
FROM HOSTELS TO HOMES:

Ontario's Experience with the Housing First Approach

Presentation to the National Housing Research Committee

May 4, 2009

Metropolitan Hotel, Toronto

Thu Nguyen, Ontario Works Branch, Ministry of Community and Social Services

OUTLINE

- “Housing First” Approach
- Overview of the Hostels to Homes (H2H) Pilot Initiative
- Funding Parameters
- Policy Parameters
- Service Delivery Trends
- Service Delivery Models
- Evaluation
- Preliminary Data

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“HOUSING FIRST”

- Emphasis on helping homeless people quickly access and then sustain housing
- Premised on research findings that homeless people are more responsive to intervention and social service supports after they are in their own housing
- 3 key components:
 - crisis intervention and needs assessment
 - re-housing to more permanent accommodation
 - “wrap-around” supports based on individualized case management

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OVERVIEW OF H2H

- Purpose: to assist chronic hostel users in attaining safe, appropriate, affordable and stable accommodation
- Expected Outcomes:
 - return the use of emergency hostel services to its original intent – short term and infrequent use
 - enhance coordination and integration of housing and other support services
 - produce long-term savings for the province and municipalities

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OVERVIEW OF H2H, cont'd

- Implementation:
 - Phase I began January 2007, Phase II began January 2008
 - six municipal pilot sites: Hamilton, Kingston, London, Ottawa, Toronto, Windsor
 - duration of up to 18 months from the date a participant enters the pilot initiative
 - expected final end date: June 2010

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FUNDING PARAMETERS

- The cost of H2H = the cost of keeping an individual in a hostel for the same duration

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{H2H supports through Ontario Works Health-Related Discretion Benefits (HRDB)} \\ & \quad = \\ & \quad \text{emergency hostel per diem} \\ & \quad - \\ & \quad \text{Ontario Works financial assistance for basic needs and shelter} \end{aligned}$$

- Approximately \$800 available for a single participant, based on current rates
- One-time funding for start-up costs

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POLICY PARAMETERS

- Target: chronic hostel users (30+ days in hostels in a year), eligible for Ontario Works assistance
- Involvement of community partners in pilot development
- 18 months of support with phase-out of services beginning in the 12th month
- Linkages with local community and existing services
- In addition, monthly reporting to the ministry and participation in an Implementation Committee

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POLICY PARAMETERS, cont'd

- Flexibility to meet the unique characteristics and needs of the local community, including:
 - the number and demographic of participants
 - the service delivery model

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SERVICE DELIVERY TRENDS

- Targeted Participant Demographics:
 - majority – single adult male, “hard-to-serve”
 - families
 - youth
 - single women

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SERVICE DELIVERY TRENDS, cont'd

- Service Path: through an individualized case management approach
 - recruitment/assessment
 - housing placement and stabilization (e.g., landlord relations, rent/utilities pay direct, eviction prevention, housing allowance, rent geared to income, etc.)
 - other “wrap-around” supports provision (e.g., health, addictions services, life skills training, informal counselling, employment supports, etc.)

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SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

- All pilot sites involve collaboration with hostels and other community service providers
- However, the level of integration for service delivery varied among sites resulting in two major models:
 - purchase of service agreements
 - direct delivery
 - recruitment/assessment and housing stabilization by municipal staff working with seconded staff from service providers including hostels; other supports provided by community agencies
 - all stages of the service path by an integrated case management team comprised of dedicated municipal staff, seconded staff from hostels and other community agencies

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EVALUATION

- Two components: process and outcomes involving interviews with ministry staff, municipalities, partner agencies and participants
- Outcomes evaluation includes a cost-analysis and economic evaluation, relating cost with outcomes
- Expected to be completed by Summer 2010

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PRELIMINARY DATA

- Based on data pilot sites provided to the ministry, as of January 31, 2009, a total of 947 hostel residents had been housed
- 48% (459) had finished participating in the pilot
- Of those who had finished with the pilot, the vast majority (72% or 328) were housed when they left the pilot, and 14% (63) left due to finding employment

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PRELIMINARY DATA, cont'd

- Reported successes:
 - stabilized housing situation
 - enhanced self-confidence
 - simpler system to navigate
 - increased knowledge of available resources
 - better attachment to the community
 - supportive relationships with service staff

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PRELIMINARY DATA, cont'd

- Reported challenges:
 - The per diem funding model for hostels – based on bed occupancy rates – is inconsistent with the objectives of H2H which emphasizes transitioning hostel users into permanent housing
 - Definition of the target group (chronic hostel users) is too broad, resulting in the selection of participants who may not be suitable for the limited period of supports under H2H
 - A large proportion of participants require intensive pre-housing supports that require more resources
 - Shortage of assistance to make housing affordable

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Questions

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