

Theme: Sheltering and Housing

Theme Description

Domestic violence is one of the main causes of homelessness among Canadian families. Fleeing an abusive partner is not only a factor in women becoming homeless but also influences their continued homelessness, because it is unsafe to return home to a partner or live in a place that the abusive partner may be able to find and access. When they are not able to remain in their homes or communities because of their abuse, women may try to access a spectrum of housing options that includes short-term emergency shelters, second-stage shelters, transitional housing, housing first, permanent or subsidized housing.

What are the Issues or Barriers?

- A recent injection of funding from the Alberta Government to support women's shelters across the province has been a very important and welcome development. However, emergency and second-stage shelters, particularly in urban areas of the province, continue to turn-away thousands of women and children each year.
- Generic homeless shelter spaces are not equipped for housing women fleeing violence due to lack of security, lack of services for children and lack of specialized counselling and advocacy services to support women to safely re-establish a home in the community.
- Poverty is identified as the most significant barrier to safe housing facing those leaving violence. Regardless of their income prior to leaving, most women leaving violent relationships have limited finances available to them. Efforts to escape domestic violence can result in loss of job, housing, healthcare, childcare, and access to a partner's income – in fact, past exposure to domestic violence has been shown to be linked to future unemployment and poverty for women.
- Lack of affordable and safe housing across Alberta is a significant barrier for women who wish to leave their abusive partners.
- Current law, policies, and practices regarding residential tenancies in Alberta contribute significantly to the continuation and escalation of domestic violence and to the homelessness of women and children fleeing violence.

What Works?

- A broad spectrum of housing options can respond to a diverse group of women with varying family compositions, cultural considerations, and ability to live in community while in crisis. These options may range from women's emergency shelters, to second-stage/transitional or progressive housing, and to domestic violence (woman focused) housing first approaches.
- Increased coordination, cooperation, cross-training and partnerships between the homelessness and domestic violence programs or shelters is necessary to minimize the disconnect between services, reduce barriers to women for services access and to ensure meaningful response.
- There is a need to increase the supply and accessibility of affordable housing options throughout Alberta.
- The allowable stays in both emergency and second stage shelters should be lengthened, and accompanied with increased funding for longer-term transitional housing, including addition of more second stage shelters.
- It is essential to address systemic issues related to poverty, including minimum or living wage, adequate income support levels, labour standards, rental supplements and childcare policies.



- More funding is needed for specialized shelters in urban areas designed to meet the needs of Indigenous women and children moving to the cities from reserves, as well as equitable funding to on-reserve shelters and services.
- Laws and policies that govern housing need to be reformed to effectively respond to the variety of needs of victims of domestic violence.

References

- ACWS (2004). Ethical/Moral Framework. Edmonton: Alberta Council of Women's Shelters.
- ACWS (2012). Alberta Shelter Data Count 2012.
- Albert, M., Pauly, B., Cross, G. And Cooper, T. (??). The Cycle of Impossibility: Pathways Into and Out of Family Homelessness. BC: Centre for Addictions Research of BC; Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness; Community Social Planning Council.
- Alberta Government (2009). Women's Shelter Standards.
- Baker, C.K., Billhardt, K.A., Warren, J., Rollins, C., and Glass N. (2010). Domestic violence, housing instability, and homelessness: A review of housing policies and program practices for meeting the needs of survivors. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 15, 430-439.
- Beaulieu, M. (2012). Towards More Inclusive Way of Working (WOWs) in Shelters. Report on the Implementation of the Pilot Project on "Creating Inclusive Spaces". Submitted to the Board of Directors Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses. Ottawa, December 10, 2012.
- Billhardt, K. (2014). Rapid Re-Housing with DV Survivors: Approaches that Work. NAEH Ending Homelessness Conference. July 2014. VOA Oregon – Home Free. Powerpoint presentation.
- Burns, J., Forrester, T., Johnstone, K., MacLeod, L., McDonald, M., Todd C., Ozga, J., and Stewart C. (2016). Change, Justice, Fairness: "Why should we have to move everywhere and everything because of him?". Scottish Women's Aid.
- Calgary Domestic Violence Collective. (2013). *Surviving Not Thriving: Barriers to housing for people leaving violence*. Calgary, AB: Author.
- Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Houses. (2016). *The Practice Implementation Manual. A Guide for Sharing Promising Practices in VAW Transition Houses and Shelters*.
- Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses (2016). *Shelter Voices*. <http://endvaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/ShelterVoices-2016-WEB.pdf>
- CDVC/HomeFront Treatment Issues Committee, (2004). *Women Who are Abused: Peer Support Services and Shelters that Support and Protect Them. Tabling the Issues*. Submitted to the Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying.
- Felix-Mah, R., Adair, C.E., Abells, S. & Hanson, T. (2014). *A Housing and Homelessness Research Strategy for Alberta: Supporting A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in Ten Years*. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Centre for Child, Family & Community Research.
- Hansen, M., Ense, L., Freeman, C., Wiggins, K., Ford-Gilboe, M., Harris, R., MacQuarrie, B., (2012). *Ontario Shelter Research Project. An Evaluation of Shelters as Service Navigation Hubs for Abused Women. A Community-Based project funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation*.
- Hoffart, I. (2011). *Practical Frameworks for Change – Supporting Women and Children in Alberta Emergency Shelters*. Report prepared for the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters.
- Hoffart, I. (2015). *Domestic Violence Shelter Services: Review of Barriers, Gaps and Recommendations*. Written on behalf of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters for submission to the Alberta Human Services Department.

