

TRANSITIONS TO HOME

RESEARCH STUDY



To find out about the impact the Transitions to Home (T2H) Program was having in Hamilton,

we asked people who had experienced long-term homelessness to talk about their experiences. We also talked to the T2H case management team and senior social services workers in the city, and analyzed data from T2H's case management database and Hamilton's Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). The study lasted one year. This fact sheet contains our key findings and recommendations.

Transitions to Home

supports individuals experiencing long-term shelter use and homelessness to acquire and maintain safe, affordable and long-term housing in the community.

Long-term homelessness

is defined as spending more than 30 days in an emergency shelter or unhoused.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 Most T2H participants spent fewer nights in emergency shelters.
- 2 They were more likely to secure affordable rental housing and stay there for an extended period if they stayed in contact with the program.
- 3 Housing for T2H participants placed in permanent units was stable, both in terms of being affordable and providing a psychological sense of stability.
- 4 People who had experienced long-term shelter use but weren't T2H participants had more challenges securing housing than those who were enrolled in the T2H program.
- 5 The services offered by T2H, including therapeutic recreation, addictions counseling and housing support, appeared to improve the general wellbeing of participants.

Find the full study online at www.crunch.mcmaster.ca

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Our interviews suggest there is an overall need for more affordable and social housing stock in Hamilton, particularly quality housing that is clean, in good repair and pest free.

2

There is also a need to increase housing allowances and rent supplements in Hamilton.

3

Most participants had experienced some form of trauma in childhood or youth. This suggests the need for increased counseling support for participants in T2H, as well as a need for agencies and governments to continue with preventive strategies that provide adequate support to low-income and at-risk families and children.

4

There is a need to establish innovative ways to increase collaboration between agencies and sectors, both those with a direct mandate to serve homeless people and those that regularly encounter this population.

5

Creative solutions for engaging with this population are needed.

Transitions to Home is a Housing First program.

Housing First is an evidence-based intervention model designed to quickly rehouse people experiencing long-term or multiple occurrences of homelessness. Participants are provided with access to treatment and therapeutic supports if they want, but Housing First doesn't require that they access treatment prior to being housed or comply with treatment to maintain their housing.

Housing First is based on the theory

that stable housing is an important determinant of health and wellbeing. With housing in place first, people will be better able to cope with and resolve mental health and addiction issues and work toward achieving other personal goals.

Housing First emerged in the U.S.

and was popularized by Sam Tsemberis and his team, who developed Pathways to Housing in New York City in the 1990s. Researchers analyzing the outcomes associated with Housing First have found mostly positive impacts, which is why it is called an "evidence-based" model.

In Hamilton, Housing First programs

for men are offered by Wesley Urban Ministries (the Transitions to Home (T2H) program that this study examined). Supporting Our Sisters (SOS) offers Housing First to women. Both agencies work with Hamilton's emergency shelter providers to offer their programs.

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This research was conducted by the Collaboratory for Research on Urban Neighbourhoods, Community Health and Housing at McMaster University. It was funded by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada. The research was funded in part by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The views expressed are those of the researchers, not the Government of Ontario, or the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

