

# HOMELESS OUTREACH PROGRAM

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## PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

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5th Edition



## INTRODUCTION

BC Housing's Homeless Outreach Program (HOP) provides Services to individuals who are experiencing Homelessness or are At Risk of Homelessness. Services are delivered by non-profit organizations in communities across the province who directly engage and assess Clients, assisting them with personal goals and connecting them with Housing and community based Support Services.

For many Clients, HOP is often the first point of contact with the provincial system of housing and supports, and provides an important opportunity for Clients to find long-term Housing options and referrals to appropriate Support Services. Services provided according to HOP are part of a suite of programs along the housing continuum (Figure 1)<sup>1</sup>.

HOP also includes targeted funding to enable Indigenous individuals, who are experiencing Homelessness or At Risk of Homelessness, to access Housing, Support Services, and other Culturally Appropriate Services.

As of 2014, in some communities, HOP includes additional preventive measures to help individuals and families who are at immediate risk of Homelessness due to crisis or transition. This enhancement, the Homeless Prevention Program (HPP), includes additional rental supplements and supports that specifically target individuals leaving the corrections or hospital systems, women who have experienced Violence or are At Risk of Violence, youth (including those leaving the care system), and Indigenous peoples.

This framework outlines key program elements, standards and guidelines, and defines the roles and responsibilities of BC Housing and its partners in the delivery and management of the program. BC Housing developed this program framework in partnership with providers and is committed to working cooperatively with the sector for program delivery.

**Figure 1: Housing Continuum**



## PRINCIPLES

### Services are accessible and Client focused

- Services are accessible to anyone aged 19 or older who is experiencing Homelessness or is At Risk of Homelessness, regardless of ethno-cultural background, religious beliefs, disability, mental health status, gender identity or sexual orientation.

<sup>1</sup> The housing continuum extends from emergency shelter and housing for those experiencing homelessness through to affordable rental housing and homeownership. This diagram illustrates the level of supports and services tenants may need to maintain a stable housing situation and ranges from housing with integrated on-site programs and services through to independent housing in the private market.

- Providers are culturally aware, sensitive, and respectful of diversity, and embrace a spirit of flexibility in their approach to meeting the needs of their Clients.
- Providers are aware of the diversity of sexual orientation and gender identities and work to create an atmosphere of safety and respect.
- Providers are aware of the nature, dynamics and impact of violence against women and work to create a safe and secure environment.
- Providers engage with Clients to assist them in identifying and pursuing their goals toward Housing, wellness and self-reliance. This includes providing resources and information to Clients on Housing, health care, income and employment services.
- An atmosphere of dignity, compassion and respect is maintained.
- A range of Services will be available to ensure access for a diverse population.
- Service engagement is based on the willingness of Clients to accept help in obtaining and maintaining Housing, wellness and self-reliance. Clients must be given a choice in terms of Housing options as well as the services they wish to access.

### **Operations are transparent and accountable**

- Providers maintain reliable records and fulfil regular reporting obligations.
- Providers adopt written policies and procedures that are responsive to Client needs.
- Providers communicate their policy and procedure regarding complaints and appeals to all Clients.
- A monitoring system provides assurance that an adequate quality of service is provided.
- Providers work towards achieving predetermined program goals and targets.
- BC Housing conducts reviews and assessments to confirm that Services delivered are effective at meeting the program's objectives.
- BC Housing regularly reports to the provincial government and the public on the effectiveness of the program.

### **The service environment is safe, secure and welcoming**

- The health and safety of staff and Clients is of the highest importance. While unlawful discrimination is not tolerated, providers are not expected to deliver Services in circumstances where the safety or security of any individual may be threatened.
- Providers should have a safety protocol in place that provides clear guidance for Client and staff safety, including procedures to help ensure staff safety while engaged in outreach work. Safety protocols should be geared specifically to the context of the local community and reviewed periodically with all management and staff.

### **Collaboration among providers to improve service effectiveness**

- Service delivery effectiveness is enhanced through open and collaborative working relationships among providers, partner agencies, other government agencies and BC Housing.
- Program delivery is responsive to community needs and funding must reflect local needs assessments, strategic plans, best practice research and evidence-based analyses.

