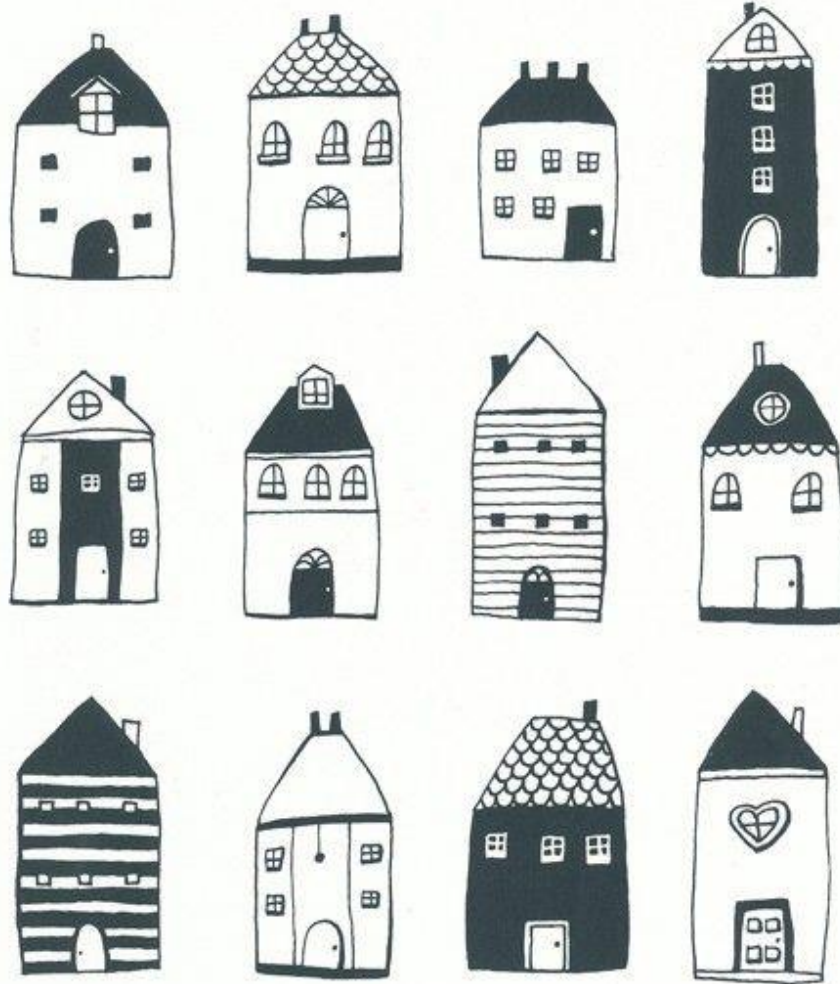# Housing Stability Policy

Report prepared by the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria
For the Coalition to End Homelessness and the Capital Regional District

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Executive Summary:

Housing Stability Policy

The purpose of the Housing Stability project is to identify non-eviction and rapid re-housing approaches that could be utilized within the housing, health and support services system. The objective is to minimize the negative impacts of evictions, and support more secure, stable and successful housing. It is rooted in the principles of the Housing First approach, which the Capital Regional District is using as a framework for addressing homelessness in the region.

This report examines the causes of evictions as well as barriers to rapid rehousing and eviction prevention and presents policy recommendation to support them. The report looks at existing experiences and structures within the region as well as a review of the regulatory context and best practices elsewhere.

The outcome of this report is a set of housing stability policy recommendations that address non-eviction and rapid rehousing approaches to support the implementation of the Regional Housing First Program. The non-eviction policy recommendations are aimed at supportive and some supported housing but it does not fully explore housing stability policies for subsidized and non-subsidized housing in the private housing market. The recommendations can be adapted for both new and existing housing and service providers. Additionally, they provide direction for areas of further planning and research. Included in this is a recommendation to explore private market housing stability measures for subsidized households and/or vulnerable households.

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Introduction

The purpose of the Housing Stability project is to identify non-eviction and rapid re-housing approaches that could be utilized within the housing, health and support services system. The objective is to minimize the negative impacts of evictions, and support more secure, stable and successful housing. It is rooted in the principles of the Housing First approach, which the Capital Regional District is using as a framework for addressing homelessness in the region.

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In order to establish a local context for housing stability, we gathered experiences from housing and service providers and most importantly, from individuals who have experienced homelessness or have been at risk of homelessness. Specifically, this included focus groups with current tenants of supportive and supported housing as well as members of the Social Inclusion Advisory Group of the Coalition to End Homelessness. We are grateful for the time, energy and valuable insights that these participants contributed to this research.

Housing Stability Key Considerations

- Eviction prevention and rapid rehousing policies can vary in their approach. For the purposes of this research, they are considered through the wider lens of Housing First principles.
- Eviction prevention and rapid rehousing policies are part of, and supported by a wider housing stability approach.
- Housing stability is necessary in ending homelessness, and is the "presumptive goal of housing programs"[1].
- Housing stability is about creating housing and services that support successful tenancies and outcomes for individuals. It goes beyond simply reducing the statistics on number of evictions: it means fostering the health and well-being of an individual.
- A proactive approach is required for successful outcomes.
- Finding housing is about housing choice, not placement.
- Non-eviction approaches start with the assumption that success is possible for everyone.[2]

Context

Regional Housing First Program

The Regional Housing First Program (RHFP) is a capital funding program designed to support supply-side interventions for chronic homelessness. In December of 2015, the CRD Board approved the RHFP, a program that will facilitate the CRD borrowing up to $30 million to support the development of a range of supportive housing units to help address the needs of people who are experiencing chronic homelessness in the region.

In May 2016, the CRD entered into a Partnering Agreement with the BC Housing Management Commission (BCHMC) and Vancouver Island Health Authority (Island Health) through which the Province has committed to contribute a matching $30 million to the RHFP.

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[1] Distasio, J., & McCullough, S. (2014). *Holding On! Supporting Successful Tenancies for the Hard to House*. Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg.

[2] Mainstay Housing. (2005). Beyond the Key to the Front Door: A guide to helping tenants keep their homes. Toronto

Housing First Principles

There are six mandatory principles under the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) Housing First (HF) approach:

1. **Rapid housing with supports:** This involves directly helping clients locate and secure permanent housing as rapidly as possible and assisting them with moving in or re-housing if needed. Housing readiness is not a requirement.

2. **Offering clients choice in housing**: Clients must be given choice in terms of housing options as well as the services they wish to access.

3. **Separating housing provision from other services:** Acceptance of any services, including treatment, or sobriety, is not a requirement for accessing or maintaining housing, but clients must be willing to accept regular visits, often weekly. There is also a commitment to rehousing clients as needed.

4. **Providing tenancy rights and responsibilities:** Clients are required to contribute a portion of their income towards rent. The preference is for clients to contribute 30 percent of their income, while the rest would be provided via rent subsidies. A landlord-tenant relationship must be established. Clients housed have rights consistent with applicable landlord and tenant acts and regulations. Developing strong relationships with landlords in both the private and public sector is key to the HF approach.

5. **Integrating housing into the community:** In order to respond to client choice, minimize stigma and encourage client social integration, more attention should be given to scattered-site housing in the public or private rental markets. Other housing options such as social housing and supportive housing in congregate setting could be offered where such housing stock exists and may be chosen by some clients.

