

message from the co-chairs

Residents of Greater Victoria have the privilege of living in one of the world's most beautiful places, with an exceptional quality of life for most of us. For the roughly 1500 homeless people here, however, life on the streets is a daily struggle with people dying from exposure, disease and drug abuse. This situation is unacceptable, and it is our moral obligation to find a solution with urgency.

Launched in February, 2008, the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness was formed to address this increasing crisis, and has a mandate to end homelessness in Greater Victoria by 2018. This is an aggressive goal, and thanks to the already substantial work of numerous organizations and individuals, we are well positioned to succeed.

Indeed, special thanks must go to former Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe, whose "Mayor's Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness" in 2007 provided the framework and context for the Coalition to begin its work. We also gratefully acknowledge the invaluable efforts of the non-profit sector, countless volunteers and the public servants who have been providing care and support to those experiencing homelessness each and every day. By effectively coordinating, leveraging and supporting these existing services and resources, homelessness in Victoria can be eliminated

There is still much to do, and while the Coalition is committed to the partnership of community organizations, funding agencies, governments and non-governmental agencies, we are all accountable for contributing to the solution. And so, we issue this call for action – for every member of the community to help accelerate the work of the Coalition, be it through increased awareness, funding assistance, political support or volunteering. It is critical that we continue to build on the successes that have been accomplished in our first year. This momentum can only be sustained through the support of the entire community.

Together, we can end homelessness in Greater Victoria.

Mayor Dean Fortin

Ted Hughes

message from the executive director

The many individuals being helped by the Coalition's partner agencies have only one thing in common – the absence of a 'home'. In fact, each individual's situation – how he or she came to be homeless, and the solution required to assist them – is unique, and requires a personalized program of support. Does this make the challenge more difficult? Certainly. Hence, there is an overwhelming need to provide a range of housing options and a breadth of integrated and coordinated support services.

The Mayor's Task Force Report identified cracks in the system, and despite the efforts of existing support services, people were falling through them. Homelessness was being 'managed', but not being solved. The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness is taking a tactical leadership approach to putting systems and processes in place that will address the underlying causes of homelessness, and enable a wide range of housing and support services to work more effectively together to provide homeless individuals with the care they require to get off and stay off the streets.

The Coalition is comprised of a diverse host of community leaders, each bringing to the table a level of expertise, knowledge and commitment that is required to achieve the Coalition's goals.

The Coalition has developed a strategic plan that is derived from and relies on the expertise and resources of its partners. The disciplined process that has been applied to developing the strategic plan and the supporting business plan are a testament to the Coalition's competence and capabilities.

It is the on-going commitment of Coalition partners, and the broader community effectively implementing focused programs which will distinguish Greater Victoria as a North American leader in the fight against homelessness.

Jill Clements

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nowhere to live is no way to live

The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Society is a non-profit community-based organization that engages community organizations, governments, business and individuals to work in partnership with each other and the broader community to lead and drive the commitment to end homelessness.

Homelessness is an extreme form of poverty. The Mayor's Task Force Report identified the root causes of homelessness as policy shifts and societal changes which include, but are not limited to: deinstitutionalization without sufficient and appropriate community supports; a lack of investment in the creation and protection of affordable and supportive housing; and the widening gap between rich and poor.

BACKGROUND

In May 2007, then Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe struck a 120-day task force to recommend a service model and business plan that would provide better assistance to residents challenged with mental illness, addictions and homelessness. The following observations from the Mayor's Task Force Report illustrate the severity of the homelessness crisis at the time:

- 1242 + people were homeless or facing homelessness in our community
- 30% high risk for health needs
- 40% with diagnosable mental illness; 50%+ struggling with substance abuse; 25% with co-occurring disorders
- Heavy users of emergency and acute health care services
- Heavy users of police services; 324 individuals responsible for 23,000+ police encounters over 40 months at a cost of \$9,200,000
- 250 – 300 street youth between 14 – 25 years of age
- 25% were young women aged 21 – 30, fleeing domestic violence or unsafe housing (10% earn primary income from the sex trade; 25% have children with them)
- 20 – 25% were Aboriginal (who make up only 2.8% of the population of the CRD)
- Taxpayers spent at least \$62 million annually in policing, prisons, hospital costs, emergency shelter, parks clean up and needle pick up
- The cost to not house each homeless person in Greater Victoria is more than \$50,000 per year.