## GOALS

1. Break the cycle of Homelessness by connecting Clients to appropriate Housing and the supports necessary to help them remain Housed.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Provide outreach Services and connections to necessary Support Services.
2. Facilitate the movement of Clients into Housing.
3. Where Clients have been Housed, help them maintain their Housing by:
  - a. Providing direct support and tenancy skill training;
  - b. Liaising with community based providers to maintain appropriate Support Services to Clients, including culturally appropriate community based providers; and
  - c. Liaising with landlords and providing support to landlords where appropriate.
4. Support communication, partnerships and collaborative initiatives across the outreach sector.

## OUTCOMES

1. The immediate needs of Clients are met through the provision of outreach Services and connection to Support Services.
2. Clients are connected with Housing.
3. Clients are supported to maintain Housing.

## MEASURES

Performance measures are designed to measure progress towards program goals, objectives and outcomes (Figure 2). Minimum requirements will be established by BC Housing, subject to the collection of baseline data.

**Figure 2: Performance Measures**

Performance Measure
Clients who are not Housed are Housed.
Clients who are Housed are supported to maintain Housing.
Clients who are Housed remain Housed at six and twelve months.
Clients who are supported to maintain Housing remain Housed at six and twelve months.

## TARGET POPULATIONS AND ELIGIBILITY

Individuals who are experiencing Homelessness or are At Risk of Homelessness are eligible for Services. Services are available to all adults (aged 19 and older) and families in need. Children under the age of 19 can receive Services if they are accompanied by their parent/guardian or if they are referred to the provider by a social worker acting under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*. Individuals under the age of 19, presenting without a parent or guardian, should be referred to child and youth serving agencies and/or the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). The province-wide Helpline for Children (310-1234; no area code required) is an available resource.

The *Homeless Prevention Program* enhancement targets individuals and families who are experiencing Homelessness or are At Risk of Homelessness due to crisis or transition:

- People leaving the corrections or hospital systems
- Women who have experienced Violence or are At Risk of Violence
- Youth (including those leaving the care system)
- People of Indigenous descent

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**BC Housing** is responsible for:

- Funding providers by entering into support services agreements for the provision of Services.
- Developing province-wide standards and guidelines with providers.
- Approving and reviewing annual operating budgets and expenditures.
- Conducting regular monitoring and evaluation of Services.
- Working with and supporting providers by:
  - Assigning a BC Housing representative to act as a liaison;
  - Providing clear guidelines and expectations for the provision of Services;
  - Providing information, resources and assistance where appropriate;
  - Supporting partnership development, best practices dissemination, and service integration;
  - Identifying gaps in service provision and working with collaboratively to respond to gaps; and
  - Providing Database Support.

**Providers** are responsible for:

- Delivering Services;
- Complying with operational guidelines, program and performance standards;
- Maintaining adequate and accurate Client service records;
- Submitting required financial information;
- Timely entry of data into the Database;
- Informing BC Housing of any critical incidents;
- Notifying BC Housing of any issues that may materially affect the provider's ability to fulfil the terms of the support services agreement;
- Managing staff and providing appropriate training;
- Maintaining a clear service mandate that outlines how the program will meet Clients needs;
- Developing partnerships with other service providers to enhance service delivery and Housing outcomes; and
- Building and maintaining relationships with landlords where Clients receive rent supplements, and providing supports when appropriate.

## OPERATING FUNDING AND AGREEMENTS

Providers approved for program funding are required to enter into a support services agreement with BC Housing. Providers who receive additional HPP funding, or primarily serve Indigenous Clients, will receive tailored Support Services agreements. Operating budgets are negotiated for each provider based on information submitted by the provider.

Program funding will take into account local demand for Services and compliance with program guidelines. BC Housing will administer funds for eligible programs directly to the provider.

Eligible program costs include:

- Program staff salaries;
- Direct program expenses;
- Property management expenses (where applicable);
- Administration; and
- rental supplements (where available).

Providers may secure additional funding from other sources for Client services and activities not outlined in the support services agreement.

## SERVICES

Providers will offer funded Services at no cost to Clients and Services will be outlined more specifically in individual support services agreements.

