HAP

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KAMLOOPS HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN
UPDATED NOVEMBER 28, 2011

ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN KAMLOOPS BY 2015 THROUGH
HOUSING, SUPPORTS & FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

United Way
Thompson Nicola Cariboo

CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
KAMLOOPS BRANCH

ASK
Wellness Centre

Kamloops
Canada's Tournament Capital

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INTRODUCTION

Homelessness. We see it in our parks, on our streets, and in our alleys. But these are just the public faces of the issue. Homelessness also hides in tents and beneath bridges; it sleeps in shelters and eats in soup kitchens. Sometimes it moves from couch to couch, bouncing between friends and family members. Sometimes homelessness is born in the middle of the night as a woman flees from violence, or on a cold afternoon after the EI has run out and the rent is late. Homelessness is also a constant presence in the minds of people for whom missing just one paycheque means regular visits to the food bank.

Homelessness affects all of us. It comes with social, moral, and economic costs. It brings human suffering, wasted potential, and damaged self-worth. It negatively impacts families, communities, and businesses. And it requires both public and private money to manage, support, and mitigate. Municipalities across Canada, the United States, Australia, and Great Britain have decided to tackle the problem head-on, drafting plans to eliminate homelessness and all of its attendant effects. It is time for Kamloops to take a more concerted approach to its own homelessness issue.

For years, individual citizens, community groups, businesses, faith-based groups, and governments have been working on homelessness. Many programs and services have been instituted to address the needs of the homeless and those at risk. Yet the problem persists.

Since its inception in 2006, the Changing the Face of Poverty (CFP) group has been looking at the issue of poverty and its effects in Kamloops. This group's focus in 2009 has been on homelessness. Building on past progress within the community, CFP formed a Homelessness Action Plan (HAP) Steering Committee in order to consult with various stakeholders and recommend a clear course of action. For guidance, the Committee has looked to John Talbot, a private consultant with extensive experience on social issues in general and homelessness in particular. The ultimate goal is to end homelessness in Kamloops within five years.

The Steering Committee understands that addressing homelessness requires input, support, guidance, and work from all sectors of the community. This includes business, labour, government, Aboriginal

groups, faith-based groups, non-profit agencies, community and neighbourhood groups, correctional agencies, work centres, for-profit community service organizations, private landlords, and homeless individuals themselves. With a holistic approach and broad engagement, ending homelessness is achievable.

From August through October of 2009 the HAP Steering Committee assembled three subcommittees, each focused on a different aspect of the homelessness issue. These three aspects form the three strategic priorities of this plan:

- Housing
- Support Services
- Bridging to Financial Independence

Members of the three groups were chosen to represent a balanced variety of community stakeholders. A full list of participants can be found in "Appendix A." The subcommittees met four times each in order to analyze the current homeless situation in Kamloops, identify the characteristics of the homeless populations, identify gaps in housing options and services, and to craft clear recommendations for ending homelessness in Kamloops. The work was facilitated by freelance consultant and writer John-Paul Baker, and recorded by a member of the United Way staff. The final recommendations of these subcommittees can be found in the "Recommendations" section of this plan.

The drafting of this plan also involved consultation with homeless people. Volunteers surveyed homeless individuals about the issues they face. The questions were open-ended, designed to elicit insight into homelessness rather than gain approval for decisions already made. The result is a very informative snapshot of the life of homeless people. Many of the comments from this survey appear word for word in the sidebars throughout this plan. A full summary of results can be round in the "Homeless Survey" subsection of this plan.

The next step was a larger meeting that brought together members of all three subcommittees and other key community members who were unable to participate in the subcommittee work. Facilitated by John Talbot, this meeting was designed to solicit feedback on the draft plan, refine the recommendations, cultivate leadership in carrying the plan forward, and plan a community forum to present the plan to the broader public.

Before going to a community forum, the plan will receive input from three separate focus groups in February and March of 2010. Fourth-year nursing students at Thompson Rivers University will conduct a youth focus

Homeless Survey

Q. What is your biggest problem when trying to find housing?

A. Lack of it.

group, the Kamloops Chamber of Commerce will host a business focus group, and the United Way Labour Coordinator along with the Kamloops and District Labour Council will host a labour focus group. These focus groups will provide valuable input on the Plan and help business, labour, and youth get involved with ending homelessness.

Carrying these recommendations forward and filling the gaps in knowledge will require a lot of work. Not everything can be done by volunteers. There is a clear need for a full-time employee to be responsible for implementing the plan's strategies and providing leadership on the homelessness issue. A Homelessness Action Plan Coordinator, reporting to the Homelessness Action plan Steering Committee, will do this work. The proposed job description for the HAP Coordinator appears in "Appendix B."

This Plan has already generated considerable momentum within the community. It is now time to harness our energies, to gather the necessary resources, and to work together on one of the most important issues that our community faces. Together, we can end homelessness.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Homelessness and the risk of homelessness are daily realities for thousands of our community's residents. The problem is broad. It includes not only those who sleep outside, but also those who sleep on friends' couches or in emergency shelters. It even includes those for whom a missed paycheque may bring serious hardship, or worse. It is a problem which requires a solution.

This Homelessness Action Plan is an attempt to build on past successes and establish a road map for future victories in the battle against homelessness. The Plan has an ambitious goal: to end homelessness in Kamloops in five years. Achieving our goal will not be easy. We have more to learn about the problem. We must address related issues such as mental illness, addiction, racial discrimination, poverty, abuse, hunger, crime, intolerance, and ignorance. We may run up against systemic obstacles, inertia, and cynicism. We may have difficulty finding resources, particularly in troubled economic times.

But we must.

The costs of homelessness - the moral costs, the social costs, and the financial costs - are simply too high. It is time for Kamloops to join other communities in a commitment to put an end to homelessness, to fulfill our responsibilities as a civil society, and to guarantee security, dignity, health, and well-being for all.

This Plan is the work of many dedicated professionals, landlords, business-owners, government officials, outreach workers, homeless individuals, and other citizens of our community. It will require all these and more to move forward with the recommendations that form the basis of this plan. The following page outlines these recommendations.

6 Goals, 8 Strategies

1   Assess the local housing situation, enhance the stock of acceptable housing, and respond to changes in the housing market...

   ... by establishing a Local Housing Board.

2   Provide greater housing stability and reduce evictions...

   ... by promoting housing support agreements, and
   ... by establishing a Resident Support Program.

3   Connect people with the help they need...

   ... by improving outreach, and
   ... by adopting a network approach to support services.

4   Build the basic skills that people need to maintain housing and independence...

   ... by improving access to life skills coaching.

5   Improve fairness, accessibility, and responsiveness...

   ... by pushing for changes to laws, regulations, procedures, and protocols.

6   Help people find and maintain employment...

   ... by improving workplace supports.

Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan

BACKGROUND

Four Homeless Profiles

Homelessness is a human issue. Before discussing definitions, statistics, causes, costs, and strategies, let's remember that behind every face, behind every plea for help, behind every crossroads, there is a story. It is these stories that often only the frontline workers hear. Meet 'Eric,' 'Tanya,' 'Stanley,' and 'Jason.'

'Eric'

Eric grew up in a middle-class household with serious problems. Both of his parents were high-functioning alcoholics who took their frustrations out on their son. Eric considered school his only safe place and excelled in his studies, but his first priority when he graduated from high school was to leave his family. He went to Vancouver, and with very little money and difficulty finding a job, Eric started sleeping on the beach and in parks. He eventually found a job and an apartment, and saved up enough money for a vehicle. He felt positive about his future until the age of 23, when he had a car accident and suffered a serious back injury. He could no longer work, and he got no insurance settlement. Unable to pay his rent, he was eventually evicted and began sleeping outside again. Now, at the age of 30, Eric still hopes one day to go to university but spends most of his waking hours trying to stay dry, relieve his pain by drinking, and get enough to eat. Eric knows homelessness.

'Tanya'

Tanya was in her late 20s, living with her 10-year-old son. Life took a terrible turn. Tanya was abused by a person that she trusted very much. It was too much to bear. She responded by leaving her community. She went far away, all the way across the country, to British Columbia. For a week she stayed in a women's emergency shelter with her son. They then moved into a homeless shelter for a month while she struggled to find work. She found a job that paid her $650 per month. The cheapest accommodation she could find cost $700 per month. It consists of a bathroom, a kitchen area, and one other room. She and her son have not enough space and not enough money. They are in a community where they do not have roots. Tanya knows homelessness.

'Stanley'

Stanley grew up on an isolated reserve. As a child, he was happy and showed great artistic talent. He also displayed early signs of depression. Stanley went to live with cousins in Prince George at the age of 14, when his father was incarcerated. Stanley's mental health continued to deteriorate. Now 40 years old, he has been hospitalized fifteen times and jailed twice. When he isn't in hospital or jail, Stanley sleeps wherever people will accept him. Stanley has been waiting to get into a supportive housing complex, but there is no room. He recently regained motivation when someone at the hospital encouraged him to pursue his artwork again. He got work on a road crew and seemed to be on the right track, but his depression set back in after just one month and he stopped getting out of bed. The friend he was staying with had troubles of his own and lost his apartment. Stanley is now staying temporarily with an ex-girlfriend. Stanley knows homelessness.