6. **Strength-based and promoting self-sufficiency:** The goal is to ensure clients are ready and able to access regular supports within a reasonable timeframe, allowing for a successful exit from the HF program. The focus is on strengthening and building on the skills and abilities of the client, based on self-determined goals, which could include employment, education, social integration, improvements to health or other goals that will help to stabilize the client's situation and lead to self-sufficiency.[3]

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[3] Employment and Social Development Canada. (2008) *Housing First Approach.*

Process mapping

The Capital Regional District, in partnership with the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, BC Housing, HPS and Island Health, undertook a Process Mapping Project in 2016 in order to identify barriers, bottlenecks, inefficiencies, and gaps within the housing, health, and social support system in the Capital Region. The Process Mapping Project identified four critical areas for intervention:

- Intake and Access;
- Data Collection and Management;
- System Efficiency and Effectiveness;
- System/Organizational Culture.[4]

Through their consultation process, the Process Mapping report identified several pressure points where tenants are at risk of eviction and potential homelessness. This included:

- Lack of non-eviction policies, particularly for those in the highest need
- Lack of low barrier housing for youth, particularly for those aging out of the foster system
- Difficultly in securing housing for those experiencing chronic homelessness

Included in these issues is an identified bottleneck, where both supportive and private-market housing providers are reluctant to accept chronically homeless or high risk individuals because of a perception that they may cause damage to a unit.

These needs and concerns were echoed in discussions of housing stability with both tenants and housing and supportive services staff.

Coalition's Community Plan

In August 2016, the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (the Coalition) drafted a Community Plan, designed to merge the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) Community Plan and the Creating Homes, Enhancing Communities (CHEC) Plan into one comprehensive document.

The Phase 1 (2016/2017) recommendations are based on the outcomes of two critical initiatives: The Process Mapping Project, created through a partnership between the

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[4] CitySpaces Consulting (2016). Process Mapping Supplemental Report.

Coalition, BC Housing, HPS and Island Health; and, the Coalition's Priority One Task Force: Better Housing and Support Services for Individuals Experiencing Chronic Homelessness with Additional or Other Needs.

Several specific projects were identified for completion in Phase 1, including work to identify and implement initiatives in support of eviction prevention. This stability project is a resulting component of this identified research and action need[5].

Housing Stability Project Objectives and Goals

This project, the Housing Stability Policy project, is part of a coordinated approach to systems change to support the implementation of the Regional Housing First Program in the Capital Regional District. Preventing and mitigating the potential impacts resulting from eviction events and developing and implementing rapid-rehousing processes are critical components of a comprehensive Housing First strategy.

The project aimed to better understand the challenges, barriers and opportunities in creating housing stability through policy approaches, with a specific focus on supportive housing. This involved exploring the following questions:

1. What are the circumstances typically leading to eviction of individuals with histories of homelessness or who are considered to be at-risk of homelessness?
2. What are the impacts of eviction on individuals at-risk of homelessness?
3. What measures can be taken to reduce evictions into homelessness?
4. What is the legal and/or regulatory framework to implement non-eviction policies?
5. What are the impacts of hard and soft evictions on the ability of individuals to access or maintain housing?
6. What processes are currently being used in the region to provide for rapid rehousing of individuals at risk of eviction?
7. What current best practices in rapid rehousing are being used in other jurisdictions?
8. What processes might be considered within the region to support collaboration among existing housing and support service providers to achieve rapid rehousing of those individuals at risk of eviction from supportive or other housing options in the community?

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[5] Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (2016). Community Plan – Phase 1, 2016/17.

Methodology

The research for this report consisted of a review of current research on housing stability, existing and promising approaches, and discussions with local staff and tenants. Specifically, the research activities included following:

- Review of existing practices in other jurisdictions with relevant policies and approaches, looking at both the successes and challenges of housing stability models.
- Interviews with housing and support system stakeholders to establish a local context including current policies and approaches, regulatory considerations, and resources contributing to housing stability.
- A focus group with the Social Inclusion Advisory Group, managed by the Coalition to End Homelessness and made up of people with lived experience of housing instability and homelessness to discuss their experiences as well as the research approach.
- Focus groups with current tenants of supportive and transitional housing: We spoke with 50 current tenants of supportive housing at 6 different housing providers.
- Engagement session with housing and support service providers to discuss the existing services and structures related to housing stability as well as the challenges, gaps and opportunities in securing appropriate housing for individuals and preventing evictions.

Limitations

The focus of this report is on clients accessing supportive housing, and some supported non-profit housing. It does not provide comprehensive policy recommendations for housing stability for tenants in subsidized and non-subsidized housing in the private housing market. Nonetheless, there is some crossover between the approaches and services. This report aims to provide some direction for general systemic approaches that may be further developed into a comprehensive housing stability approach for assisting tenants in supportive and private market housing.

Given that indigenous people are over-represented in the population of people who are experiencing homelessness or are at-risk of homelessness, due to the ongoing impacts of colonization[6], it is of utmost importance that the housing and support system

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[6] More Than a Number: 2016 Greater Victoria Point in Time Count Summary Report.

approach these issues from a decolonizing perspective with attention to cultural safety. This particular project is limited in that it has not been able to adequately provide insight to the ways in which colonization and the housing and support system are intertwined. While some participants in the research may be indigenous, the project has not provided much-needed recommendations on how indigenous people can best be supported in attaining housing stability. We recommend specific research and action on housing stability approaches for indigenous people. This includes, but is not limited to, exploring suitable housing and programming as well as training for staff and private landlords.

Definitions

The distinction between supported and supportive housing is not always clear or consistently referenced both by housing and service providers within the region and in wider body of related policy and research. In order to provide consistency across the multiple projects and efforts currently undertaken to improve the housing and support system, this project has used the definitions outlined in the Process Mapping project:

Supportive Housing

Supportive Housing refers to *bricks and mortar* facilities for individuals who are homelessness, or at imminent risk of becoming homeless. Many have experienced ongoing mental health, and/or substance challenges due to the lack of supports. Support services are available on-site, either on a daily or 24/7 basis. The services are intended to promote, improve, conserve, or restore the mental and physical well-being of a participant.

The supportive housing facilities divide into two sub-categories:

1. *Clinically-oriented.* These facilities focus on clinical outcomes, such as mental health and/or substance use treatment, under the direct or indirect supervision of medically trained staff. They are not intended to address long term housing needs. Typically, the length of stay is limited, and determined by the care team.

2. *Socially-oriented.* These facilities focus on reducing homelessness, and assist individuals with successfully transitioning to living independently. Typically, length of stay limits are less stringent, and while they may identify clinical support needs among residents and make appropriate referrals, they do not provide these services directly.

Supported Housing

Supported Housing refers to housing for individuals who are living in the private market; require a low, moderate or high level of support; and may or may not receive a rent supplement from BC Housing or Island Health. These facilities have regular or emergency support services provided through ACT teams, Intensive Case Management (ICM) Teams, and other Island Health funded programs. [7]

Rapid-Rehousing

For the purposes of this report, rapid rehousing refers to scenarios where an individual or family may be currently homeless, where an individual or has received an eviction and are at risk of homelessness, or where a housing provider or support service provider is aware that the housing stability of an individual or family is at risk and will likely a new home which may require supports better aligned to their current needs.

Eviction Prevention

Eviction prevention refers to a range of strategies or programs designed to keep individuals and families housed, or to assist in re-housing where they are at an imminent risk of eviction.