### **Among people who are experiencing Homelessness or are At Risk of Homelessness, providers:**

- Directly engage Clients where they are situated
- Complete an intake, consent form<sup>2</sup> and assessment of each Client
- Offer a Case Plan for each Client<sup>3</sup>
- Refer Clients to appropriate Housing options
- Refer Clients to income assistance, using the Fast Track Protocol where available<sup>4</sup>
- Refer Clients to Support Services
- Accompany Clients to appointments, where appropriate
- Help Indigenous Clients reconnect to their cultural heritage and family/community

### **Where Clients have been placed as tenants, providers help them maintain their housing and their ability to live independently:**

- Provide Clients with rental supplements<sup>5</sup> where appropriate
- Provide tenancy support and skills training
- Provide follow up and ongoing support to tenants as appropriate

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<sup>2</sup> Consent forms for the collection of personal information are provided by BC Housing. Clients who do not consent are still eligible for outreach services: they should be reported as an anonymous Client. However, a release of Client information is required in order to activate a rental supplement.

<sup>3</sup> Providers funded by BC Housing are required to offer case planning services to all Clients. BC Housing recognizes that under certain conditions, it may not be possible to provide this service on a regular basis, and some Clients may choose not to engage in case planning.

<sup>4</sup> In communities where there is a Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (MSDI) office.

<sup>5</sup> Refer to support services agreement for Rental Supplement Guidelines.

- Where appropriate, engage landlords in the process of supporting and maintaining Client tenancies

**Providers ensure optimal service delivery to Clients by promoting linkages and partnerships with other service providers:**

- Participate in local/regional initiatives to improve the quality and comprehensiveness of service to Clients.
- **Fast Track Protocol:** The Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (MSDSI) directly supports HOP Clients by facilitating Income Assistance. In communities where there is an MSDSI office, Clients who are accompanied by a HOP Outreach Worker are ‘fast tracked’ in the MSDSI application process. Additionally, employment plans can be geared to help Clients meet their personal goals.

**REPORTING AND REVIEW**

The intent of the reporting and review process is for BC Housing to work in partnership with providers to identify areas of strength and opportunities to achieve excellence and accountability in the delivery of the program. The cornerstones of review are quality assurance, quality improvement and risk mitigation. Key risks include Client and staff safety. Regular reporting and review helps providers and BC Housing to measure progress, work together to better match Services to Client needs, support improved service delivery, and demonstrate the effectiveness of the program. Accordingly, the reporting and review tools are designed to open dialogue with providers to help identify and share practices that are working well, as well as elicit feedback from Clients. Reporting and review processes comply with privacy requirements including the *Personal Information Protection Act* and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

**Reporting and Review Tools**

The reporting and review system is designed to gather quantitative and qualitative information from providers, BC Housing staff and Clients. Several tools are used to elicit a balanced flow of information (Figure 3) to support the operational needs of BC Housing and the provider, monitor program success, identify emerging needs among people who are experiencing Homelessness or At Risk of Homelessness, and to shape future program planning. Providers may voluntarily administer additional tools, such as Client surveys, and may choose to discuss the results with BC Housing.

**Figure 3: Reporting and Review Tools**

Tool	Frequency	Completed By
Database	Daily	Provider
Financial Review	Annual	BC Housing
Operational Review	As Required	BC Housing



#### Database

Providers report regularly using the Database. BC Housing establishes timelines for data reporting and mandatory fields. Providers are responsible for obtaining Client consent.

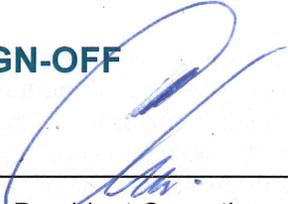
#### Financial Review

Providers submit audited financial statements and other supporting documentation to BC Housing to facilitate an annual review of financial operations.

#### Operational Review

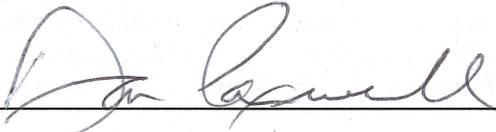
Operational reviews occur at least once every three years and determine fulfilment of the terms of the support services agreement. The review includes interviews with the provider's management, an on-site visit and physical inspection, and a review of service delivery, policies, procedures and other relevant documents, as requested.