'Jason'

Jason has a full-time job, does volunteer work, has a network of supportive friends and is working on his high school diploma in the hopes of going on to university. It wasn't always like this. At age 21, in the early stages of addiction, Jason found himself homeless when his single mother lost her house due to a major drug problem of her own. For a time, Jason lost hope. He slept on other people's couches and eventually made his way to Vancouver. He regained hope and found a full-time job. But the stability was short-lived. He became delusional and paranoid, lost his job, and spent five years sleeping in hostels, in cars, and on lawns, feeding a drug habit that only made his mental health worse. He only accepted help once he had hit rock bottom. He cleaned up. He built a healthier network of friends. Jason knows homelessness.

Eric, Tanya, Stanley, and Jason are our neighbours, our sons and daughters, and our friends. Near the end of this plan we will come back to these four people and imagine how their lives might be different if we succeed in carrying this plan forward.

Defining Homelessness

The issue of homelessness is broad. To understand it better, it is useful to identify three different categories of homelessness:

Absolute Homelessness

People experience absolute homelessness when they are sleeping in spaces not intended for living, such as in parks, on streets, under bridges, in abandoned buildings, in cars, or in emergency shelters.

Hidden Homelessness

People experience hidden homelessness when they are living in temporary accommodations. This could mean staying with family or friends, in time-limited residential programs, or in hotels / motels.

At-Risk of Homelessness

People are at risk of homelessness when their housing is unaffordable, unsafe, overcrowded, insecure, inappropriate or poorly maintained, or when they lack the support necessary to maintain stability in their lives. They may also be at risk when their income is insufficient or insecure.

Of course, homelessness is dynamic and ever-changing, just like life. A person may flow in and out of the three categories above. For this reason, it is helpful to distinguish between three different degrees of homelessness:

One-Time Homelessness	Those who experience one-time homelessness typically have resources, both financial and social, to draw on in order to prevent themselves from falling deeper into homelessness. One-time homelessness is usually brought on by sudden and unexpected misfortune. This could mean the loss of a job, house fire, family breakdown, or eviction.
Episodic Homelessness	Those who experience episodic homelessness have periods of stable housing alternating with periods of instability and homelessness. This group includes those who flow in and out of supportive housing for addictions and/or mental illness or through correctional facilities.
Chronic Homelessness	Those who experience chronic homelessness have spent at least 60 nights of absolute homelessness (e.g. in a shelter or on the street) in the past year. Many of these people have reached such poor physical or mental health that they cannot maintain employment or stable housing.

Quantifying Homelessness

How many people are homeless? Answering this question is no easy task. Each category of homelessness resists study, for different reasons.

We do, however, have some information to go on. The annual Homelessness Survey helps to put some numbers to the absolutely homeless population. We also have figures from food banks and soup kitchens which can give us a sense of hidden homelessness or at-risk populations. There have been some provincial studies that have attempted to gauge the scope of the problem, but at a local level this is clearly an issue which requires closer study.

The 2009 Homelessness Survey

The 2009 Homelessness Count, conducted by ASK Wellness Centre and close to a hundred volunteers, helps to reveal the extent and character of absolute homelessness in Kamloops. The results of this survey are summarized here:

The Numbers	
Total Homeless Counted	103
Male	68
Female	35
Aboriginal	30
Addiction	40
Mental health issues	36

Year of Birth	
1940 – 1960	30
1961 – 1970	28
1971 – 1990	21
Did not report	24

Length of Stay in Kamloops	
Less than six months	48
Six months to two years	20
Two years or more	22

Length of Time Homeless	
Less than six months	56
Six months to two years	18
Two years or more	15

Over 50% of the absolutely homeless in Kamloops have been homeless for less than six months.

While this type of homeless count cannot be truly comprehensive and many homeless individuals will remain 'unfound,' it does provide a starting point. The survey reveals the general character of the homeless population. We can see, for example, that it is approximately two-thirds male and about one-third aboriginal. Between one-third and one-half are dealing with mental health issues or serious addictions. The total of 103 individuals compares to 105 from the 2008 count. The proportion of females has gone up, from 16% in 2008 to 34% in 2009. The proportion of aboriginal homeless is roughly the same. We can also see that almost half of the homeless population has been in Kamloops for less than six months and that slightly over half have been homeless for less than six months. This type of knowledge can be extremely useful when devising strategies to deal with homelessness.

Food Services

We can also look at food services to get a better idea of how many people are homeless. One of these services is the People in Transition Program, or 'PIT Stop,' as it is known. The PIT Stop hosts a meal every Sunday in the Kamloops United Church. The people they serve are typically experiencing absolute or hidden homelessness. The PIT Stop serves between 80 and 130 hot meals per week, for a total in the first 10 months of 2009 of approximately 4,300.

Another food service that the homeless or at-risk of homelessness may access is the Kamloops Food Bank. The Food Bank offers a monthly 'transient hamper' to people who identify themselves as living on the street (the hamper includes convenient food items that don't require cooking as well as toilet paper and cutlery). In the first 10 months of 2009 they distributed 111 of these hampers. The Food Bank keeps fairly good statistics on its regular clientele as well, and reports that from January to October of 2009 they served a total of 6,053 people (including all registered family members of people picking up food hampers). The breakdown by age-group is as follows:

Homeless Survey

Q. What is your most immediate need?

A. Food.

Food Bank Clients by Age	
60 – 100 years	323 people / 5.3% of total
19 – 59	3,763 / 62.2%
6 – 18	1,262 / 20.8%
2 – 5	485 / 8.0 %
0 – 1	220 / 3.6%

While these statistics may not directly correlate with a particular category of homelessness, they do help to further develop a portrait of the situation. It is interesting to note, for example, that over 30% of the beneficiaries of the Food Bank's food hampers are under the age of 18.

These statistics are helpful, but there is much we don't know. Any count of absolute homelessness is bound to be incomplete. Counting hidden homelessness is difficult by its very nature. The at-risk population may only be gauged by general economic indicators. All of this is compounded by the fact that homelessness and the accepted categories are, as has been pointed out, fluid and ever-changing.

These gaps in knowledge are stumbling blocks. We need to know the types of people who are homeless and how many of them there are in order to create targeted solutions. An affordable housing solution for a single male looks a lot different from an affordable housing solution for a single mother with three children.

Causes of Homelessness

It is difficult to pinpoint exact causes of homelessness. A combination of factors normally contributes to an individual's situation. These factors may differ greatly from person to person. That said, two root problems stand out above all others: poverty and a lack of affordable housing. These relate directly to the financial difficulty of getting and maintaining a home. A variety of other issues, ranging from mental illness to intolerance, are also important.

Poverty

Poverty is a serious problem. As measured by Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Offs, the poverty rate in British Columbia in 2008 was 16.1%, with a child poverty rate of 21.9%. Both of these figures are approximately 5% above the Canadian average. The issue here is not purely one of unemployment, since over half of the poor children in B.C. live in families with the employment income of *at least* one full-time year-round job. Whether we're talking about absolute homelessness, hidden homelessness, or the imminent risk of homelessness, money is an issue.

21.9% of children in British Columbia live below the poverty line

A nationwide survey conducted by the Canadian Payroll Association revealed a rather surprising fact: 59% of Canadians would have trouble making ends meet if their paycheque were late by even one week. The percentage of single parents reporting the same situation was even higher, at 72%. Clearly, people across the country are feeling the pinch. And with unemployment rising, the number of people in true dire straits is increasing.

Lack of Affordable Housing

We hear it all the time in surveys of homeless people: rents are too high. With a low vacancy rate as well as rising property values and taxes, the average rent is beyond the already-strained means of many who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. For a single person on income assistance, the rental allowance of $375 does not come close to covering the cost of an average dwelling. Families on assistance can rarely afford enough space.

Mental Health

Mental illness among homeless people is common. This fact is widely acknowledged and well-documented. Approximately one-third of the homeless have mental health issues. Many people with these challenges are not only inadequately housed but also under-supported. Any proposed solution to homelessness must have built-in supports for those with mental health issues.

Addictions

Substance abuse is often discussed in the same breath as mental illness as one of the primary concerns for homeless people or those at risk of homelessness. Individuals with a history of addiction may come and go through transition housing, treatment centres, and other supportive housing options. In many cases it may be unclear whether substance abuse contributed to homelessness or is a symptom of such circumstances.

According to a recent report by the Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, there are roughly 39,000 B.C. adults with severe addictions and/or mental illness (SAMI) who are inadequately housed, roughly 26,500 with SAMI who are inadequately housed *and* inadequately supported, and roughly 11,750 with SAMI who are absolutely homeless.

Abuse

Abuse comes in many different forms. Domestic violence against women and children, financial abuse of friends and relatives, sexual abuse, and persistent adult bullying may all push people out of their homes or make a housing situation unacceptable or intolerable. Abuse may also be an issue within supportive housing or assisted living situations.

Cultural Barriers

Cultural barriers are encountered primarily by those from visible minorities, particularly First Nations. These people may suffer discrimination from employers, neighbours, support services professionals, and members of the community at large. For some, it may be difficult to get the support and

Homeless Survey:

Q. What are your goals /dreams for the future?

A. Get back to my art work and make a living.

understanding necessary to maintain stability (financial, emotional or housing) and personal security. Poverty among the Aboriginal population is a big concern. The Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction has estimated that a full 23% of Aboriginal people in B.C. are absolutely homeless, and another 41% are at-risk of homelessness.