Roger Lessard, Resident, Cool Aid Housing, Victoria BC

While statistics help in quantifying and understanding the scope of the problem, this crisis is about the people who lack access to housing and a comprehensive, integrated support system that would enable them to become contributing members of society. The Mayor's Task Force was charged with breaking down the issue of homelessness in Victoria and developing a new service delivery model that would be a substantial shift in the way we all respond to our community's social and health challenges. It became apparent that Greater Victoria needed a community-owned solution to end homelessness for its residents. As a result of this exhaustive work, the community rallied and the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Society was formed in February 2008.

#1 myth about homelessness

myth: Homelessness is only an issue in Downtown Victoria.

reality: Although it may seem more apparent in the downtown core, homelessness is present throughout the capital region.

working in partnership

In order to end homelessness and provide each person experiencing homelessness with the housing and support they require, the Coalition has embraced a client centred and needs based approach which recognizes the necessity of a broad range of support services.

These services include: income support, mental health and addictions treatment, housing outreach, medical, social and family services, job skills, and adaptive and integrative community supports that facilitate social inclusion.

Many of these supports are currently available, but until recently have tended to operate in isolation given their specific focus. This historic lack of integration has been a barrier to solving homelessness with individuals receiving fragmented, rather than comprehensive, complementary support. The Coalition is working in partnership with these services to leverage shared resources and opportunities, taking real and collective action that will positively affect the lives of our community members living on the streets or in unstable conditions.



Bryan Gooder, Jolene Tory, with Jasmine, Nicholas and Maya

KEY CHALLENGES TO ENDING HOMELESSNESS

While enhancing existing efforts and closing gaps in the current service model will be critical to the Coalition's success, there are other key challenges to be addressed:

1. Securing sustained funding and developing partnerships with and between private, public and non profit stakeholders
2. Overcoming the critical shortage of affordable housing in the capital region
3. Adapting privacy regulations which currently restrict sharing of information and integrating databases to track individuals and locations of new housing units
4. Recognizing the regional nature of this challenge and encouraging all communities to be part of the solution
5. Recognition by the community that homelessness is a complex problem and that long term solutions require new and innovative initiatives
6. Embracing a 'Housing First with Supports' approach
7. Harnessing a sense of urgency and focus on action

#2 myth about homelessness

myth: All homeless people are mentally ill, drug addicts or alcoholics.

reality: People experiencing homeless in our community also include seniors displaced due to rent increases, women and their families fleeing abusive relationships, the working poor, youth who left government care with no transitional help, and low-income families unable to find affordable housing.

year one accomplishments

Well developed strategies and a commitment to shared values and principles have enabled the Coalition to achieve numerous successes in its first year, many ahead of schedule. This bodes extremely well for the Coalition's mission to end homelessness in Greater Victoria by 2018.

Through the collective efforts of Coalition partner agencies, including governments, non-profit agencies and business these important accomplishments include:

- 400+ people housed with appropriate supports in the first year of operation in the Capital Region through collective efforts of Coalition member agencies and the private sector, significantly exceeding the target of 250
- 367 units of supportive and transitional housing have been added, protected or committed
- Three of four planned Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) outreach teams – funded by VIHA – are operational, as well as the Victoria Integrated Community Outreach Team (known as VICOT which includes police representation)
- Building at 941 Pandora purchased by the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) to house the ACT teams and a street nursing clinic, as well as the Coalition office, in addition to offering psychiatry and other health services aimed at people who are homeless
- Memorandum of Understanding between the Province of BC and the City of Victoria commits to 83 shelter beds and 25 transitional housing units at a new purpose-built shelter on Ellice Street, 44 supported housing units on Humboldt Street and 15 new units on Swift Street. The City of Victoria commits to “fast-tracking” the development planning and approval processes for these projects
- VIHA has added 15 new adult detox/residential treatment beds, increasing the total to 21
- Significant regional support for the ACCESS Health Centre (with funding from VIHA, CRD, BC Housing Endowment Fund and the City of Victoria). The clinic will deliver one-stop comprehensive services to the Capital Region's most impoverished citizens, from all municipalities
- On March 1, 2009, the Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness merged with the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. The steering committee was formed in November 2000 as part of the National Homelessness Initiative. The federal government will contribute \$1.2 million over the next two years in Greater Victoria as part of the federal Homeless Partnering Strategy (HPS)