Eviction Prevention Policy vs. Non-Eviction Policy

Generally, a non-eviction policy is aimed at zero evictions, though they will likely still include some provisions where an eviction is needed, such as example in the case of violence toward staff. In the case where an eviction is necessary, a non-eviction policy may also include provisions for ensuring the client is re-housed. In this case, the eviction can be avoided through re-housing. Eviction prevention policies may include a wider range of reasons for eviction, or re-housing. These two terms are not used consistently in the literature and existing policies. Policies referred to as 'eviction-prevention' may look the same as another referred to as 'non-eviction', and more importantly, may have the same level of successful outcomes.

Regulatory Context

The Housing First model is rooted in the principle that all tenants are entitled to tenants' rights and responsibilities; however there are a few considerations in the existing Provincial regulatory context.

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[7] Definitions of Supportive and Supportive Housing from: City Spaces. (2016). *Process Mapping*. Capital Regional District.

The provincially legislated Residential Tenancy Act (RTA) provides regulations for most types of rental housing in British Columbia, with some notable exceptions. These exceptions include:

- Emergency or transitional housing
- Community care under the Community Care and Assisted Living Act
- Continuing care facilities under the Continuing Care Act,
- Public or private hospitals under the Hospital Act
- Provincial housing based mental health facilities designated under the Mental Health Act

In response to concerns over the ambiguous nature of the term transitional housing, the Residential Tenancy Regulation was updated in the Fall of 2016 to include a definition of both emergency and transitional. Transitional housing is now defined as housing that meets all of the following criteria:

"1. (a) living accommodation provided on a temporary basis;

2. (b) by a person or organization that receives funding from a local government or the government of British Columbia or of Canada for the purpose of providing that accommodation, and;

3. (c) together with programs intended to assist tenants to become better able to live independently." (*Residential Tenancy Policy Guideline 46, 2016*)"

The policy guideline states that transitional housing is intended to include at least a general plan for a tenant to transition out of housing, and may be required to sign a transition agreement.

For housing types not covered by the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA), there may be facility specific tenancy regulations put in place by the housing operator or through an operating agreement between a housing funder (such as BC Housing) and provider.

A facility that is subject to the RTA may have customized tenancy regulations, but they must not be in contravention of the Act. This is often not the operating reality for some housing facilities.

For facilities subject to the RTA, disputes that cannot be resolved between the housing provider and the tenant may be taken to arbitration, which can be time consuming and stressful for both tenant and staff.

The literature and case studies regarding tenancy agreements emphasize the need to provide education to tenants, management, and staff regarding basic rights and responsibilities under the RTA and their tenancy agreement. This includes the foundational stages of drafting operating and tenancy agreements.

Additional considerations regarding 'transitional housing'

Based on discussions with tenants and staff, as well as findings from the 2016 Process Mapping Report for the CRD, the current reality is that many people in transitional housing programs are staying well beyond the program timelines. In this way, tenants may be in a position where they are in long-term tenancy, without the protections of the RTA.

 A similar consideration is those tenants who enter into a transitional program or agreement tied to a move to long term housing. Given the updated definition of 'transitional' in the RTA, care should be given to ensure these tenants are not unintentionally losing minimum tenancy rights.

Housing Stability Principles

What housing stability like looks in practice can vary in terms of approach, and will have different implications throughout a housing and services system. Achieving housing stability will also look different for each individual. There are, however, common fundamental elements to approaching housing stability which fit within the context of housing first principles. A 2014 research report out of University of Winnipeg on supporting successful tenancies for the hard to house[8] refers to this type of approach as 'success-based housing'. This term acknowledges the fundamental need for individual as well as systemic successes in creating housing stability. Eviction prevention is an embedded element of this overarching approach.

A success-based approach to housing stability includes:

- A systemic approach to housing and supports that proactively supports vulnerable individuals by resolving and preventing the issues that would normally lead to housing instability and evictions.[9]

[8] McCullough, J., & Distasio, S. (2014). *Holding On! Supporting Successful Tenancies for the Hard to House*. Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg

[9] Kolkman, J., & Ahorro, J. (2013). *Understanding tenancy failures and successes: final report*. Edmonton: Edmonton Social Planning Council Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness

- A mandate to intervene early where a client is at risk in order to prevent evictions and foster successful tenancies.[10]
- Individualized support and client centered flexibility[11]: it is focused on keeping a person housed in a way that is centered on their needs over the needs on the organization.[12]
- A holistic approach to housing stability that is incorporated though cross-organizational support and communication.[13]
- Client supports and education.
    - o Stages of support: early in tenancy and ongoing.
    - o Aftercare programs to support individuals who have moved into new or more independent housing.[14]
    - o Ongoing programming: Life skills/household/employment training and education.
- Capacity building/empowerment for tenants.[15]
- Ongoing review and monitoring of approaches.
- Organizational philosophy/culture that respects and supports the clients.[16]

Housing Stability is a Process

The needs of people experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness often face complex challenges. This will warrant specific consideration, level and types of supports and as well as approaches. Additionally, the process of stability will be different for everyone. Some individuals may from housing instability or homelessness to housing stability and community integration without additional supports. Others may require periodic supports. There will also be some individuals, for whom long-term, ongoing support, either in the form of housing or services, is what housing stability looks like.

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[10] McCullough, J., & Distasio, S. (2014). *Holding On! Supporting Successful Tenancies for the Hard to House*. Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg

[11] Ontario Addictions and Mental Health. (2013). *Addictions Supportive Housing Literature Review*.

[12] Ibid; Ontario Addictions and Mental Health. (2013). Addictions Supportive Housing Literature Review.

[13] Newton, R. (2009). *Municipal Strategies To Address Homelessness in British Columbia*. Burnaby: Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia.

[14] Ready to Rent BC is an example of an organization in Victoria that currently provides training programs to tenants and landlords on topics such as rights and responsibilities and conflict resolution. For tenants who have completed the 'RentSmart' program, they also offer 'coaching supports' in order assist and empower tenants to address tenancy related issues that arise.

[15] (Distasio & McCullough, 2014; Newton, 2009)

[16] (Distasio & McCullough, 2014)

Key Findings

Key Finding from Staff and Tenants:

The following findings were gathered over several focus groups and interviews with staff of housing and service providers, current tenants of supportive housing, and members of the Social Inclusion Advisory Group. There was considerable overlap with the responses between staff and people with lived experience. This feedback is provided first, followed by the feedback that was more specific each group.

Barriers to Rapid Rehousing

What we heard from tenants and front-line staff was that there are currently major barriers in securing housing for people currently experiencing homelessness, or re-housing for those who are at risk of homelessness, or require more appropriate housing. Many tenants told stories of being on housing waitlists for months or years with no updates. Some tenants did share experiences of quickly securing housing with the help of a support worker. We also heard from both groups that given how difficult it can be to secure a unit, the need to secure a spot leaves little room to explore appropriateness of housing.