Criminality

Criminality is, in many cases, a byproduct of other issues such as poverty and substance abuse. Criminality is by no means a common feature of the homeless population, but homelessness is a common feature of those who go through the correctional system. In particular, release from a correctional facility may launch a person back onto the street without adequate supports.

Lack of Skills and Education

A lack of skills and education will, of course, affect one's employment opportunities and earning capacity. There is a strong link between poverty and education level. Literacy is a major concern, particularly because it may be very difficult to navigate the system, obtain and understand information, and fill out the forms and applications necessary to get support.

Age

While homelessness affects all age groups, it appears to affect youth and the elderly differently. Youth from unstable homes or without solid family supports are much more likely to wind up homeless. The elderly, many of whom struggle to make ends meet on a fixed income, often experience unstable or unacceptable living conditions. This is especially true as physical and mental health deteriorate and they require more support.

Social Stigma and Intolerance

People in all of the categories have traditionally had to deal with stigma and intolerance. It is a major part of the daily struggle. Some people simply don't understand the background issues. Some see the problem as a basic unwillingness to get a job. Many don't realize the devastating effects of mental illness and addictions. The resulting stigma and intolerance can reinforce a homeless person's sense of isolation, making it even more difficult to change the situation. Any plan to eliminate homelessness must therefore involve an element of public awareness and education.

The Cost of Homelessness

Homelessness comes with great moral, social and economic costs.

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights lays out rights related to maintaining a standard of living adequate for health and well-being. One of these is housing. In fact, without adequate shelter, other rights are very easily compromised, including the right to privacy, the right to assembly and association, the right to health, and the right to development.

Homelessness takes a terrible toll on individual people. It brings physical and emotional suffering, it destroys self-worth, it causes isolation and misery, and it forces people to worry about basic needs rather than fulfilling their potential. For children, inadequate housing can be particularly disastrous, since their development (moral, social, emotional, intellectual) can be influenced so powerfully by their circumstances. Children born into cycles of insecure housing may find it difficult to escape as adults.

Homelessness wastes lives. According to the BC Coroners Service, a homeless person (here defined as someone living on the streets, not in supportive shelter) dies every 12 days in our province, at an average age of 45 years. The leading causes of death are natural disease, drug poisoning, blunt injuries, hanging, and drowning.

We have a moral responsibility to ensure that everyone's rights are fulfilled, that our children can grow up in conditions conducive to proper development, and that human life is no longer unnecessarily wasted.

The effects of homelessness are felt throughout the community, reducing quality of life for all. It impacts our public spaces and perceptions of safety (rightly or wrongly). It harms business and tourism. And it puts strain on the hospitals and other health services that we all depend on. Homelessness exists in our alleys, our parks, and our libraries. It threatens the well-being of many people we know personally. It is truly a community issue.

If our moral and social responsibility weren't enough, homelessness is a terrible drain on public resources. A recent report shows that non-housing services related to homelessness are costing our provincial government about $644 million per year. That's about $55,000 per year for a person with severe addictions and/or mental illness. These provincial estimates of the financial cost of homelessness are, in fact, at the low end of the range of estimates in North America. Using different metrics, Calgary determined the annual cost per homeless person to be $134,000.

The British Columbia government spends approximately $644 million per year on non-housing service costs for homelessness.

What exactly are these financial costs of homelessness? Besides housing, the three biggest spending areas are health, corrections, and social services. According to a 2001 report by the B.C. Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, the provincial government spends 33% more on these areas for a homeless person than for a socially-housed unemployed person.

In terms of housing costs, even a self-contained apartment unit with on-site support is generally cheaper than emergency shelter or institutional housing (correctional facility, psychiatric hospital, mental health residential facility). In fact, the 2008 report by the Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction claims that each homeless person could be given adequate housing with a full basket of proper supports for approximately $37,000 per year. That amounts to a total cost avoidance of over $200 million.

A full account of the costs of homelessness leads us to a single logical conclusion: we must make every effort to eliminate homelessness, moving forward with a clear plan and putting in place the necessary leadership and resources to do so.

The Homeless Survey

What do homeless people themselves think? This question is of utmost importance if a plan such as this is to have any hope. With this in mind, a simple survey was crafted that could be conducted orally or in written form. The five survey questions were as open-ended as possible to encourage homeless people simply to educate the public about the issues they face, rather than approve or disapprove of solutions.

The five survey questions were:

- There is a committee working on the issue of homelessness. What do you want them to know?
- What is your most immediate need?
- What service or help are you unable to get?
- What is your biggest problem when trying to find housing?
- What are your goals / dreams for the future?

Forty people were surveyed in the following locations: Henry Leland House, PIT Stop, the Y Women's Shelter, Elizabeth Fry, and on the street as part of the 2009 Homeless Count conducted by ASK Wellness. These people represent a cross-section of the absolutely homeless, the hidden homeless, and the at-risk of homelessness. Although this was an informal, non-scientific survey, the responses bring to light the major concerns of the people at issue.

Question 1: *There is a committee working on the issue of homelessness. What do you want them to know?*

Responses to this question varied widely. Included here is a list of concerns. Numbers in parentheses indicate how many people mentioned each item. If an issue was only mentioned once, no number is given. This list is intended to give an understanding of the range of issues that homeless people face, not to highlight the relative importance of each. The numbers do not necessarily come to a total of 40, since responses were not limited to just one issue.

Not enough housing (11)	Anxiety
Rent is too high (5)	Employed but still homeless
Not enough emergency shelter (3)	Need men's shelter
Need clothing (2)	Need lockers for storage
Homeless by choice (2)	Need laundry facilities
Camping out	Need women's housing
Roommate problems	Difficult to stay warm
Mental health issues	Need to get rid of street drugs
Problems budgeting on monthly cheque	Need free coffee
Couch surfing	Not enough food
Housing comes before everything else	Addicted homeless are dangerous
Difficult to qualify for assistance	Problems with credit and references
No support for laid off people	Want equal treatment

Highlights:

"Need clothing, food, home, not going from place to place for appointments with no bus fare, no idea what time it was and only a couple of pieces of clothing from the Salvation Army."

"People need a permanent, secure place to feel safe and comfortable before getting a job and dealing with issues in their lives."

"Homelessness causes instant anxiety, even the first time you experience it."

"Even if you have a job you can be homeless, with nowhere to go. Rents are impossible to afford."

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Question 2: *What is your most immediate need?*

Percentages below may not add up to 100%, since some people identified more than one immediate need.

63%	Shelter (emergency or longer term)
33%	Food
20%	Clothing and/or blankets
10%	Money and/or work
10%	Addictions counselling or emotional help

Highlights:

"Knowing where or if there is a women's shelter."

"Clothing. Very cold at night. Blanket, boots."

"Warm clothing, food, a place to sleep regardless of temperature."

"D and A counselling, structure in life: ex. Programs to attend throughout the day."

"Place to store extra clothes and bedding."

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Question 3: *What service or help are you unable to get?*

Percentages below may not add up to 100%, since some people identified more than one immediate issue.

20%	Shelter
20%	Money
15%	Transportation
15%	Doctor / dentist
10%	Counselling
8%	Clothing / laundry
5%	Support / advocacy
< 5%	Roommate Life skills Place to store extra clothes References

Highlights:

"Housing. Always looking in paper, asking friends, checking on-line. Still no housing."

"Permanent place to stay. Youth safehouse: after 1 to 2 week stay what do I do? Worry comes back when safehouse stay is over."

"Help keeping home phone running."

"Enough money to pay rent, utilities, and food. Can you live with $500 per month?"

"Help with bus to get to work."

Percentages below may not add up to 100%, since some people identified more than one immediate problem.

58%	Not enough money / rents are too high
15%	Stigma / intolerance
13%	Lack of housing
8%	Transportation
8%	References / credit checks
5%	Access to phone or Internet
5%	Problematic landlords
< 5%	No laundry facilities Too young Animals not allowed Need an advocate

Highlights:

"I was too young and no one would rent to me."

"Affordability in a safe environment; non-regulated, low-income housing is unsafe and run by slum landlords; you pay for unsafe shelter and can be evicted or have the rent raised without notice."

"Cost of move, damage deposit, little social housing, always paying $200 over allotted amount."

"They don't like people on social services, dig into your past and make you feel bad."

"My addictions. Landlords know me or see me on the street."

Question 5: *What are your dreams / goals for the future?*

It is difficult, and not particularly informative, to put percentages to people's dreams and goals. Answers to this final question are provided here word for word.

"Own my own home."

"I would like to get into the human services worker program and see if I could help people like myself."

"Settle down, become maybe a wife. Own my own cabin and spending a lot of time with my family."

"When I was homeless I was drinking almost every day all day, so I had no goals or plans for a future. I was emotionally distraught and in great despair."

"See my grandkids when I get my settlement. Get detoxed."

"A warm place to sleep. Safety from harm."

"Get married, 'white picket fence,' find a partner, work on relationships."

"Win the lotto, like to see my health improve."

"To abstain from using or abusing myself and others."

"To have my children home and get a career."

"Go back to school. Stay clean and sober. Be in a stable, healthy relationship."

"Stay healthy. Live long and prosper."

"To get a job."

"Looks great until the 24th so far."

"To have the foundation things I need in my life. To be as successful as I can."

"Not sure."

"To be self-sufficient. To feel like living with purpose."

