

Housing Solutions for Complex Clients in Small Cities and Rural Areas

PURPOSE

Chronic and prolonged homelessness can be detrimental to a person's wellbeing and may also result in weaker ties to community and social supports, increasing the risk of harm and even death. Reducing the number of people who are chronically homeless requires a coordinated effort built across human service systems and providers (Cummings et al, 2022). City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County share a vision that "Everyone has a safe, secure and affordable home" (CKL, 2020). For this vision to be realized, a solution must be found to house those individuals who are chronically homeless and have been evicted from social housing.

METHODS

- ❑ Literature review of academic and grey literature, pertaining to the key areas of research, which are: eviction prevention, Housing First, supportive housing models, transitional housing programs, and micro-homes communities.
- ❑ Case studies include Indwell's Woodfield Gate Apartments (London Region); Inn From The Cold (York Region); and Oshawa Micro-Homes Pilot Project (Durham Region).
- ❑ Informational interviews were conducted with project managers of the programs selected as case studies to fill knowledge gaps in addition to publicly available information about the programs (e.g. websites).

FINDINGS

- ❑ All three case studies have adopted a transitional housing model and are using occupancy agreements instead of, or in addition to, tenancy agreements.
- ❑ The intake process is critical to the success of the participants, as it ensures those who are best suited to the programs and likely to be successful, are prioritized.
- ❑ The terms of the occupancy must be clearly defined in the agreement and require residents to actively participate in programming.
- ❑ Having sufficient staff to provide adequate support for residents is a determinant of success for programs and residents.

Supportive Housing

- ❑ Supportive housing is a physical environment that is specifically designed to be home-like, with in-house supports. The aim of supportive housing is to maximize independence, privacy, and dignity for residents. It is a highly effective strategy that combines affordability with intensive coordinated services.
- ❑ Supportive housing programs differ in many ways including the types of housing, programs offered, and the level of support provided by administrators. Types of supportive housing include scattered sites, group-homes, and congregate sites.
- ❑ Permanent supportive housing (PHS) has been linked with reductions in emergency shelter use, hospitalization, and incarceration for individuals with histories of chronic homelessness. (Oudshoorn, 2021; Kresky-Wolff et al, 2010; Dohler et al, 2016)

Transitional Housing

- ❑ Transitional housing provides temporary housing, social supports, treatment, and employment opportunities that are needed for successful integration into society.
- ❑ There are many types of transitional housing that provide specialized supports for individuals transitioning to permanent housing. Settings for transitional housing programs include scattered units, group-homes or shared housing, and space in larger supportive housing congregate sites.
- ❑ Transitional housing programs that support individuals with comorbidities recognize the importance of providing a home-like setting, with lower resident-to-staff ratios, small numbers of residents in one setting, and access to specialized services. Wrap-around supports can be tailored to the needs of participants within the program and delivered through partnerships that help with successful transition into a better quality of life. (Whalen, 2021; Province of British Columbia & MMHA, 2022)

Micro-Homes Communities

- ❑ Micro-homes are small, self-contained units, that are designed for year-round use. They include a kitchen, bathroom, and sleeping area and are limited to a maximum size of 37 metres squared as determined by the Ontario Building Code.
- ❑ Micro-homes are becoming a popular alternative to other types of housing, as they are cheaper to build and maintain. There are now many micro-home villages across the U.S., and a growing number in Canada, that are well supported and well organized.
- ❑ With the help of non-profits, architects, and planners, these micro-home communities are working to restore dignity, connection, and purpose to formerly homeless individuals. (York Region, 2021; Alexander, 2017)

CASE STUDIES

Indwell's Woodfield Gate

Woodfield Gate is Indwell's first permanent supportive housing building, located in downtown London, Ontario. Established in 2019, Woodfield Gate supports more than 67 tenants in one-bedroom apartments, many of whom were considered high acuity, and came to Woodfield Gate from shelters, hospitals, the justice system, or other precarious living situations. Woodfield Gate offers its tenants an on-site, interdisciplinary team of dedicated staff that provide wrap-around, 24 hours a day / 7 days a week, and on-call support, including housing support, mental health and addiction services, nursing, and food security. (Oudshoorn et al, 2021)



Photo provided by Indwell

Inn From the Cold

Inn From the Cold's (IFTC) mission is to provide services for individuals facing homelessness with basic to complex needs in York Region. IFTC introduced a housing readiness program called "Getting Ahead" to give residents the resources to move forward with their lives. "Stability Now", IFTC's transitional housing program, was created to provide temporary housing and prepare participants for permanent housing. In 2022, IFTC began its "Please Come Inn" – head lease program to create a more permanent housing solution for individuals who had successfully completed the transitional housing program. (IFTC, 2023)



Photo provided by Inn From The Cold

Oshawa Micro-Housing Pilot

The Oshawa Micro-Housing Pilot Project includes 10 micro-homes units, offering temporary transitional housing with social supports. These supports include employment services, mental health and addictions supports, life skills training and more. Participants are required to work on life skills to transition into permanent housing. Property management is coordinated through Durham Region, in collaboration with Cornerstone community organization, which provides support and case workers. The goal of this time-limited transitional housing is to help bridge the gap between homelessness and more permanent housing. (Durham Region, 2023)



Photo provided by Durham Region

Researcher: Johanne St Louis
 Faculty Supervisor: Lisa Boucher
 TCRC Supervisor: Brittany Finigan
 Host Supervisor: Aaron Mulcaster
 GESO-4820Y (2023-2024)