### **SIGN-OFF**



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Vice President Operations  
BC Housing



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Vice President Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer  
BC Housing

## APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

**Adequate Personal Space:** having freedom from crowding as identified in the Canadian National Occupancy Standards (see Appendix B).

**At Risk of Homelessness:** means individuals and families living in accommodation where tenancy will be terminated within three (3) months of application (e.g., given notice by landlord) and having no other Housing options, or living in time-limited housing designed to help them transition from Homelessness to living in a more permanent form of Housing (e.g., transitional housing or second-stage housing).

**At Risk of Violence:** means situations where a woman indicates that she and/or her children are at risk of experiencing Violence.

**Case Planning:** means developing a Client-focused and mutually agreed upon plan to assist a Client to integrate more fully into their community. Case Planning will include activities such as an explanation of available options, identification of Client's goals, explanation of how the provider can support the Client to achieve desired outcomes, and the benefits, alternatives and consequences of planned services.

**Clients:** Individuals who are eligible for services pursuant to the Homeless Outreach Program.

**Culturally Appropriate Services:** means a broad range of community based programs, services and supports that are available to Indigenous people who are experiencing Homelessness or at Risk of Homelessness, in support of their personal objectives. Culturally Appropriate Services differ from Support Services in that they are delivered in a way which links an individual with an aspect of their Indigenous culture and are culturally significant for that individual

**Database:** means the computer application provided by BC Housing to meet the operational and informational needs of the provider and BC Housing.

**Homelessness:** refers to a situation where an individual or family is not stably Housed or is living in temporary accommodation where they do not have control over the length and conditions of tenure and do not have Adequate Personal Space. This includes living in: public spaces without legal claim (e.g., on the streets, in abandoned buildings or in tent cities); a homeless shelter, a transition house, a public facility or service (e.g., hospital, care facility, rehabilitation or treatment centre, correctional facility) and cannot return to Housing; or where they are financially, sexually, physically or emotionally exploited to maintain their shelter.

**Housed or Housing:** is defined as accommodation allowing for tenancy of more than thirty (30) days, under conditions in which the individual/family has Adequate Personal Space. This range includes supported, transitional housing to independent social or private market housing. This definition does not include emergency shelters or transition houses.

**Services:** means outreach services delivered by providers pursuant to the Homeless Outreach Program. Services are available to people who are experiencing Homelessness or At Risk of Homelessness. Services include but are not limited to referrals to Support Services, connections to Housing and help applying for income assistance.

**Support Services:** may include services to maintain Housing, employment and life skills programs, medical services, addictions treatment, or mental health services among other services. Such services may be external to the supports provided by the provider.

**Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT):** means the assessment tool used to measure an individual's level of vulnerability. The tool is designed for use by service providers



accustomed to interacting directly with individuals experiencing Homelessness. Training is required to ensure reliable application of the tool. The results are then used by the Provider to appropriately match Clients with Housing.

***Violence:*** means violence against women and/or their children including physical, emotional, economic, financial, sexual and/or spiritual abuse, including domestic, family or intimate partner violence.

## APPENDIX B: NATIONAL OCCUPANCY STANDARD

The National Occupancy Standard (NOS) can be used as ideal guidelines for Providers moving Clients to Housing. However, it is recognized that NOS is not always achievable given the available affordable housing options in a community as well as the fact that adequate personal space is perceived differently from person to person.

The NOS has been developed by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to help determine the number of bedrooms a dwelling should have to provide freedom from crowding. The NOS determines the number of bedrooms a household requires given its size and composition.

According to NOS requirements, suitable housing has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households. Enough bedrooms based on NOS requirements means one bedroom for:

- each cohabiting adult couple;
- unattached household member 18 years of age and over;
- same-sex pair of children under age 18;
- an additional boy or girl in the family, unless there are two opposite sex children under 5 years of age, in which case they are expected to share a bedroom.

A household of one individual can occupy a bachelor unit (i.e., a unit with no bedroom).

NOS definition taken from the CMHC website

[http://cmhc.beyond2020.com/HiCODefinitions\\_EN.html#\\_Suitable\\_dwellings](http://cmhc.beyond2020.com/HiCODefinitions_EN.html#_Suitable_dwellings)