"To finally be free of the fear that others are judging me and / or what they think of me. To be able to help brighten another person's life."

"A safe home that I can have a pet in."

"That every community have an emergency centre in winter."

"I would like to finish school. My biggest goal that is ongoing is to remain clean and sober."

"To have a place to call home. To be financially independent. To be able to celebrate Christmas and other holidays like everyone else."

"A solid career, a comfortable home, and security."

"To go back to school and finish my last six classes and practicum to get my degree. Can't afford to go to school!"

"Full-time work, a dog, a car or truck, and a cute place to live."

"Independence and financial security. Happiness with my job / career. I wish to be married in the next five years."

"To get a good job and a house of my own. "

"To find someone (landlord) accepting our applications especially being on welfare. It's our right."

"Quit drinking. Get back to my artwork. Make a living."

"Marriage."

"Stable housing. Return to T.R.U."

"Keep moving forward."

THREE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Housing

Housing is a basic need. Without a home, it is difficult to maintain the security, stability, and health required to participate more broadly in the community, whether that means holding down a job or serving as a volunteer. Like those in most other cities, the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan takes a 'Housing First' approach to homelessness. This means that establishing a home is top priority; nothing else can take root unless there is a roof over one's head.

When we talk about housing, however, we are not talking about just any house or apartment. We are talking about *acceptable* housing. To qualify as acceptable, a home must satisfy three important criteria.

Acceptable Housing

Acceptable housing must be…

… adequate,

For a home to be adequate, it must be in good repair. Things work, there are proper locks on the door, it is well-heated, and the roof doesn't leak.

… suitable,

For a home to be suitable, it needs to be the right home for its occupants. A bachelor suite, for example, is not suitable for a single mother with three children. A bachelor suite above a pub is not suitable for a recovering alcoholic.

… and affordable.

For a home to be affordable, it must be within the occupants' financial means. According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 'affordability' means that the cost to rent or lease is no more than 30% of household income.

Acceptable housing doesn't look the same for everyone. People need varying levels of support, some on an ongoing basis, and others only during periods or moments of transition or crisis. Addressing homelessness means properly supporting people as they move as far along a continuum of independence as possible.

The continuum of housing looks like this:

High Level Support	Mid to High Level Support	Low to Mid Level Support		
Emergency Shelter	**Transitional, Supportive and Assisted Living**	**Social Housing and Subsidized Housing**	**Private Market Rental**	**Home Ownership**
Non-Market or Near-Market			Market	
Dependent		**→**	**Independent**	

Emergency Shelter
Emergency shelter is short-stay housing, typically of 30 days or less. Emergency shelters provide single or shared bedrooms or dorm-type sleeping arrangements with varying levels of support.

Transitional Housing
Transitional housing is provided for a minimum of 30 days and a maximum of two or three years. It includes on- or off-site support services to help people move towards independence and self-sufficiency.

Supportive Housing
Supportive housing is a type of social housing that helps people stabilize their personal situations and re-establish connections to the community. The

housing is linked to voluntary and flexible support services designed to meet the tenants' needs and preferences. The level of support may vary: some support services may be provided by on-site staff, while others may be delivered on an outreach basis. Part of the work of the staff is to link tenants to other services throughout the community, in places like community health centres, schools, and community centres.

Assisted Living

Assisted living units are self-contained apartments for seniors or people with disabilities who need some support services to continue living independently, but do not need 24-hour facility care. Services provided include daily meals, social and recreational opportunities, assistance with medications, mobility, a 24-hour response system, and light housekeeping.

Social Housing

Social housing comes in a variety of forms. The first type is 'public housing,' which is jointly funded by the provincial and federal governments and managed primarily by the Province of British Columbia. The second type of social housing is 'cooperative housing,' in which individual residents own a share in the cooperative. This share grants them equal access to common areas, voting rights, occupancy of an apartment or townhouse as if they were owners, and the right to elect board members to manage the cooperative. Each member has one vote and members work together to keep their housing well-managed and affordable. The third type of social housing is 'non-profit housing,' also referred to as 'subsidized housing (see below).' Non-profit housing is owned and operated by community-based, non-profit societies. The mandates of these societies are to provide safe, secure, affordable accommodation to households with low to moderate incomes. Most non-profit housing societies receive some form of financial assistance from government to help them keep rents low. Each society operates independently under the direction of a volunteer board of directors. There is also a very limited amount of housing provided by private landlords that operates in a similar fashion to non-profit housing but without the financial support from government.

Subsidized Housing

Subsidized housing includes all types of housing to which the provincial government provides some type of subsidy or rent assistance, including public, non-profit and cooperative housing, as well as rent supplements for people living in private market housing. Financial support for subsidized housing is generally given on a 'rent-geared-to-income' basis. Rent-geared-to-income is for low to moderate-income households. Tenants pay rent based on the gross income of the household rather than paying the market rate. Affordable rent is defined as costing no more than 30% of a household's total gross monthly

Homeless Survey:

Q. What is your biggest problem when trying to find housing?

A. My addiction. The stigma. The perceived problems.

income, subject to a minimum rent based on the number of people living in the home. Rent-geared-to-income units include all public housing stock and many developments managed by non-profit and co-operative housing providers.

Subsidized housing developments are for people with low to moderate income, including:

- seniors
- people with mental or physical disabilities
- low-income families
- the homeless or at-risk of homelessness
- women and children fleeing abusive relationships

Vacancy

The issue of homelessness is tied closely to the issue of available affordable housing. In simple terms, there's not enough. For the past decade, British Columbia has had vacancy rates lower than the national average. Within this highly competitive province, Kamloops has one of the tightest rental markets in the country for cities of comparable size, with a vacancy rate of 1.4%.

Vacancy Rate
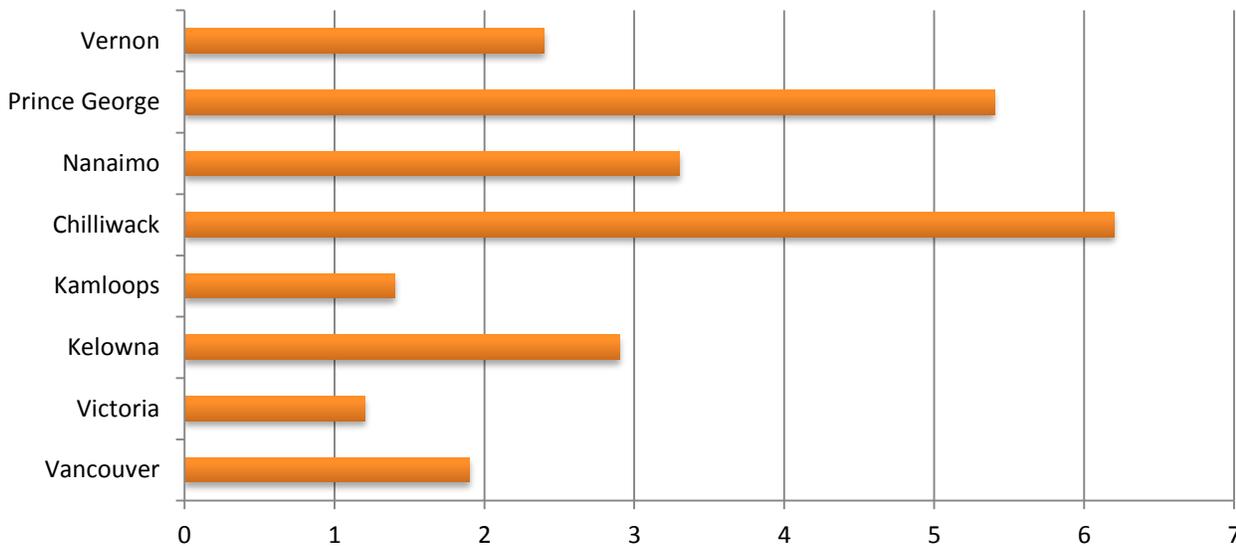
Source: Canadian Mortgage and Housing Association

The vacancy rate is not always an accurate measure of the amount of acceptable housing, for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it does not include illegal suites, which are officially unrecognized but remain an important part of the rental market. Secondly, the official vacancy rate includes high-end rental housing, at one end of the spectrum, and inadequate housing at the other end. Neither of these are realistic or acceptable. So just how much housing is there for people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness? The true figure would be lower than the posted 1.4%.

A low vacancy rate not only indicates a lack of housing, but it also puts upward pressure on rental costs. This creates even more difficulty for people with low-paying jobs or those living on income assistance.

Kamloops Housing Inventory

In August of 2008 a group of agencies and organizations attempted to take stock of social, supported, and subsidized housing in Kamloops. This became what is called the Kamloops Housing Inventory, which went public in February 2009 on Access Kamloops (www.accesskamloops.org). The inventory has been updated twice since then, with the most recent version posted at the end of May, 2009. A summarized version of the Inventory appears in "Appendix C" of this plan.

The Kamloops Housing Inventory is designed to be as accurate and as comprehensive as possible. It provides a snapshot of what is available to individuals and families who are in need of housing but unable to pay market rental prices.