The progress made by the Coalition over the past year can be attributed to four key factors:

Improved service delivery through the Coalition's focus on collaboration, as well as the establishment of ACT and VICOT, and regular meetings between VIHA and BC Housing

Area rental owners and managers are working with housing outreach workers to rent apartments to some of the region's most vulnerable citizens

Increased funding from both the Province and the Capital Regional District for new housing, and funding from VIHA for enhanced services

Support from the CRD, the City of Victoria and other regional municipalities for supportive housing for the homeless



Bruce Parisian, Executive Director,
Victoria Native Friendship Centre

strategic plan

The Coalition has developed a short term strategic plan, to make an immediate impact by assisting those most at risk. This plan tackles the problem from multiple angles, and provides a strong foundation for what will be a ten-year initiative.

To provide guidance, direction and focus to the strategic plan, the Coalition developed Mission and Vision Statements, and articulated working values and principles:

MISSION

“Our Mission is to end homelessness in our community.”

VISION

“By 2018, all people facing homelessness in our community will have access to safe, affordable, appropriate, stable housing with the support they require. This will be provided in a coordinated, accessible and effective manner.”

VALUES

Our values guide how we act:

- We respond to our community's needs
- We work together
- We engage partners
- We are effective
- We provide leadership
- We are accountable

PRINCIPLES

These principles guide our decisions:

People-centred: People come first. We will provide housing and supports in ways that best meet homeless people's needs rather than organizing based on our efficiencies or expertise.

Appropriate: Supports will be responsive to the diversity of cultural communities and individual nations.

Seamless: Housing and supports will be integrated, coordinated and tailored to individual needs.

Accessible: Access to appropriate housing and supports are a key component of our work; people will be served where they live and work.

Adaptable: People will be supported along their continuum of care as needed; care and support will be individualized to people's needs, with an emphasis on integration into the community

Inclusive: Housing and supports will be provided to all people facing homelessness and will not be contingent on abstinence or treatment.

Innovation: We embrace innovation and seek to learn from our actions and share that learning with the community.

Prevention: Identifying, mitigating and advocating for systemic change that addresses the root causes of homelessness will be key components of our prevention work.

Respectful: We treat everyone with respect and dignity.

Community Engagement: We build a broad range of support for the work that we do and engage all members of the community in finding and implementing appropriate solutions.

The fundamental philosophy adopted by the Coalition is the concept of 'Housing First With Supports'. It is an approach to ending homelessness which focuses on providing people who are homeless with housing quickly and then providing services as needed. In essence, this means that everyone has a right to a home and is ready to be housed regardless of his or her circumstances and behaviours. Additionally, the type and level of support provided is based on the needs of the individual and should be tailored accordingly.

This is a highly successful model, employed in jurisdictions in North America including New York, Toronto and Calgary, with a success rate approaching 85%.

goals & strategies

Having identified the challenges to ending homelessness, the Coalition developed 3 key goals and a set of action-based strategies designed to achieve the goals within the first 3 years of the initiative. With the first year behind us, the following overview sets out the work to be undertaken in years two and three:

goal 1: house and support those who are homeless

In 2008, the number of people facing homelessness in the capital region was estimated at 1500. Our initial focus will be on those who are currently homeless (estimated at 950). The balance of those who are nearly homeless will be addressed in a future multi-year plan and/or through our prevention strategy. By 2018, 100% of those who are homeless or nearly homeless in 2008 will have stable and appropriate housing.

