Eby
 Property Portfolio Manager
 250-978-2905
 teby@bchousing.org

Interior Region



Peter Chau
 Regional Director



Maggie Chinnery
 Property Portfolio Manager
 250-487-2525
 mchinnery@bchousing.org



Nanette Drobot
 Property Portfolio
 Manager
 250- 487-2524
 ndrobot@bchousing.org



Catherine Williams
 Property Portfolio Manager
 250-487-2532
 cwilliams@bchousing.org

Northern Region



Ann Howard
 Regional Director



Valerie Hare
 Property Portfolio Manager
 250-649-2154
 vhare@bchousing.org

Home Office



Michael Anhorn
 Manager, Emergency
 Shelter Program
 604-439-8595
 mianhorn@bchousing.org

Administrative Assistant
 homeless@bchousing.org

It can be hard to come to work some days... but clients remind us why we do it. Here are some inspiring quotes, with thanks to the staff at Lookout Emergency Aid Society for sharing these.

If you have client quotes that you would like to submit, please contact the editor:
glunde@bchousing.org; 604-439-4135.

“Thanks for all the help and support given to me when I was at the Yukon Street Shelter. I'm now the senior system Integrator for the Maritime Helicopter Program in Halifax and loving it. The company I work for will send me to school (weekends) for an Executive MBA. Working my program [rehab] and have not felt so good in years.”

Kent

“I can't thank you enough for giving me a roof over my head, meals, meds guidance and support. Nobody thinks they will find themselves homeless, but life can go sideways. Having your help and support was everything I needed, when I needed it.”

Vel

“Due to sad and unforeseen circumstances my partner, myself and our unborn baby found us without a place to stay or anything to eat. Feeling completely lost and devastated and never having been in this situation before, we came across the Lookout phone number and to our relief, were instructed to come that evening. Now we feel safe and (to our shock) even our cat has a place to sleep! We are both grateful to those who make Lookout possible for even without their aid, we would be sleeping in the park!”

Carun