Included in the Inventory are the following:

- emergency shelters and extreme weather programs
- transitional supportive housing
- social or subsidized housing
- low-end of market rental housing

Not included in the Inventory are the following:

- group homes for youth through the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)
- group homes or short-term housing for people with mental health issues
- housing for the disabled
- formal and informal market rental
- private family care homes for seniors and people with mental health issues and/or addictions

The Kamloops Housing Inventory is an excellent starting point for further discussion about housing needs. It is also a valuable resource for anyone wanting or needing to know where to direct people in need of housing solutions. It does have shortcomings, and would clearly benefit from someone with experience and training in analyzing housing data in order to gain a clearer sense of exactly what the gaps are.

Moving forward with solutions to homelessness includes increasing the housing supply, but exactly what type of housing needs to be made available? With insufficient data on the exact housing needs of the homeless, it is difficult to answer this question. This is why one of our first priorities must be assessing the real demand and fitting the solutions to the problem.

Support Services

A great majority of the people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness require supports in order to maintain stability, health, and security in their lives. For some, this means ongoing support. For others, it means support at key periods of transition, change, or crisis. Without these supports, many of the previously homeless will not be able to succeed in a housing solution, while many at risk of homelessness will become truly homeless. A proper network of supports is therefore critical in any attempt to put an end to homelessness.

Types of Support Services

Varying degrees of support may be necessary for the following:

- people with mental health issues
- people with addictions
- victims of abuse
- aboriginal people
- seniors
- people released from correctional facilities
- people lacking education and skills
- 'troubled' youth
- the disabled

The services required by these groups vary widely. They include, but are not limited to:

- addictions counselling
- education and skills training
- clothing and household items

- food
- child care
- advocacy
- emergency financial assistance
- legal services
- assistance finding and maintaining employment
- health services
- transportation
- youth services
- moving assistance
- financial advice

These services may be provided by non-profit agencies, government services, and for-profit community services. They may be offered in combination with housing (such as a supportive housing complex for people with addictions) or as stand-alone services.

We need to support people and move them as far along the continuum of independence as they are able to proceed. Sometimes this transition is not smooth. One common problem is that at the end of a specific program, period of incarceration, or course of recovery, support is withdrawn very suddenly. The individual is expected to be well-adjusted and independent upon release. This expectation is not always reasonable, and the cycle of homelessness may begin again.

Many support services agencies are under a triple strain. They are dealing with cuts to funding, rising costs, and increased demand. Reductions to and elimination of support services affects the entire community. The street level impact is to leave many people who need support out in the cold, sometimes literally. Maintaining and enhancing such supports and helping agencies serve their clients better is a top priority. Indeed, the Housing and Bridging to Financial Independence Subcommittees continually emphasized that any recommendations they made would be fruitless without adequate support services.

Engagement and Outreach

One important element of support services is the way in which agencies and programs engage people. We could also call this the *interface* between the homeless and the services designed to assist or serve them. Are the services easy to find? Do people have to travel to access them? Do they qualify for the services? Do they have difficult forms to fill out? Do they even know about the available services? All of these questions speak to the importance of proper outreach. That is, there need to be people at street level talking to, supporting, and otherwise engaging the homeless.

Homeless Survey:

Q. What is your most immediate need?

A. To beat the addiction.

Landlord Supports

Another challenge involves private market landlords. While landlords must be held to standards of fairness and acceptability in the housing they provide, they must also be supported in the issues they may face with hard-to-house people. Building managers and owners may have to deal with fairly serious crisis situations. These managers have a responsibility to protect the safety, security, and health of all tenants as well as the safety and security of their property, but they may not know how best to do that. Landlords need recourse and assistance when problems arise. In many cases, landlords lack incentives to provide affordable housing to those who may be viewed as difficult to house. Fairly or unfairly, they are afraid of potential problems.

Coordination

Coordinating support services is essential. A single homeless individual may be accessing different services at different agencies. Several different agencies may be trying to help the same individual. Services and programs may overlap. Some agencies may be better equipped to do certain types of work than others. Agencies must be able to know how to properly refer people for help outside their mandate. All of this adds up to the necessity of proper cooperation, information sharing, and coordination. At the same time, there needs to be acceptance from funders that some overlap of services between organizations is not inherently a problem.

Access Kamloops

Kamloops has an array of agencies, services, and programs designed to serve the needs of many of the homeless or at risk of homelessness. These agencies and services have been compiled into a comprehensive resource directory called *Access Kamloops*. This directory is maintained, updated, and enhanced on a regular basis. It lists and categorizes services and agencies with their contact information. *Access Kamloops* is designed to help people access the services they need, but it requires a reasonable level of literacy. The online version is useful, but only to those with computer skills and Internet access. Despite these shortcomings, *Access Kamloops* has helped thousands of people and may serve as a model for a service registry designed for use by professionals and service providers.

Bridging to Financial Independence

Financial independence is another critical piece of the homelessness puzzle. A consistent flow of income is necessary to maintain not only housing but all of the other basic needs.

The issue of homelessness and financial independence brings a troubling quandary: housing is difficult to acquire and maintain without employment or other regular income, yet employment or other regular income is difficult to obtain without housing. The issue is about more than just having an address where cheques can be sent - although that is sometimes a problem. It relates in part to removing the constant worry about stable shelter, having a place to practice proper hygiene, a kitchen in which to prepare food to sustain the body and mind, an overall sense of security and stability, and effective ways to maintain health and avoid illness. In the hierarchy of needs established by Abraham Maslow, the most basic requirements must be met before the others can be fulfilled.

Employment

Homeless people may have serious difficulties not only finding but also maintaining gainful employment. Local work search centres are open to anyone in search of employment, but often have to refer homeless people to other services first. Without the facilities to bathe, decent work clothes, a warm place to sleep at night, or even an alarm clock, functioning within a typical work environment may be a challenge.

The same issues that make it hard for people to maintain stable housing may make it hard to maintain a job. Mental illnesses and addiction are just two of the most common challenges that many homeless people face. In such cases, these underlying issues require attention before moving into gainful employment. Again, work search centres must sometimes refer people to other services or agencies which may be able to assist with more elemental concerns.

It is important to note that employment itself is no guarantee of safety and security. A 2009 study by the Salvation Army found that 35% of homeless people in British Columbia are, in fact, employed. In this case, it is the *type* of employment – low-paying, infrequent, as-needed – that is the issue. Respondents in this study claimed that permanent housing would be realistic with better-paying and more stable jobs.

Of the 72% of unemployed homeless people across Canada, only 6% reported having accessed employment assistance programs such as those offered at work search centres. This leads us to wonder whether homeless people are

35% of the homeless population in British Columbia is employed

able to find the services available to them, and shows us the importance of coordinating services in a network approach.

Income Assistance

For some, achieving financial independence through employment is simply impossible. These people may not be able to work for physical, mental, or age reasons, and must therefore depend on income assistance to meet their basic needs.

In the past decade, income assistance has become an increasingly difficult route. Eligibility requirements have become stricter, while benefits and shelter allowances have actually been reduced. This comes despite the fact that the cost of living continues to rise. In effect, people are being squeezed out of the system, and those that remain are finding it more and more difficult to survive.

Even if a person is legally entitled to assistance or benefits, he or she might have problems getting them. The system of websites, forms, and applications is difficult to navigate. Many people require advocates to help them through the complex process.

Another concern is that many forms of income assistance are allotted on a monthly basis, which makes budgeting difficult. Managing a once-monthly income would be a challenge for anyone. This is just one of the many systemic and administrative issues that need to be addressed. Rules need to be altered to suit the circumstances.

Life Skills

Underlining any move towards greater independence in housing and finances is the importance of life skills. These are the skills that enable us to function normally at work, at home, and in society.

Basic life skills include budgeting, finding work, maintaining a job, personal grooming, home maintenance, family management, conflict resolution, emotional control, maintaining self-esteem, and time management, among others.

Many people take for granted things that homeless people may find particularly challenging. Support services and training for homeless people must take into account certain lifestyle differences. Again, it comes back to a hierarchy of needs. A resume workshop, for example, seems rather useless for someone who can't get up on time for a job because he doesn't have an alarm clock.

Education and training are important pieces of the puzzle, but generally take a backseat to more primary concerns such as food, shelter, health services, and crisis supports. That said, many organizations are working hard to educate and train the homeless and at-risk of homelessness.

The Kamloops-Thompson School District's 'Street School' is a continuing education program for adult learners, many of whom have previously struggled in the educational system. Street School provides the opportunity to improve basic literacy as well as acquire accredited high school credits that can be used toward a BC Adult Dogwood Diploma (high school equivalency). Street School also offers classes to inmates at the Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre.

Besides Street School, there are several other literacy and alternative education programs that target specific groups. These include Four Directions, designed to serve secondary and adult-aged Aboriginal peoples, and the Boys and Girls Club's Two Roads program, serving 13 and 14-year-olds. Such programs are essential in cultivating literacy, numeracy, computer skills, and other abilities that may enhance a person's chances of success and provide the foundation for further education.

Homelessness and the threat of homelessness is a largely unacknowledged problem among the university student population. Many students find it difficult to achieve their educational goals because they are so busy trying to take care of their more basic needs. Non-academic concerns consume a considerable amount of time and resources in the various support services at Thompson Rivers University.

The recent economic downturn has had a broad impact, adding to the ranks of unemployed and making job-seeking all the more competitive. In such a climate, education and training (or re-training) become all the more important.

Homeless Survey:

Q. What are your goals / dreams for the future?

A. Get stable housing and return to T.R.U.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After careful analysis and discussion, the three subcommittees came up with a total of six goals and eight strategies, which form the basis of this Homelessness Action Plan.