strategies	projects	timeline
Provide stable housing with appropriate support services for those who are defined as homeless (estimated at 950)	<p>Implement a housing procurement strategy to house 1500 people by 2018.</p> <p>In Year Two, House and support 160 people</p> <p>Secure affordable market rental units by leasing and purchasing property and securing rent supplements to bridge rent gap where necessary</p> <p>Acquire land for building new non-market rental housing, secure funding, and tender construction for future projects</p> <p>Implement landlord support program, including a building maintenance fund, 24/7 coverage and a tenant education program</p> <p>Work with BC Housing, CRD and municipalities to enter into agreements/MOUs aligned with Coalition priorities</p>	2009 - 2010
	<p>Work in partnership with Aboriginal communities to develop specific housing initiatives, aligned to the Provincial strategy</p> <p>Identify and engage Aboriginal representatives</p>	
	<p>In Year Three, House and support 325 people</p> <p>Through BC Housing complete construction of the facilities on Ellice St. and Humbolt St. as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Victoria; and with BC Housing and the CRD, the Carey Road project</p> <p>Secure affordable market rental units by leasing and purchasing property and secure rent supplements to bridge rent gap where necessary</p> <p>Build new non-market rental housing, secure funding and tender construction for future projects</p>	2010 - 2011

goal 1 continued

strategies	projects	timeline
Deliver appropriate and tailored support services through a variety of mechanisms.	<p>Coordinate and integrate service delivery including intake, outreach, case management and follow-up support</p> <p>Establish a base line analysis of current service inventory, information infrastructure and existing approaches to intake, outreach and case management</p> <p>Identify mechanisms and resources necessary for effective, client-centred service delivery</p> <p>Implement a pilot project to integrate services and provide a continuum of support - including securing housing - by coordinating the efforts of the ACT and VICOT teams and community outreach services to provide tailored supports</p> <p>Develop methodology and establish standards, monitoring and reporting framework for outreach and case management.</p>	2009 - 2010
	<p>Initiate a harm reduction action plan</p> <p>Review the content of the Mayor's Task Force Harm Reduction Strategies.</p> <p>In discussion with partners and key stakeholders, prepare a costed and prioritized action plan for endorsement and implementation, to include a review of delivery models, locations, scope and resourcing of harm reduction services.</p> <p>Advocate for funding for ACCESS Health Centre</p>	
	<p>Evaluate pilot project and make recommendations for roll-out</p> <p>Fund and establish integrated housing and support services as per pilot project recommendations with focus on effective, client-centred service delivery and necessary information infrastructure to support integration.</p>	2010 - 2011



Chris Ford-Whittington, Resident, Cool Aid Housing, Victoria BC

#3 myth about homelessness

myth: It would be too much of a burden on taxpayers to provide homes for our neighbours who are homeless.

reality: A study conducted by the province of BC showed that the cost of maintaining the status quo of homelessness through just emergency shelters and minimal health services is 33% higher than providing permanent housing and the required social and health supports.

goals & strategies continued

goal 2: prevent homelessness

Mitigate the homelessness situation in our community by taking immediate steps to minimize an increase in the numbers of people experiencing homelessness as well as develop a long term strategy for addressing the root causes of homelessness.

strategies	projects	timeline
Develop and implement a short term prevention strategy to minimize homelessness.	Immediately establish a Prevention Working Group to create a prevention plan, which may include: Strategies to eliminate risk of homelessness through more and enhanced rental subsidies, improved landlord-tenant relations, and increased access to low-cost market housing for people leaving all forms of care and/or custody. Analysis and recommendations to ensure sufficient capacity of, and access to, shelters in the region, including during extreme weather. Evaluation of community court concept	2009 - 2010
	Implement, monitor and revise short term prevention strategies as determined by the Prevention Working Group	2010 - 2011
	Complete a 10-year prevention strategy	



Insp. Jamie Pearce, Victoria Police Department

#4 myth about homelessness

myth: Most homeless people are to blame for their situation.

reality: The spiral from stability to homelessness can occur in a short period of time. For some, the path to homelessness is a matter of multiple barriers such as mental health issues, disability, addiction and social issues. Others may be escaping abusive situations and have nowhere else to go. For many it is an issue of poverty and housing affordability.