Common themes we heard:

- Lack of housing options
- Long wait lists
- Lack of cohesive communications network across housing service providers
- Gaps in housing (difficult to find 'the right fit': low barrier/high barrier, mental health and/or addiction supports, age-targeted housing, dog-friendly, affordable)
- Complicated policies and application processes
- 'Blacklisted' clients
- Lack of transparency/communication in CASH

What can contribute to an eviction:

- Safety/conflicts between tenants, personal conflicts
- Non-payment of rent
- Changing needs such as relapse or illness
- Inappropriate use of space (hoarding, hygiene)
- Lack of understanding of rights and responsibilities

Contributors to housing instability:

- High costs of higher needs clients. Some front-line staff said that the perception that low barrier tenants will more likely cause damage and result in high repair and maintenance costs is a motivating factor for some housing providers to favour lower needs clients
- Gaps in services: addictions and mental health services
- Staffing limitations (hours and training)
- High staff turnover affects service levels and relationships
- Lack of understanding of existing services for both staff and tenants
- Lack of suitable alternatives

Additional Challenges

- Additional rehousing challenges for:
  - Indigenous people
  - Youth
  - Families
  - People with pets
  - People with disabilities
  - Seniors, or 'nearly' seniors

Feedback from tenants regarding housing stability, evictions and rehousing:

All the quotes within this feedback section are from tenants in supportive housing.

Experiences with housing providers

Many tenants expressed a lack of trust in staff. Several said that they avoid interactions with staff, and were less likely to bring up potential issues as they feared it could impact their tenancy. Related to this:

- Tenants expressed that in some supportive housing, evictions may be used as a disciplinary measure or warning. The impacts on tenants generally included greater alienation and mistrust.
- We also heard from some tenants that their only interactions with staff were negative in nature: when they had done something wrong or there was a conflict, something they felt should be improved.

> *The less you talk to them, the safer it is.*

We also heard many positive things about housing staff. Some of the tenants talked about the value of staff assisting in accessing housing and support services through tasks like getting personal help from staff for things like looking up program information, filling out forms, or getting to appointment. Additionally, some tenants talked about the value of their relationships with staff.

> *I don't think people acknowledge how lonely life can be when you run solo[...], To have that type of support from CSWs to go to an appointment or to have a coffee with you because they have an extra half hour [means a lot]*

- Many tenants expressed the feeling that staff were quite busy, and not always able to provide the level of support that tenants would like.

- The high level of staff turnover was often brought up. Tenants found this sometimes meant that they did not get "follow through in support". Additionally, we heard that this was a barrier to forming relationships with staff.

- A common theme was the frustration that the housing system saw them only in terms of the issues they have had, and did not acknowledge their successes. Not only did tenants find this frustrating, but it affects their housing. Many tenants had been blacklisted from one or more non-profit housing providers and private management companies.

> *I am going to be 4 years clean. It is hard. I have been on drugs my whole life. I changed around my life. And I still can't find a place. There should be a reward.*

- Some tenants we frustrated with the perceived lack of logic or consistency in the way conflicts or broken rules are handled. Several tenants described situations where they felt staff let a tenant 'get away with' breaking rules, while others had been 'punished' would like explanation, or even involvement where possible in the case of a conflict or risk of eviction for another tenant.

Support and information

Many tenants said they were not aware of what services are available to them. Similarly, several tenants said they were unaware of their housing options.

- We heard from many tenants that they found it difficult to find information on programming and services and to get clarity on things like eligibility, program details and application or sigh-up process. Several tenants brought up the value of front-line staff in assisting in accessing this information and helping with the process.
- Many said that when there were given information on their housing and support options after asking or after a staff member approached them, and some were frustrated that they weren't given this information sooner. A lack of information and a feeling of 'not knowing where to start' was brought up as being particularly intimidating for those individuals who were experiencing homelessness for the first time.

Community and Isolation in Housing

Something we heard from many tenants was that they feel a sense of community in their housing. They expressed the value of being able to talk to staff and fellow tenants. These social connections were considered an important support.

> *The two shelters I mentioned people were coming and going. Here we have developed a sense of community – get to know people here a little bit. We became associates. Which is awesome. You don't feel solo.*

- There were also some tenants that did not feel any sense of community within their housing. This included concerns about a lack of trust among tenants.

- Whether a tenant felt a sense of community or not tended to vary by facility.

- Many of those tenants that felt a sense of community in their current housing situation also expressed a desire to maintain this level of connection and interaction in future housing situations.

Whether tenants felt a sense of community or not, many expressed fear over the isolation and of moving to independent housing. Many tenants shared stories of other people they knew experiencing a decline after moving into independent housing, sometimes resulting in relapses or even in death.

[Regarding moving into independent housing]:

> *if we died, nobody is going to notice*

Feeling of hopelessness and frustration and stigma

Many tenants said they were discouraged and felt 'stuck' after completing educational or transitional programs only to find a lack of availability in housing options. For these tenants, there was a mix of feelings: several people talked about feeling impatient to move on, but also nervous about transitioning. For many, the waiting is a challenge in itself.

> *When you get on these programs you're scared to mess it up or lose it.*

Perhaps the most unanimously discussed issue for tenants was the feeling of stigma attached to their housing living in supportive or transitional housing. We heard that this had impacts on the search for housing and jobs. We also heard that it had social impacts. Several tenants expressed that they felt shame from having friends or family see where they live. Many tenants also brought up the stigma or shame associated with being on social assistance, particularly when looking for housing.

[In reference to looking for an apartment:]

> *I am nervous to talk go talk to someone. To tell them where I have been and for how long*

Empowerment and involvement

Many tenants brought up the need for them to have a say in the management and operations of their housing. Some talked about the value of having tenant meetings with management to discuss issues brought forward by tenants.

- Conversely, we heard frustration and mistrust if these types of tenant inclusion actions were seen as ineffective in affecting changes, or as damaging to privacy by discussing tenants without adequate confidentiality.
- Several tenants said they would like to be able for tenants to pursue their interests, or utilize their skills in the programming of the building.
- A few of tenants cited this lack of ability to have meaningful input and the lack of alternative housing options contributed to a feeling of being imprisoned.

> *This is supposed to be supportive housing but [staff] are the first ones to call the police to create more problems for people here who are also ready up against things like this. This does not help them better their life by getting them into more trouble with the police and getting more charges* "

Staff-Specific Feedback:

- A few front line staff and management brought up a concern that rapid policy changes would disrupt and frustrate staff, resulting in staff turnover.

- Similarly, several front-line staff members felt that ongoing training, and shifts in organizational culture were both necessary in in successfully supporting housing stability.

- A small number of staff felt that a contributor to housing instability is that that tenants do not want, or are not ready for the help. While some staff expressed that this was the responsibility of tenants, others felt that this was a problem of a lack of flexibility and resources in "meeting people where they are at"

- Many staff talked about having over-burdened workloads and resource limitations. Further, they felt frustrated that that this negatively impacted the level and quality of support they were able to provide to tenants.

Rapid Re-Housing and Eviction Prevention: Approaches and Recommendations

The nature of eviction prevention approaches, as well as the diversity of housing providers means that "one size fits all" is not realistic or ideal for implementing housing stability. There are however, common fundamental elements that can inform the creation of a housing stability, and/or eviction prevention policy at various levels, and housing models.

The following themes for non-eviction and rapid rehousing policies are based both on the existing best practices and the input we received through our focus groups and discussions with tenants and housing and service provider staff. Following each of the theme areas are a set of policy recommendations. The recommendations may be used as a starting point for developing non-eviction policies for new housing and services and may also be incorporated into the practices of existing housing and services providers.

These recommendations may also inform strategies in a wider network of housing, re-housing and homelessness prevention. In this way, the recommendations range from policies for housing providers to system-level approaches.