These strategies are proposed as the most effective ways of achieving the ultimate goal of ending homelessness in Kamloops in five years. Many members of the subcommittees agreed that we need to learn more about some issues before deciding on an exact course of action. In such cases, filling those knowledge gaps forms part of the strategy.

On each of the following pages you will find one of these eight strategies. Each strategy is explained in detail, with a rough five-year timeline laid out whenever possible.

Homeless Survey

Q. What are your goals /dreams for the future?

A. Keep moving forward.

Goal

Assess the local housing situation, enhance the stock of acceptable housing, and respond to changes in the housing market

Strategy ► Establish a Local Housing Board

The Local Housing Board would be a community-led advisory and research board comprised of representatives from the City of Kamloops, non-profit agencies, private businesses and community service organizations, landlords and property owners, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Association, Province of British Columbia agencies, local developers, and non-affiliated residents.

The responsibilities of the local housing board would be to:

- conduct research into housing availability and housing needs
- support both non-profit agencies and private sector stakeholders in their work
- establish and maintain a housing registry
- assess demand for different types of social, supportive and subsidized housing
- recommend changes to municipal legislation and tax structure
- protect and enhance local housing stock
- review and recommend changes to the RTA and related legislation

This Board would help Kamloops respond more quickly and appropriately to local housing needs. The infrastructure for many of these functions already exists in municipal government. Work may be done by committees until the Board is fully formed.

Objectives	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	Laying the Groundwork	**Formation**	**Operation**	**Assessment**	**Formalization**
	- examined precedents / models for local housing boards - conducted research into housing demand - determined membership and duties of the board	- assembly of the housing board - stakeholder consultation and support - address local housing issues	- recommend local changes - improve dispute resolution	- measure outcomes and assess impact - continue protecting and enhancing local housing stock - respond to changes in local housing climate	- full-fledged operational Housing Board

Goal

2

Provide greater housing stability and reduce evictions

Strategy A ► Promote Housing Support agreements

A housing support agreement would provide agency support to landlords, building managers, and other housing operators. Such agreements are currently used by some housing operators. They are designed to assist landlords in dealing with tenants who require a low to moderate level of support services. Existing agreements need to be enhanced, standardized, and more broadly marketed.

Included in a standardize Housing Support Agreement would be:

- information for landlords, explaining available support services and how to access them
- a clear delineation of the responsibilities of each party (landlord, tenant, agency)

These agreements would offer greater stability and assurances to landlords, who might otherwise be hesitant to take on tenants who require support in maintaining housing. They would also help tenants understand their responsibilities.

Promoting these Agreements would involve landlords, building owners, other housing operators, non-profit agencies, government agencies, the RCMP, the Residential Tenancy Board, BC Non-Profit Housing Association, and the British Columbia Apartment Owners and Managers Association.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Objectives	**Network**	**Research**	**Drafting & Testing**	**Marketing & Expansion**	**Broad Recognition**
	-form community network through the HAP to provide information about housing models	- examine models of Support Agreements	- draft standardized agreement - utilize, test & assess	- seek support of the City, landlords and others - implement marketing / communications strategy to expand usage	- refine the agreement - achieve legal recognition - achieve greater tenant stability - reduce evictions

Strategy B   ►   Establish a Resident Support Program

A Resident Support Program would resemble a model currently being tested by ASK Wellness and the Kelson Group (property managers). In this program, the agency signs on as the 'tenant' and bears all attendant responsibilities. The agency then places 'residents' or 'program participants' in the rented suites.

A Resident Support Program would include the following:

- an agreement between an agency (tenant) and a housing operator (landlord) that permits the agency to house program participants (residents)
- agency guarantee of support and swift resolution of problems
- guaranteed payment of damage deposit and monthly rent
- a plan to transition people into regular tenancy if and when possible

This type of program benefits all parties. Residents obtain housing and support, agencies are able to house their clients, and landlords fill vacant suites while receiving support with collection and dealing with problems. The current model being tested involves people with addictions, but similar programs could be established for those homeless or at risk of homelessness with other underlying issues, such as mental illness. The greatest challenges of this program are administrative and financial. Rents are typically higher than the current shelter allowance of $375 that people on income assistance receive. Agencies must therefore seek funding for the difference. Funding for such programs must be firmly secured for them to be sustainable.

Objectives	Year 1 Assessment of Current Model	Year 2 Establishment	Year 3 Expansion	Year 4 Assessment & Refinement	Year 5 Expansion
	- measure outcomes of pilot project between ASK and the Kelson Group - assess the needs of homeless groups - assess and refine the program structure	- formalize the program model - establish programs between different agencies and landlords	- develop communications strategy - expand the program model for different 'hard-to-house' populations	- assess impact - measure outcomes - refine program to reflect what has been learned	- expand the program model as needed

Goal

3

Connect people with the help they need

Strategy   A   ►   Improve outreach

Support services are useless if the people who need them don't know how to get them. Engaging the homeless and at risk of homelessness, reaching out to them on their own territory, is key.

An improved outreach and engagement strategy would include:

- a 'team approach:' coordinated outreach between different agencies and organizations
- street-level engagement of those people who are not 'in the system'
- round-the-clock outreach service
- outreach geared specifically to youth
- regular meetings of outreach workers to assess needs and to strategize
- creation of new outreach positions

Along with a network approach to support services, improved and coordinated outreach will help organizations serve people better. It will also reduce overlap and remove the burden on agencies to be all things to all people.

Objectives	Year 1 Network	Year 2 Expand Network	Year 3 Laying the Foundation	Year 4 Implementation	Year 5 Expansion
	-establish network through the HAP to gain local information -Assist with the formation of an outreach workers' group	-Assist network in work to improve outreach such as through groups like the K.I.C.C.	- assess current outreach services - identify outreach gaps - identify leadership - conduct cost analysis	- coordinate outreach & engagement - monitor need - reassess services	- ensure round-the-clock service - secure funding for new outreach positions - reassess services

Strategy B ▶ **Adopt a network approach to support services**

Support services for the homeless and at risk of homelessness are delivered by many different agencies, organizations, and businesses. These groups must be able to communicate with and support one another in order to serve their clients well.

A network approach to support services would include the following:

- regular communication of changes and updates to services, programs, and staffing
- negotiated protocols between agencies and organizations for dealing with clients and case management
- a resource directory available to the entire network
- a communications strategy to raise awareness of the coordination of services and maintain good public relations

A network approach is critical. Agencies need to understand what services are available, properly refer clients to the most appropriate place, and address problems together. A network approach will allow the current capacity for support to work more efficiently and allow fewer people to slip through the cracks.

Objectives	Year 1 **Laying the Foundation**	Year 2 **Creating a Working Model**	Year 3 **Development & Awareness**	Year 4 **Evaluation & Expansion**	Year 5 **Refinement & Enhancement**
	- compile a comprehensive resource directory - identify leadership	- negotiate a 'pilot protocol' for the network - test and evaluate pilot protocol - conduct cost analysis - develop communications strategy	- negotiate broad protocols throughout the network - identify service gaps - raise awareness	- evaluate the effectiveness of the network approach - fill identified service gaps	- refine and enhance the network - improve efficiency - improve client service

Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan

Goal

Build the basic skills that people need to maintain housing and financial independence

Strategy ► Improve access to life skills coaching

Underlining any move towards greater independence in housing and finances is the importance of life skills. These are the things that enable us to function normally at work, at home, and in society.

Basic life skills would include:

- budgeting
- finding work
- maintaining a job
- personal grooming
- home maintenance
- family management
- emotional control
- maintaining self-esteem
- time management

People in need of improved life skills training come from all areas, including corrections, domestic abuse cases, the absolute homeless, hospitals, and so on. Life skills training for these people could be delivered in a variety of forms, including group sessions, one-on-one employment coaching, or through outreach workers. Both private and publicly funded work search centres could be involved through an enhancement of existing services.

Although some life skills workers already assist certain populations, such as those with mental health issues and addictions, there are many populations that are underserved. They may require personalized services and advocacy. Such services could build on the outreach and network strategies in the support services realm. Enhancing existing supports and services would require the following:

- assessing exactly what life skills are necessary for which people at each point along the continuum of stability or independence
- meetings of life skills coaches and outreach workers to coordinate service delivery
- streamlining services
- filling perceived gaps in the delivery of life skills training

Goal

5

Improve fairness, accessibilty, and responsiveness

Strategy   ►   Create changes to laws, procedures, regulations, and protocols

In addressing homelessness and the underlying issues and concerns, communities often bump up against systemic challenges. Sometimes the way things work simply seems unreasonable or unrealistic. For example, the rent allotment for those on income assistance has not increased alongside increases in housing costs. Today, that rent allotment simply isn't enough.

The types of systemic changes that may be argued for include:

- increase to monthly income assistance and rent parity
- more flexibility in accommodation size for larger families
- better and more affordable childcare for single mothers and low-income families
- wage subsidies for workers with mental health issues, history of addiction or abuse, or other challenges
- change to bi-monthly income assistance
- greater allowance of earnings for those on income assistance

The legislative process is often slow and change often comes only when a situation has grown intolerable. Governments must be encouraged to change laws and regulations to reflect changing economic and social realities.