goal 3: provide the required infrastructure

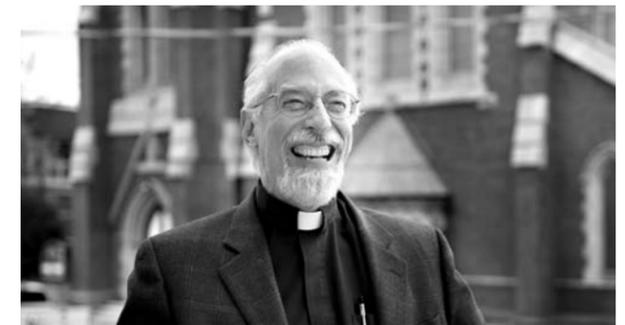
Lead, coordinate and focus the efforts and the resources of public, private and non-profit agencies in the Capital Region to meet the collective goals of the Coalition and, ultimately, create better outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

strategies	projects	timeline
Establish the Coalition and ensure its effectiveness	Establish monitoring and evaluation process for business plan performance and appropriate board reporting mechanisms. Adopt 'fundamental' reporting in Year 1, and consider "dashboard" and "Balanced Scorecard" approaches beyond year 1. Establish appropriate reporting mechanism to report to the community at the end of 2009/2010.	2009 - 2010
	Evaluate the performance of the Coalition's 3-year business/ operations plan, aiming to extrapolate and add strategies to the longer-term plan, with particular focus on increasing housing capacity and a prevention (root causes) strategy.	2010 - 2011
	Create Coalition Statement of Principles/Charter to be agreed upon by all Coalition partners (Leadership Council and others). Create and secure Partnership Agreements with agencies and funders to articulate agency/funder role within the Coalition, and to ensure accountability. Secure and Coordinate Coalition Funding Funders Table to develop funding strategy to meet the Coalition's goals, determine process to coordinate flow of funding and demonstrate utilization of partner assets. Secure Core Funding Ensure Secretariat is adequately resourced, through to March 2011, to provide necessary leadership and coordination in line with governance structure.	2009 - 2010

#5 myth about homelessness

myth: Most of the homeless people in Victoria are not from here. Providing more services to homeless people will only draw more of them here.

reality: Homelessness is a homegrown issue. About three-quarters of people in Greater Victoria experiencing homelessness or unstable housing are from this region.



Harold Munn, Rector, St. John The Divine

goals & strategies continued

goal 3 continued

strategies	projects	timeline
Establish / streamline organizational business processes and ensure required Coalition resources	Ensure effective and user-friendly information and data management system is in place, with Coalition Secretariat as the 'nodal point'. Review current and proposed BC Housing and VIHA information systems, and other available alternatives to minimize duplication and increase community efficiencies Establish monitoring, reporting and analysis requirements and a process to correct as necessary.	2009 - 2010
	Agree to a research and evaluation plan to support the Coalition business/operating plan. Create partnership agreements with UVic and other community agencies	
Engage the community and generate commitment	Create and implement a Communications Plan Establish a communications protocol between Coalition partners to ensure information is shared effectively and in a timely manner Identify unique target audiences, their interests and abilities to influence, capacity, potential engagement strategies and key messages Develop a media relations program to educate public about homelessness, and a media strategy to report on progress and celebrate successes	2009 - 2010
	Implement a Community Engagement Plan Establish an ongoing schedule for Project Connect; develop a social networking strategy to increase awareness and engage youth Develop a speaker's bureau to engage City Councils, Community Associations and the general public. Downtown Victoria Business Association and Chambers of Commerce to lead increasing private sector engagement in the Coalition. Engage congregations through the Faith Community; and Community Associations across the region	

summary

First year accomplishments indicate that the Coalition is on course to end homelessness in our community by 2018. The Coalition has demonstrated – through action and leadership – that it is a viable and dynamic platform for bringing together community partners and finding collective solutions.

Moreover, the Coalition has highlighted that the key components required for success – collaboration, integration, and facilitating change – are already at work and making a difference.

The year ahead is filled with challenges. In support of our Housing and Support goal, an additional 160 individuals will need to be provided with housing and services. We will work to efficiently coordinate and integrate service delivery, as well as initiate a comprehensive regional harm reduction action plan. Our second goal – to prevent homelessness – will see progress through the creation of the Prevention Working Group and its associated strategies to eliminate the risk of homelessness. Providing the required infrastructure – our third goal – will focus on securing required funding, and establishing effective information and data management systems.