This analysis does not include a comprehensive approach to housing stability for vulnerable individuals in independent housing with private-market landlords (subsidized and non-subsidized), Nonetheless, the foundational principles and many aspects of the approach are applicable.

Organizational Mandates and Culture

For housing stability policies to be successful, they must be foundational to the mandate and culture of an organization or network. The approach needs to come from place that assumes that successful housing stability is possible for every person, and that this is made possible through every interaction and process with an individual[17]. There needs to be an organizational culture and philosophy of respect, support and empowerment. This includes understanding and proactively responding the unique needs for an individual.

An example of this approach to culture being put into action is the Region of Waterloo Language Guide, aimed at providing housing and support staff with a toolkit of respectful and accessible language and conversation guides for engaging with tenants[18]. As part of their Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy, this language document is one in a larger summary series of tools and training for housing and support organizations.

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[17] McCullough, J., & Distasio, S. (2014). *Holding On! Supporting Successful Tenancies for the Hard to House*. Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg

[18] Region of Waterloo. (2012). Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy Summary Series Language Guide.

Recommendations:

- Create an organizational mandate that establishes success-based principles, utilizing either a non-eviction or eviction prevention policy. Establish a philosophy/culture of respect and support.
- Establish and foster a success-based culture in staff and management staff by considering these values in all processes. Create and hold periodic training to ensure these values are understood, improved and successfully implemented.
- Ensure staff has the time and ability to have positive interactions with tenants that solidify relationships.

Early Intervention

In University of Winnipeg-based 2014 report on best practices for supporting successful tenancies for the hard to house, Distasio and McCullough[19] find that a common theme in existing and emerging approaches to preventing evictions and providing housing stability was early intervention support. This includes:

- Early identification and support for vulnerable or higher risk clients
- Identifying and addressing issues and needs for clients at risk of an eviction

Identifying vulnerabilities in clients typically begins early on in this process. This helps in determining housing needs, as well as potential supports. There are different kinds of vulnerability that may intersect with issues of poverty to make stable tenancies more difficult for tenants. Understanding needs early on will help in providing services to support stable tenancies and will help it if gets to a point where a tenancy is at risk.

The Toronto Housing Network suggests that housing providers should "use everyday management practices to identify at-risk tenancies and establish supports before crises happen"[20]

In a 2016 toolkit of promising eviction prevention practices, Distasio and McCullough found that common indicators included:

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[19] Distasio, J., & McCullough, S. (2014). *Holding On! Supporting Successful Tenancies for the Hard to House*. Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg.

[20] Connelly, J., & Roberts, A. (2009). *Toronto Community Housing's Mental Health Framework Executive Summary*. Toronto.

1. rent arrears,
2. warning of eviction, or an eviction notice,
3. housing unit issues such as hoarding, housekeeping, damage, or fire hazards,
4. anti-social behavior including criminal activity, or intimidation or disturbances to other tenants,
5. social isolation — especially for Aboriginal persons away from their home community,
6. missing appointments with support-workers,
7. tenant lacks formal program supports, or a support network."[21]

Recommendations:

- Create or review processes at the beginning of the tenancy or re-housing that assess client needs, identifies vulnerable clients who may be at a higher risk of eviction.
- Implement a 'vulnerable tenants protocol' to impellent a process for when a potential crisis, or risk of eviction is imminent (Distasio, S. &. McCullough, J., 2016)
- Creating indicators for vulnerabilities, and at-risk tenancies and establish training for staff to identify these vulnerabilities.
- Identify where additional protocols for vulnerable clients may be appropriate, such as frameworks on mental health challenges, or age-friendly communities (Mainstay Housing, 2005).

Flexible, Client Centered Principles

A client-centered principle is central to housing stability approaches. In addressing housing stability approaches, non-profit housing provider Mainstay Housing in Toronto highlights that their clients face extremely complex issues such as:

- Serious mental illness
- Other chronic health conditions, including substance use, developmental disabilities and debilitating physical conditions
- Trauma

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[21] Distasio, Jino; McCullough, S. (2016). *Eviction Prevention: Toolkit of Promising Practices*. Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg (pg. 12)

- Poverty
- Multiple barriers to employment
- The experience of chronic homelessness and instability
- Racism, stigma, homophobia and other sources of discrimination. [22]

The complexity of these challenges cannot be addressed with a single formula. In successful housing stability programs, creating quality relationships is foundational to positive outcomes.

Another consideration is the timeline for stability, or the length of time it takes for a person to become stably housed. While this can be difficult to measure, Research from the University of Winnipeg[23] suggests it can take up to three years or more. It is important to understand and accommodate the reality that efforts to support successful tenancies are for most, a long-term investment.[24]

Several recommendations for client-centered approaches are included below, however they are also embedded throughout the recommendations.

> Recommendations:
>
> - Aim to build support networks for tenants to see themselves as active members of the community. Identify what barriers (personal or systemic) might be affecting this.
> - Interventions to move people out of homelessness should be shaped by the clients' individual needs and circumstances. An individualized assessment should be conducted.
> - Meaningfully involve tenants in developing housing, including aspects such as: who the housing is aimed at, facility design and programing design.
> - Explore options to allow tenants to have greater agency in housing operations. This may include some level of client-run, co-run or collaborative management process.

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[22] Mainstay Housing. (2005). Beyond the Key to the Front Door: A guide to helping tenants keep their homes. Toronto. (pg. 9)

[23] Distasio, S. &. McCullough, J., (2016)

[24] City of Toronto. (2013). Housing Stability Service Planning Framework 2014 to 2019, Toronto

Accessibility of Information

A common theme in feedback from staff and tenants is that information on services and processes are not always easily accessible. This includes information on existing support resources and programs, tenant rights, and housing options.

> Recommendations:
>
> - Create a centralized database of existing housing and related services. Include information on tenant rights and responsibilities as well as resources for accessing services such as income assistance.
> - Make information on these resources available to staff through ongoing training.
> - Create or update orientation handbook for tenants that includes information on resources as well as relevant contact information.

Network Coordination and Communication

Staff talked about the need for an effective way to communicate between organizations in order to support cross-agency case management. Cross-agency case management supports housing stability by assisting clients who might be experiencing multiple challenges and identifying and following up with potential tenancy challenges and service needs[25]. We heard from front line and tenants that any centralized communication program needs to be done in a way that respects the privacy and dignity of individuals. While the Intensive Case Management and Assertive Community Treatment teams currently exist in Victoria, this service is not approached from a housing first model.

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[25] Kolkman, J., & Ahorro, J. (2013). Understanding tenancy failures and successes: final report. Edmonton.; Acacia Consulting and Research. (2006). Highlights Report, Cycles of Homelessness: Understanding Eviction Prevention and its Relation to Homelessness.

Recommendations:

- Consider cross-agency case management approaches that utilize housing stability principles.
- Ensure there are guidelines for sharing client information in a way that is respectful to the individual. Accommodate for clients who may not wish to participate, or disclose information.
- Any written information or reports about tenants should be written in a way that is objective and without personal comment.