- Hoffart, I. (revised 2015). Alberta Council of Women's Shelters Second-stage Shelter Project: Transitioning from Domestic Violence to Stability. Project Report Prepared for the Canadian Women's Foundation.
- Hoffart, I. and Cairns, K. (2012). Strength in Numbers: A Ten-Year Trend Analysis of Women's Shelters in Alberta. Written for Alberta Council of Women's Shelters.
- Mccambridge, R. (2015). Housing first and the research and practice relationship in advancing a Field. *Nonprofit Quarterly*, November 3, 2015.
- Mosher, J. (2013). Housing first, women second? Gendering housing first a brief from the 'homes for women' campaign. Toronto ON: Homes for Women.
- Olsen, L., Rollins, C., and Billhasrdt, K. (2013). Domestic violence housing first: The Intersection of Domestic Violence and Homelessness.
- Rollins, C., Glass, N., Perrin, N., Billhardt, K., Clough, A., Barnes, J., Hanson, M., and Bloom, T. (2012). Housing Instability Is as Strong Predictor of Poor Health Outcomes as Level of Danger in an Abusive Relationship: Findings from the SHARE Study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 27 (4).
- Strategic Prevention Solutions, Ltd. (2011). The Missing Piece: A Case Study Analysis of the Washington State Domestic Violence Housing First Project – Eliminating housing as a reason that survivors stay in an abusive relationship. Prepared for Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.
- Stock, M. (2016). Ending Homelessness? A Critical Examination of Housing First in Canada and Winnipeg. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba.
- The Global Network of Women's Shelters. 2012 Global Data Count.
- The Pincher Creek Women's Emergency Shelter. (2015?) Spider Net Question: What stops you from coming into shelter when you need help?
- Thurston, W., Roy, A., Clow, B., Este, D., Gordey, T., Haworth-Brockman, M., McCoy, L., Rapaport Beck, R., Saulnier, C. And Carruthers, L. (2013). Pathways into and out of Homelessness: Domestic Violence and Housing Security for Immigrant Women. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 11:278-298.
- Tutty, L. (2006). Effective practices in sheltering women leaving violence in intimate relationships. Phase II report. Toronto ON: YWCA Canada.
- Tutty, L. (2015). Addressing the Safety and Trauma Issues of Abused Women: A Cross-Canada Study of YWCA Shelters. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 16(3), 101-116.
- Tutty, L., Ogden, C., Giurgiu, B., Weaver-Dunlop, G., Damant, D., Thurston, W., Berman, H., Gill, C., Hampton, M., Jackson, M., Ussel, J., Delaney, D., Harrison, P., Silverstone, A., White, L., Dunbar, J., Ali, S., Solerno, J. (September 30, 2009). "I Built my House of Hope". Best Practices to Safely House Abused and Homeless Women. Report prepared for the Homelessness Knowledge Development Program, Homeless Partnering Secretariat, Human Resources and Social Development Canada.
- Van Berkum, A., Oudshoorn, A. (2015). Best Practice Guideline for Ending Women's and Girl's Homelessness. Funded by the Government of Canada Homelessness Partnering Strategy
- Waegemakers Schiff, J., Schiff, R., Turner, A. & Bernard, K. (2015). Ruarl homelessness in Canada: Directions for planning and Research. *The Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 10 (4).
- Wathen, C., Harris, R., Ford-Gilboe, M. and Hansen, M. (2015). What Counts? A Mixed-Methods Study to Inform Evaluation of Shelters for Abused Women. *Violence Against Women*, 21(1).
- Woodman, K., Reimer, J. (2007). Research Trends and Implications for Practice: The State of Alberta's Children. Alberta Council of Women's Shelters: Edmonton, Ab.
- Williams, K. (2015). Feasibility Study: Transitional Housing for Women Leaving Violence. A report prepared for Rowan House Emergency Shelter.
- Yeo, S., Ratnam, C., Paradis, E., Oushoorn, A., Nessa, B., Mosher, J., (and 11 more authors) (2015). A Framework for Ending Women's and Girls' Homelessness. Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.