While significant strides have already been taken, it is clear that there are many hurdles to overcome. It is imperative that the momentum that has been generated to date is sustained. This will involve a continued rallying behind this initiative from all levels of government, community agencies, local business and individuals. The Coalition recognizes that the best way to gain the required level of support is to continue achieving results while adding value to the services already in place in the region.

This Coalition of diverse agencies and individuals – focused on a common strategy – is the region's best hope to ending homelessness. However, if a community is truly "measured by how it treats its weakest members", then the Coalition alone cannot be the only hope; hope lies with the possibility that every member of the community will become part of the solution to end homelessness in Greater Victoria.

Funding for the Coalition secretariat is generously provided by:



Investment in housing and supports in Greater Victoria is being made by:



success stories

Rick Sanderson
Outreach Worker, Downtown ACT team

Rick Sanderson is a member of The Downtown Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team, a clinical team that provides access to services in a community setting for clients suffering from mental illnesses and/or addictions. Here, Rick shares a 'success story' which would not otherwise have occurred had it not been for the establishment of the ACT program.

When "Mike" came to us in June 2008, he was referred by Forensic Psychiatric Services and suffering from untreated psychosis. He was also addicted to street drugs and was well known to police and court services, having had numerous serious run-ins with the law. He had been homeless for 5 years, and lived in a parkade.

Despite his many different needs, the ACT program is designed to enable us to treat his concurrent conditions as well as find housing for him. In the past, he would have had to look to numerous different supports to get the help. The reality is, most of people in Mike's situation don't necessarily have the motivation to seek out the help; instead, we are able to bring it to them.

Mike received treatment daily and took his anti-psychotic medication. We were able to find him permanent housing through Cool Aid, and he is off all stimulants. He has even started contacting family members, which means a great deal to him.

From a vocational perspective, he completed the Food Safe program and is enrolled in the Better Employment Strategies and Techniques (BEST) program at Camosun College where he is upgrading his English and Math skills. His goal is to find suitable employment.

The Downtown ACT Team, along with three similar outreach teams operated by the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) is able to provide a high level of care for clients and connect them with services that include stable housing, addictions services, and vocational supports.

Marilynn Quigley
Client Services Worker, Cool Aid

Marilynn Quigley is a Client Services Worker at Streetlink, and recounts the inspirational story of a former client.

When "John" first came to Streetlink, he was a long term alcoholic who was suffering from chronic pain as a result of previous injuries that prevented him from finding employment. He was intent on improving his quality of life, and after having been clean and sober for 4 weeks at Streetlink, we referred him for residence at the Next Steps Transitional Shelter.

Next Steps is a 15-bed house that provides residents the opportunity to access the resources and services they need to get their lives back on track in a 'safe' environment free from alcohol and drugs. Next Steps is staffed 24/7, and experienced staff work closely with individuals to develop personal action plans designed to help them move to a better place in their lives.

John had several issues to deal with, but he was determined to turn his life around. The first thing he did was to work on his recovery by attending meetings and counseling sessions. From a financial perspective he was able to apply for and receive disability benefits. He also took responsibility to deal with unpaid family maintenance issues and sought the help of Legal Aid to effectively manage payments.

Staff also connected him with the clinic to reassess his health. Eventually, it was determined that surgery could be ruled out, and John was fitted with orthotic supports that significantly

reduced his chronic pain. As a result, he eagerly sought employment. Although a carpenter by trade, he was still unable to operate machinery but managed to get a job as a cleaner at a construction site. Before long, he demonstrated a range of relevant skills and received a promotion.

At the beginning of his stay at Next Steps, John could be easily rattled, but as he worked with staff to address his issues he soon gained considerable confidence and excellent coping skills. He even became a mentor to a younger resident at the house.

John had also been long estranged from his family, but wanted to reconnect after beating his addiction, improving his health, stabilizing his financial situation and finding a job. Although there was a history of painful mistakes he needed to work through with his mother and sister, these were resolved and John returned home to help his sister run the family farm.

Streetlink is operated by the Victoria Cool Aid Society and provides 95 beds of emergency shelter for temporarily or chronically homeless adults. Client Services Workers coordinate referrals, hygiene services, mental health services, housing advocacy, community liaison, and crisis and life skills counseling.