Rehousing Process

In terms of rapid rehousing, local stakeholders brought up many of the same issues faced for jurisdictions in Canada and beyond. While lack of available housing was cited as the top barrier, there are still many ways to increase the efficiency. In particular, the largest challenge was the lack of consistency, and clarity in application processes, as well as the lack of transparency in the CASH process. While re-imagining a full, coordinated intake process is beyond the scope of this report, there are some basic housing stability principles that can adapt to existing processes and inform future restructuring.[26]

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[26] Patterson, M., Somers, J., & Mcintosh, K. (2007). Housing and Supports for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or mental Illness in BC. Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health & Addiction: Simon Fraser University; (Distasio & McCullough, 2014)

Recommendations:

- Housing should be appropriate: Housing that is 'the right fit' for clients. This means a focus on client choice, not placement. It also
- Consider an expedited and accessible process for homeless
- Create greater access to rental supplements, review the scope of eligibility and process for accessing.
- Consider an expanded 'flex fund' to assist clients who may need to pay upfront costs when moving into housing.[29]
- Review coordination between agencies, service providers on information and referrals. Ensure there is transparency and fairness in the process.
- Maintain communication with individuals waiting for housing
- Provide a greater housing choice. In particular, low barrier housing with flexibility in rules and that accommodates the range of needs for people with addiction and mental health issues.
- Prioritize housing that is appropriate to an individual. Considerations include the neighborhood, spiritual and cultural needs.[30]
- Provide and ensure accessibility and advocates that can provide personal support in finding and securing housing.[31]
- Provide access to phones and computers and free voicemail for homeless individuals.
- Prioritize processing of applications for homeless individuals.
- Establish a desired maximum timeline in which to secure housing for homeless individual.
- Keep an 'inactive' waiting list for those clients who cannot be contacts. Allow these clients to re-enter the waiting list without losing their 'spot in line'. Additionally, relax requirements for homeless individuals to keep application updated.[32]
- Minimize application requirements such as credit checks, criminal records, landlord references.
- 'Black-listing' clients should be avoided, but in such cases, it should be time-limited, allowing re-assessment of current needs, circumstances and successes.

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[27] City of Toronto. (2016). *Eviction Prevention Framework*. Toronto;
Region of Waterloo. (2012). Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy Summary Series Language Guide.

Supporting Staff

Both the stakeholder feedback and the general literature emphasized the importance of supporting staff. In order to effectively support housing stability, staff need education and training, the adequate resources and reasonable case-loads, and conditions that prevent burn-out.[31]

Recommendations:

- Ensure policies are in place to support employee retention and prevent burnout. This may include adequate time off and individualized briefings.
- Listen to staff about what is needed to support their work and well-being.
- Provide new staff with orientation and training on housing stability policies.
- Provide ongoing training and information sharing existing or updated programs and services.
- Invest in housing stability related training such as workshops, conferences or accessing online sources.
- Create a process for staff to assess and monitor challenges, opportunities and indicators of success.

Client Resources and Support

When implementing a housing stability approach, developing specific resources may be helpful. This will likely look different for each organization. There is a still a strong potential for sharing resources, costs and experiences across organizations. Client resources and supports related to housing stability extend to all aspects of support, as stability is a holistic process. The analysis and recommendations below include some specific housing stability approaches to support, and support processes.

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[28] Distasio, J., & McCullough, S. (2014). Holding On! Supporting Successful Tenancies for the Hard to House. Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg.

[29] CMHC. (2005). Research Highlight: Homeless Applicants' Access to Social Housing, Retrieved from www.cmhc.ca

[30] ibid.

[31] (Distasio, Jino; McCullough, 2016)

Move-in Process

The move-in process is an important transition point, particularly for those with more complex challenges[32]. In the context of a Housing First model, this becomes particularly important point in establishing the foundation for a successful tenancy.

Recommendations:

Aspects of the move-in process should include:
- An orientation of the building policies, staff and facilities.
- Explanation of roles and responsibilities of the tenant and housing provider.
- Personalized information on available services and resources.
- Nearby community resources, from services, to community centres, shopping etc.
- Personalized assessment and mutual housing-client plan (see below).
- Where possible, establish direct payment or trusteeships for clients receiving social assistance.

Tenant Agreements, Participation Agreements

Housing providers commonly uses standard tenancy agreements or good behavior agreements. These standard agreements may undermine Housing First and Housing Stability principles when they are used primarily as a disciplinary tool[33]. A mutually agreed upon housing and personal action plan for clients is an alternative or complimentary approach that supports housing stability. It is a written document that serves as solutions-oriented individualized plans for proactively supporting a successful tenancy. A potential framework is the Successful Tenancy Action Plan (STAP) used by Mainstay Housing in Toronto[34]. This written plan is created at intake through mutual planning with the client to support a successful tenancy for the individual. The former Community Wellness Initiative in Winnipeg had similar approach, but it was completed

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[32] ibid

[33] Kolkman, J., & Ahorro, J. (2013). Understanding tenancy failures and successes: final report. Edmonton.

[34] Mainstay Housing. (2015). Annual Report 2015-2016. Toronto.; Distasio, J., & McCullough, S. (2014). Holding On! Supporting Successful Tenancies for the Hard to House. Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg.

where a problem occurs that may put an individual's tenancy at risk. These agreements are individualized and solutions oriented. They clearly lay out what is expected of both parties, and they identify challenges, solutions, timelines and resources for the client. Where possible they also include steps and resources for the tenant to take a proactive role (for example, enrolling in a training program).

Recommendations:

- Review how existing 'behaviour agreements', or similar agreements may impact housing stability.
- Create a process and template for 'participation agreements'.
- Elements of a mutual participation agreement may include:
  - Needs assessment
  - Responsibilities and rights of both the tenant and the staff
  - Personal goals
  - Plan for checking in
  - Ongoing update/reflection
  - Mutually agreed upon structure, developed and signed by staff and client
  - Includes timelines, and allows for measurable results[1]

Peer-support Services

Another important element of client supports is the value of peer-to-peer support, which is being increasingly adopted in service models.[35] People who have experienced homelessness can be reluctant to trust staff or the system. Peers with lived experience can provide a level of understanding and trust that is not always possible with support staff. This also supports the autonomy and empowerment of participants.

Recommendations:

- Establish and expand peer support services.

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[35] (Distasio, Jino; McCullough, 2016; Kolkman & Ahorro, 2013)

Client Programming, Education and Training

From a housing stability perspective, there are several types of client education and skills training: life skills training (such as cooking, managing finances, dispute resolution etc.), job skills training, and education on tenant rights and responsibilities. These programs can assist clients in the day-to-day tasks of maintaining a household[36]. For many clients with long histories of homelessness, or a lack of stable housing, these programs can be particularly valuable.[37]

An important piece of feedback we received from tenants is that they would like to run their own programming, utilizing their skills and interests.

Recommendations:

- Create life-skills programming that will assist individuals in learning the skills needed to maintain housing (cooking, cleaning, money management, tenant rights, responsibilities and landlord relations.
- Work with clients to develop training and activity programming.
- Consider allocating resources for client led programming.
- Continue to support those recently housed through after-care programs including ongoing assistance and support in household maintenance.

Communicating with Clients

Effective communication with clients is an important element in supporting stable tenancies. Common across housing stability approaches is that communication should be early and ongoing. We also heard from tenants that there was inconsistent communication around a range of issues, such as resources, or changes in policies. While communication policies may be in place, they require critical reflection on how they actually work to best support client stability. A City of Toronto Ombudsman report examining evictions from the Toronto Community Housing Corporation found that,

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[36] City of Toronto. (2016). Eviction Prevention Framework, Toronto; Homeward Trust Edmonton. (2013). Edmonton Community Service Delivery Plan. Edmonton.