Goal

6

Help people find and maintain employment

Strategy ▶ Improve workplace supports

Many people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness are dealing with circumstances or issues that make getting hired and keeping a job difficult. Employers often have little incentive to hire these people. Employers therefore need supports and incentives in order to improve opportunities for the homeless. The employees also need to be helped through the learning phase of a new employment situation so that they can become secure in their jobs and in their lives.

Employer and workplace supports would include:

- support agreements between employers, employees and supporting agencies that can help smooth transitions and resolve difficulties
- wage subsidies for residential job coaching and mentoring

Instituting employer and workplace supports would involve employment agencies, support service organizations, business improvement associations, the Chamber of Commerce, and employers.

Objectives	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	Network	**Laying the Foundation**	**Development & Implementation**	**Assessment & Refinement**	**Refinement & Expansion**
	-create a network, through the HAP, to gain local information about employment models and needs	- examine existing employer support models - draft employer-employee agreement - cultivate interest among employers and agencies - conduct pilot project with chosen employer	- develop and implement marketing strategy - implement program with different employers - publicize success stories	- assess impact - measure outcomes - refine programs according to assessments	- refine agreements and programs - expand programs - build greater capacity

FOLLOWING UP and MOVING FORWARD

Following Up

In all of our investigations, deliberations, and calculations, we must never lose sight of the human element of homelessness. Our ultimate aim here is to improve human lives, and thereby improve our community.

Earlier in this plan we met Eric, Tanya, Stanley, and Jason. They all know homelessness, albeit in different forms and for different reasons. How might our recommendations affect these people? How might this plan make a difference in these people's lives?

Eric

Eric is busy taking care of his daily needs and may not be accessing all the services available to him. Improved outreach will help get Eric connected. From there, he can begin getting his life on track. Without a source of income and several years on the street, it is difficult for Eric to rent an apartment. A homeless resident program may be just the thing he needs. Once Eric has a roof over his head, he can start working on his other needs. An effective network of support services could help him access disability benefits, pain medication, an employment coach, work suitable for a person with a back injury, and educational opportunities. Eric's dreams may not be in vain. Eric does not have to spend his days searching for food, managing his pain, and trying to stay dry. Eric doesn't have to be homeless.

Tanya

Tanya clearly doesn't earn enough to support herself and her son. She may be at risk of eviction if she isn't able to earn more money. A housing support agreement would give her a network of support if this possibility becomes a reality. If Tanya is connected with one piece of the support services puzzle, the entire network may be mobilized to ensure that she doesn't fall into hidden or absolute homelessness. Better support services may also connect her with an employment or life skills coach so that she can find a higher-

paying job. She may even be connected with an employment program with supports that can help her adjust to the work and maintain her employment. Tanya may also benefit from a new transitional housing project, something that allows a longer stay than emergency shelter but does not cost as much as market rental. Tanya and her son don't have to be homeless.

Stanley

Stanley needs housing and the right services to help him maintain stability in his life. In the past, he has bounced in and out of various institutions and programs. Each time he was released, he entered a new phase of homelessness. A room in a new supportive housing complex could give him the longer-term stability that he needs. He could get help with his depression. He could find and maintain work again. With the right supports, Stanley could achieve a reasonable degree of financial independence and break the homelessness cycle. A home, a job, ways of managing his health, and a return to his artwork are all within reach. Stanley does not have to be homeless.

Jason

Jason has managed to turn himself around on his own. He now does volunteer work helping people who are experiencing many of the things he has experienced himself. Jason should know that a system of supports is in place that will help prevent him from falling back into drug use. He should be able to access services that will help him realize his educational goals and find meaningful work. Through his current volunteer work, Jason can become an important part of the network envisioned in this plan.

Moving Forward

This is an action plan. Its purpose is to lay the groundwork for *doing*, not just thinking and discussing. The formation of this plan has created positive momentum. It has set the ball rolling. The ball must now be pushed along with all our strength, determination, and wisdom. The following is a list of keys to success:

~ engaging the community

~ overcoming cynicism

~ maintaining a balanced approach

~ prioritizing

~ finding the necessary resources

~ cultivating leadership

~ accepting accountability

~ responding to change

APPENDIX A

Composition of Committees

Homelessness Action Plan Steering Committee

Brenda Aynsley, Thompson Nicola Cariboo United Way
Jennifer Casorso, City of Kamloops
Danalee Coates, Thompson Nicola Cariboo United Way
Bob Hughes, ASK Wellness Centre
Louise Richards, Elizabeth Fry Society
Douglas Sage, Canadian Mental Health Association
Athena Smith, City of Kamloops Community Safety
Diane Stuart, P.I.T. Stop

Housing Subcommittee
Facilitator: John-Paul Baker
Jennifer Casorso, City of Kamloops
Blake Collins, City of Kamloops
Kelly Fawcett, Kelson Group
Brian Hayashi, Canadian Home Builders Association
Debra Hewlett, PA & JM Gaglardi Senior Citizens Society
Bob Hughes, ASK Wellness Centre
Jacqueline Johnson, Kamloops Native Housing Society
Stewart Johnson, John Howard Society
Shirley Palmer-Hunt, Canadian Home Builders Association
Debra Powell, Landlord
Louise Richards, Elizabeth Fry Society
Douglas Sage, Canadian Mental Health Association
Michele Walker, Y Women's Shelter
Grant Wolkosky, John Howard Society

Support Services Subcommittee
Facilitator: John-Paul Baker
Keith Bonnah, Thompson Community Services
Shelly Bonnah, Interior Community Services
Leah Dawson, Boys and Girls Club
Sharron Gardner, Ministry of Housing and Social Development
David Hall, Ministry of Children and Family Development
David Hawkes, Salvation Army
Elaine McBride, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Cheryl Montgomery, RCMP Victim Services
Carol Morgenthaler, Citizen
Chris Phillips, Interior Indian Friendship Centre Society
Todd Thexton, Interior Health
Kris Weatherman, Interior Health

Bridging to Financial Independence Subcommittee
Facilitator: John-Paul Baker
Don Anderson, Work Search Centre
Theresa Brooks, GT Hiring Solutions
Yvonne Dysart, Central Interior Partners in Aboriginal Human Resources Development
Maureen Jones, Y WillowTree Services
Nathan Lane, Thompson Rivers University Student Union
Peter Mutrie, Kamloops North Shore Business Improvement Association
Wendy Peschick, Community Living BC
Karen Rees, Kamloops Central Business Improvement Association
Athena Smith, City of Kamloops Community Safety

Meeting of All Subcommittees and other Key Community Members
Facilitator: John Talbot
Brenda Aynsley, Thompson Nicola Cariboo United Way
Barb Berger, City of Kamloops
Keith Bonnah, Thompson Community Services
Jennifer Casorso, City of Kamloops
Peter Chau, BC Housing
Danalee Coates, Thompson Nicola Cariboo United Way
Blake Collins, City of Kamloops
Kelly Fawcett, Kelson Group
Sharron Gardner, Ministry of Housing and Social Development
David Hall, Ministry of Children and Family Development
Brian Hayashi, Canadian Homebuilders Association
Debra Hewlett, PA & JM Gaglardi Senior Citizens Society
Bob Hughes, ASK Wellness Centre
Stuart Johnson, John Howard Society
Nathan Lane, Thompson Rivers University Students' Union
Elaine McBride, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Deb McClelland, Kamloops Chamber of Commerce
Carol Morgenthaler
Cheryl Montgomery, RCMP Victim Services
Peter Mutrie, North Shore Business Association
Wendy Peschick, Community Living BC
Louise Richards, Elizabeth Fry Society
Doug Sage, Canadian Mental Health Association
Athena Smith, City of Kamloops Community Safety
Diane Stuart, P.I.T. Stop
Todd Thexton, Interior Health

APPENDIX B

Chronology

September, 2008   Thompson Nicola Cariboo United Way and ASK Wellness Society organize a meeting which results in the Kamloops Housing Inventory

19 November, 2008   Changing the Face of Poverty decides to develop a steering committee to work on a plan to end homelessness in five to ten years; resolves that the steering committee will initially be comprised of interested Changing the Face of Poverty members but eventually have broad community representation

21 November, 2008   Homelessness Action Plan Steering Committee first meeting

19 January, 2009   HAP Steering Committee meeting

2 February, 2009   HAP Steering Committee meeting

16 February, 2009   HAP Steering Committee meeting

19 February, 2009   HAP Steering Committee member Louise Richards and Dick Dickens meet with Mayor Peter Milobar to inform him of the planning process

6 March, 2009   HAP Steering Committee meeting

23 March, 2009   HAP Steering Committee meets with Mayor Peter Milobar for input and to update him on the planning process

9 April, 2009   HAP Steering Committee meeting

April, 2009   Meeting with John Talbot (consultant and facilitator)

11 May, 2009   HAP Steering Committee meeting

May – June, 2009   Preparation of homelessness background document (including housing, employment, and support services) for June meeting with John Talbot