[37] Housing and Supports for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or mental Illness in BC. Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health & Addiction; Simon Fraser University.

despite clear policies on early and effective communication, it could still be intimidating and inaccessible for clients. [38]

Recommendations:

- In written communications use clear, accessible language.
- Where letters are used, consider templates to ensure consistency.
- Communicate in person, where possible.
- Consider that too much written correspondence can be overwhelming, depersonalizing.
- Support a culture where staff-client interactions are relationship building.
- If important policy changes are made that could affect clients, ensure this is communicated.

Managing Disputes and Risk of Eviction; Preventing Homelessness

Eviction prevention means take a proactive approach in the cases where there a client may be at risk of eviction. This means identifying risks for eviction early on, determining resource needs, and following through to support the tenant in resolving the issue. In some cases, the vulnerability may be a change in housing or support needs. Some cases may require dispute resolution. If there is a plan for resolving an issue, it may be useful to create this as a written, agreed upon plan in order to create accountability for all parties. This approach was successfully used by the former Community Wellness initiative in Winnipeg.[39] The Support Successful Tenancy Action Plan (STAP), used by Mainstay Housing in Toronto, uses a similar approach, but utilizes the agreements- including needs identification- at the outset of a tenancy.

Another tool for preventing evictions, stabilizing tenancies, and providing supports during transitions back into housing is emergency or respite housing, where an individual can access short term beds. This can be helpful where an individual is experiencing conflict within their current housing, or is facing addictions, mental health or other health issues that require more intensive care. Where there is conflict within an individual's current housing situation, having access to short term, alternate housing can

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[38] Crean, F. (2013). Housing at Risk: An Investigation into the Toronto Community Housing Corporation's Eviction of Seniors on the Basis of Rent Arrears. Office of the Ombudsman.

[39] Distasio, J., & McCullough, S. (2014). Holding On! Supporting Successful Tenancies for the Hard to House. Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg.

provide a valuable 'cool-down' period. Emergency/respite beds for individuals at risk of homelessness can help prevent eviction, hospitalization or, sometimes, incarceration[40]. In the capital region, Island Health offers several emergency and transitional facilities and programs such as: the Sobering Centre; transitional care units, which provide transitional support for hospital patients who may require complex discharge planning to transition to long-term housing; psychosocial, medical and shelter supports through their Support for Addictions through Management of Independence (SAMI) program, which is aimed at clients with severe addictions issues[41]. While there are some resources available, there is still an identified need for increased access to emergency shelter/respite beds for those individuals whose tenancy is at risk, or who are at risk of homelessness during period of transition[42].

Both tenants and staff said they would like to have access to an independent body to assist tenants in cases where they are at risk of eviction, as well as provide mediation services between the housing provider and tenant.

Recommendations:

- Establish/update procedures where a tenant has been identified as potentially being at risk of an eviction. Establish/update operating procedures in the case of an eviction process. Ensure operating procedures identify proactive ways to resolve the issue, such as communication and support where there is non-payment of rent, or early staff mediation in the case of a dispute with other tenants or staff. Create accountability at each step, including management check-ins, with a focus on finding alternate solutions.
- Accountability:
    o   In the case of disputes or evictions, establish reporting process within organization
    o   Reporting to centralized body (where applicable)

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[40]Mayor's Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Health and Addiction. (2007) *Report of the Gap Analysis Team*. City of Victoria

[41] CitySpaces Consulting (2016). Process Mapping Supplemental Report.

[42] Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (2016). Community Plan – Phase 1, 2016/17.

Recommendations, continued:

- Establish mediated settlement processes in-house
- Create a funded, independent mediated settlement process. In housing where the Residential Tenancy Act applies, this could be used to try and avoid the need to go to arbitration with the Residential Tenancy Board.
- In cases where the tenant has changing needs:
    - Train staff to identify where a tenant may have changing needs, may be at risk, or more vulnerable. Avoid penalizing those who come forward to identify issues such as relapse.
    - Begin process to identify what is needed, both in terms of additional supports, and/or more appropriate housing.
- Establish or review processes for non-payment of rent. This should include early intervention, communication and re-payment plans.
- Expand access to emergency/respite beds for individuals at risk of homelessness.

Assessment and Monitoring

There are several reasons why assessment and monitoring is important for housing stability approaches in particular. First, the nature of these approaches is to be flexible and adaptable, but this takes practice, reflection and work. Additionally, for any new policy, it is will inevitably time for existing, or new staff and tenants to adjust. Another reason is that while the policies and processes may look successful on paper, it is truly in the meaningful implementation where the successes lie. For example, an organization may have 'eviction as a last resort' as a policy, but critical reflection of past eviction practices can help to reveal where alternate actions may have preempted the need for an eviction, or simply have provided better outcomes for the tenant.

Indicators for success are important but must require care in their use and interpretation, as they tend to measure outcomes rather than reflect actual tenant stability. Distasio and McCullough (2014) looked at best practices literature and existing programs to come up with this following list of potential indicators of stability:

- Length of Tenure
- Rehousing Episodes
- Rent Payment
- Housing Unit Measurements
- Unit Maintenance Issues

- Level of Crisis and Response
- Mental Wellbeing
- Behaviour Based Issues
- Personal Growth and Goal Attainment, and
- Engagement with Case Planning
- Self-Identified Success
- Feeling Safe
- Decreasing Isolation, Improving Interaction
- Community Integration
- Tenant Participation Levels in programs
- Improved Health[43]

Mainstay Housing uses a variety of indicator themes related to housing stability. One theme is focused on community and belonging. Mainstay developed these by asking the tenants to identify what indicators told them they belonged and had community (Mainstay Annual Report, 2014-15)[44]. The resulting indicators are unique to their housing and programming, and relevant to the actual experiences and priorities of tenants.

Recommendations:

- Assessment and monitoring should take place at multiple levels and points in time:
    - During and after an eviction or dispute to review the scenario, use of procedure, challenges, successes and areas of improvement.
    - Periodically within and organization to review challenges, successes and barriers.
    - System-wide, between organizations, to collaborate and review successes and barriers.
    - Each of these aspects of assessment needs to have processes and resources in place to complete them.
- For system-wide assessment, develop a common set of indicators and data-collection standards.
- In addition to common indicators of success, identify where facility or program specific indicators might be of value.
- Include tenants in developing indicators.

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[43] Distasio, J., & McCullough, S. (2014). *Holding On! Supporting Successful Tenancies for the Hard to House*. Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg.
[44] Mainstay Housing. (2015). *Annual Report 2015-2016*. Toronto.

Implementation of Eviction Prevention Policies

Meaningful implementation is fundamental to the success of housing stability policies[45].

Organizations looking to support successful tenancies should have an eviction prevention or non-eviction policy in place. An eviction prevention policy will be the foundational document for implementing a range of housing stability approaches.

Recommendations:

An eviction prevention policy should include:

- Organizational Mandate that includes[46]:
  o Flexible, person first approach
  o Staff/Agent responsibilities
  o Communication strategies and responsibilities
  o Education for staff
  o Early intervention
  o Support and education when a tenant does not meet responsibilities.
- Policy Review
  o Established indicators of success
  o Periodic review of indicators and guidelines
  o Organizational support/priorities:
  o Increase maintenance budgets to address damage to units or facility. Maintain a flexible fund for this and similar issues.
  o Address ways to minimize staff turn-over to maintain stability for both staff and tenants
  o Where housing includes higher needs tenants, consider budgeting to allow for higher staff to tenant ratios.

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[45] Crean, F. (2013). Housing at Risk: An Investigation into the Toronto Community Housing Corporation's Eviction of Seniors on the Basis of Rent Arrears. Toronto Office of the Ombudsman.

[46] Sault Ste. Marie Housing Corporation. (2008). *Eviction Prevention Policy Guidelines*. Sault Ste. Marie.; Distasio, Jino; McCullough, S. (2016). *Eviction Prevention: Toolkit of Promising Practices*.

Next Steps

This report provides the framework for housing stability policy approaches, within the context of the regional Housing First Strategy as well as the local supportive and supported housing context. The report and recommendations are intended as a first step towards further development and implementation of housing stability policies for the network of existing and future affordable housing. Below are recommended next steps and future considerations for continuing to implement these recommendations through the Housing Affordability Strategy:

- Throughout the development of the Housing First Strategy, consider how housing stability is affected throughout the entire process: from developing support services and facilities, client inclusion in planning and development, developing indicators and monitoring and interagency intake and communications networks.
- Create a monitoring and accountability system, with stable funding.
- Further develop housing stability approaches for supported/subsidized private market tenants.
- Establish or expand stable sources of funding for housing stability related services.
- Create a Housing Stability Strategy, connected to the broader Housing First Strategy, which includes the points above, as well as key elements that include:
  - A description the stakeholders and their roles.
  - A set of housing stability values.
  - A template for eviction prevention policies and agreements for new housing providers.
  - Resources of monitoring, evaluation and follow up.
- Questions to ask when setting the terms of a housing stability strategy include: who will be included in this process? How will existing housing providers incorporate these policies? How will resources be funded and how will they be secured over the long term?

Ultimately, a successful approach to housing stability will be one that is on-going, inclusive and able to reflect and adapt to challenges, failures and successes.

Appendix I

Promising practices from other jurisdictions

Mainstay Housing: Toronto, Ontario

Mainstay is the largest non-profit housing provider in Ontario and is aimed at subsidized housing for mental health consumer-survivors. It is one of the few housing providers with specific non-eviction policies. Mainstay also involves tenants in planning, decision-making and management of their housing.

Mainstay operates a range of housing type and support levels, but all of them are aimed at tenants who are capable of independent living. Individuals are referred through partner agencies.

The intake process:

At the application stage, the needs of the individual are assessed in terms on accessing and maintaining housing. The intention is to match a housing option that works for the individual.

Next, a Successful Tenancy Action Plan (STEP) is drafted in partnership with the individual. This is a written document providing tools to support the tenant in maintaining tenancy. It is individualized, solutions oriented and allows for measurable results. The document includes:

- Defined roles and responsibilities of the tenant, housing provider and support services
- Contact information in the case a problem arises
- Definition of what constitutes a problem
- Specific timelines

Communication and support for service providers:

The Mainstay participant guide outlines guidelines for staff and other support workers. The framework of the guidelines is enable staff in assisting tenants maintain housing.

Staff and Organizational Training

IN 2005, Mainstay led the development of training workshops and materials entitled *'Beyond the Key to the Front Door: A guide to helping tenants keep their homes'*[47]. This project was administered by the City of Toronto created in consultation with multiple housing and support service agencies, as well as with people with lived experience. Mainstay continues to offer facilitated workshops and participant guide and to other organizations.

The participant guide takes practical approach, providing discussion scenarios, templates, rights and responsibilities, and 'how-to' suggestions. It also explains the success-based principles underlying the approach.

The participant guide identifies key preventative measures for successful outcomes:

- Choice – suitable housing
- Move-in Orientation – including:
  - Initial tour of the facility, including an explanation of things like the laundry facilities
  - Explanation of roles and responsibilities of the tenant and landlord
  - Skills building: longer term, this element includes teaching independent living skills such as cooking and banking.
- Regular visits to the home.
  - 1st visit within 1st week of moving in
  - Allows for early identification of issues
- System of rent payment: this may vary, but an established agreement should be in place
- Good communication: between landlord, tenant and agency
  - All parties should know who to contact when there is an issue
  - Landlord should know roles and limits of the service provider

The aim of these approaches is to build a support network for the tenant and to help the tenant in seeing themselves as active members of the community.

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[47] Mainstay Housing. (2005). *Beyond the Key to the Front Door: A guide to helping tenants keep their homes*. Toronto. Retrieved from: http://www.mainstayhousing.ca/PDF/Participant%27sGuide%20REVISEDv1.pdf

STEP Home, Waterloo Region

STEP Home of programs funded and implemented by the Waterloo Region in conjunction with community partners. The cover a spectrum of housing and support services, including: street outreach programs; 'streets to housing stability' and 'shelters to housing stability' programs with dedicated support workers; peer worker program; and supportive housing. Building on the Housing First model, it is focused on housing stability.

Key approaches:

- Emphasizes the importance of building relationships at all levels to support community building for tenants, with landlords as well as the broader community as a whole.
- Supports rehousing as needed. They take a 'do what it takes, no limit to housing' approach.
- Flexibility on policies and processes that meet the needs of the tenant.

Determining needs:

The program identifies 4 groups of participants in STEP Home that need different levels of service:

- Active group (Intensive and lower support)
- Inactive group
- Relationship building group: may serve as peer support
- Left the program

Program element: Contingency Funds

All programs in the STEP Home network are asked to set aside a contingency fund, of flex fund. This money is intended as a last resort for scenarios where all other options have been exhausted. It is used to address tenant needs with the intention of maintaining housing stability. Examples that could be covered through the flex fund include overdue utilities payments, or unit repairs. This has proven to be a cost effective prevention measure.

Community Wellness Initiative: Winnipeg, Manitoba

Created through a partnership between Manitoba Housing and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. While this program is no longer funded, there are some best practices lessons to take from their experience. The stated program goal was the "support the overall mental health and wellness of tenants living in public housing and aims to bring about a positive change in the community".

The program identifies key aim of capacity building for the individual and community. They use three themes of capacity building:

- Information needs- for staff and tenants
- Skill building needs
    - This includes programming and activities for tenants to teach daily living skills, as well as support from staff in addressing problems
- Support needs- for staff and tenants

Support service program element: "Tenant Service Coordinators" (TSC). TSC working in Manitoba Health building as play a key role in identifying tenant needs.

Outreach Program:

Assists high need tenants at risk of an eviction. The tenants in this program are primarily, but not exclusively individuals who have mental health issues. The referral process for the program uses 6 criteria:

- Tenant is at a high risk of eviction
- Tenant has no supports
- Tenant wants help
- Safety concerns exist
- Tenant is isolated
- There is a high probability of success

Intake process:

Tenants completed a TSC to complete a "working together agreement". This consists of a list of goals from which staff can allocate resources. It also includes a list of supports, including personal. The tenant is then paired with a Housing Support Worker.

Program details:

- Delivered by 'paraprofessionals' with onsite support
- Work with tenants up to nine months
- Meet once a week
- Assertive, interventional approach
- Empower tenants to take action themselves when possible
- Offers life skill programming, links tenant with services and includes mediation support when needed
- Progress is jointly assessed throughout

The outcome was reduced evictions and turnover greater tenant stability and improved health outcomes. In 2012 only 1 of 110 enrolled in the program were evicted. Tenants were also less likely to need to reenter the program.