25 June, 2009	Meeting with John Talbot to review background document; Talbot advises forming three subcommittees to address and analyze the information in the three strategic priorities (housing, employment, and support services)
8 July, 2009	HAP Steering Committee meeting
23 July, 2009	HAP Steering Committee meeting
13 August, 2009	HAP Steering Committee meeting
14 August, 2009	Hiring of John-Paul Baker, facilitator and writer to facilitate subcommittee meetings, conduct necessary research, and write the draft Homelessness Action Plan
26 August, 2009	HAP Steering Committee meeting
10 September, 2009	Housing Subcommittee meeting #1
11 September, 2009	Support Services Subcommittee meeting #1
15 September, 2009	Bridging to Financial Independence Subcommittee meeting #1
16 September, 2009	HAP Steering Committee meeting
17 September, 2009	Housing Subcommittee meeting #2
22 September, 2009	Bridging to Financial Independence Subcommittee meeting #2
24 September, 2009	Housing Subcommittee meeting #3
25 September, 2009	Support Services Subcommittee meeting #2
29 September, 2009	Bridging to Financial Independence Subcommittee meeting #3
1 October, 2009	Housing Subcommittee meeting #4
2 October, 2009	Support Services Subcommittee meeting #3
6 October, 2009	Bridging to Financial Independence Subcommittee meeting #4

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8 October, 2009	Support Services Subcommittee meeting #4
14 October, 2009	HAP Steering Committee Meeting
16 October, 2009	Annual Homeless Count – Homeless Survey conducted
18 October, 2009	PIT Stop – Homeless Survey conducted
23 October, 2009	First draft of Homelessness Action Plan submitted
30 October, 2009	HAP Steering Committee Meeting
6 November, 2009	Revised draft of Homelessness Action Plan submitted
9 November, 2009	Meeting of All Subcommittees and Other Key Community Members, facilitated by John Talbot; revisions to Homelessness Action Plan recommended and future process discussed
16 December, 2009	HAP Steering Committee Meeting
11 January, 2010	HAP Steering Committee Meeting
2 March, 2010	HAP Steering Committee Meeting
29 March, 2010	HAP Steering Committee Meeting with 3rd yr Nursing Students from TRU
12 April, 2010	Community Forum
22 April, 2010	HAP Steering Committee Meeting
23 July, 2010	HAP Steering Committee Meeting
4/5 August, 2010	HAP Coordinator Interviews
9 September, 2010	HPS Funding Announcement Introduction of New Coordinator
15 October, 2010	HAP Steering Committee Meeting
29 October, 2010	Information Session, Adam Wylie Interior Health Kelowna presents on the PICC

Kelowna Partners in Community Collaboration, outreach group – weekly meetings of Kamloops Outreach group begin

19 November, 2010   HAP Steering Advisory Group Meeting

15 December, 2010   HAP Steering Advisory Group Meeting

6 January, 2011   HAP Steering Advisory Group Meeting

20 January, 2011   Kamloops Local Housing Board Working Group meeting 1

25 January, 2011   HAP Leadership Council Meeting 1

27 January, 2011   HAP Steering Advisory Group Meeting

17 February, 2011   HAP Steering Advisory Group Meeting

24 February, 2011   Kamloops Local Housing Board Working Group meeting 2

March 10, 2011   HAP Steering Advisory Group Meeting

March 2011   Release of First Annual Public Report

Since the release of the first Report to Community:

HAP Steering Advisory Group Meetings – Monthly

HAP Leadership Council Meetings – BiMonthly

March 29, 2011   Public Hearing to amend the Official Community Plan to allow surplus City-owned lands to be rezoned and utilized for affordable housing

April, 2011   Release of the Updated Non-Profit Housing Inventory

May 30, 2011   First meeting of the Kamloops Housing Board

June 2011   Beginning of the Support Service Inventory data collection

APPENDIX C

Homelessness Action Plan Coordinator

Reporting to the Homelessness Action Plan Steering Advisory Group, the Homelessness Action Plan Coordinator is responsible for implementing the strategies set out in the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan and providing initiative and leadership in addressing homelessness in Kamloops. In addition to facilitating the implementation of the plan, the Coordinator also monitors the progress of the plan and solicits feedback from stakeholder groups.

Duties & Responsibilities

- Informs & promotes the plan in the community
- Liaises with federal, provincial & municipal government
- Identifies services gaps & overlaps
- Supports organizations who are working together to optimize resources
- Assists with development of methods to integrate services among service providers & coordinates networking opportunities
- Assists service providers in understanding funding opportunities
- Strengthens the "link" and explores new partnerships between all levels of government, service providers, and the private sector
- Assists integrated committees of agencies that will provide leadership in implementing the plan

HAP Coordinator Tangie Genshorek graduated from high school in Kamloops in 1990 and has researched Homelessness and Affordable Housing in Canada , Asia and Europe. She completed a B.A. with a Major in Urban Studies at the University of Calgary in 2004, and went on to complete her Master of Architecture Degree at the University of Toronto in 2008. Both degrees focused on the process of creating affordable housing in an urban environment.

Tangie has had many opportunities to live across Canada and abroad and this makes her especially proud to be able call Kamloops her home town. She has lived in Kamloops and had family in the city since 1982, she understands the nature and the potential of Kamloops, and she offers a fresh and informed perspective on the plans for city improvement. Tangie brings a wealth of research and passion to the Homelessness Action Plan. With personal experience and theoretical knowledge, she plans to instigate the significant changes required to meet our goal of ending homelessness in Kamloops in the next 5 years.

APPENDIX D

Kamloops Housing Board

The primary purpose of the Kamloops Housing Board will be to collect, analyze and distribute housing information to the membership to facilitate informed decision making. Together with the support of the City of Kamloops and the Social Planning Council, the Housing Board will become an avenue to discuss recent trends, to evaluate supply and demand, to establish community priorities in an open forum, and to discuss policy and legislative reform where deemed necessary. Some additional items that may be addressed by the Kamloops Housing Board include, but are by no means limited to:

- o   Inform interested parties on housing matters
- o   Create & maintain a Housing Registry
- o   Establish community based methods to protect and enhance local housing
- o   Recommend changes to the RTA & other legislation &/or policy

This group will form a single source of information that will allow all participants to obtain the data and facts needed to develop successful projects, systems and policies. The data will be made available to the board, local agencies, BC Housing, and other groups, with the goal of improving the provision of housing and housing resources in Kamloops. The membership of the Kamloops Housing Board was decided in Spring 2011 through a public Call for Proposals.

Members of the Kamloops Housing Board:

Representing the City of Kamloops

Blake Collins, City Planner
Nicole Beauregard, Social Planning Council

Representing Market Housing

Multi-Dwelling Residential Development
Kelly Fawcett, The Kelson Group
Single-Occupancy Residential Development/Rooming Houses/Suites
Nikki Deverell, Think Outside the Box Dev.

Representing Non-Profit Housing

Property Management
Remi Lord, Door to Roof Society
Support Services tied to housing
Wendy Sims, ASK Wellness Centre

Representing Current Housing Concerns

Renee Taylor, Citizen at Large

Representing Aboriginal Housing

Jeanie Cardinal, White Buffalo Aboriginal

Representing Financing

Adam Curtis, Invis

Representing BC Housing

Peter Chau, BC Housing

Representing the Construction Community

Stefen Reid, Trophy Developments

Representing Thompson Rivers University

Sukh Heer Matonovich, Student Engagement & Retention Coordinator

Representing the Ministry of Social Development in a liason capacity. (Non-Voting Member)

Jan Borgerson, MSD

Task Manager

Tangie Genshorek, Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan Coordinator

APPENDIX E

Members of the Leadership Council

Representing the Federal Government: Cathy McLeod
Kamloops-Thompson-Cariboo MP

Representing the Provincial Government: Terry Lake
Kamloops North MLA

Representing the Provincial Government: Kevin Krueger
Kamloops South MLA

Representing the Aboriginal Community: Chief Shane Gottfriedson
Tk'emlúps Indian Band

Representing the Municipality: Mayor Peter Milobar
City of Kamloops

Representing the Private Housing Market: Kelly Fawcett
Property Manager, The Kelson Group

Representing the Construction Community: Patsy Bourassa
Executive Officer
Canadian Home Builders' Association

Representing the Kamloops Working Group on Homelessness:
Christopher Phillips
Executive Director
Interior Indian Friendship Society

Representing Kamloops' Youth: Nathan Lane
Executive Director
TRU Students Union

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Representing Kamloops Faith Community: Viktor Gundel
                                               Clinical Spiritual Care Chaplain
                                               Spiritual Care Department
                                               Co-ordinator
                                               Royal Inland Hospital

Representing Kamloops Non-Profit Agencies: Ray Jolicoeur
                                               Kamloops This Week

Representing the Business Community: Steve Earl
                                               Board Member
                                               Kamloops Chamber of Commerce

Representing the Labor Community: Carol Spicer
                                               Hospital Employees' Union

Representing the Homeless Community :   Meetings will include a
                                               representative recommended by
                                               LC members

APPENDIX F

Acknowledgements

The Steering Committee for the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan gratefully acknowledges all of the individuals and organizations whose sponsorship, support, and participation have made the creation of this plan possible.

Sponsors

Thompson Nicola Cariboo United Way

City of Kamloops

Community Living BC

Changing the Face of Poverty

Federal Government, Homelessness Partnership Strategy

Writing and Design

John-Paul Baker

APPENDIX G

Glossary

absolute homelessness

Having no suitable shelter, sleeping in places not intended for living, or staying in emergency shelters.

advocacy

Individual advocacy means supporting, empowering, or acting on behalf of an individual. Systemic advocacy means efforts to change legislation, policy, practice, or attitudes.

assisted living

Self-contained apartments for seniors or people with disabilities who need some support services.

at-risk of homelessness

Living in unaffordable, unsafe, overcrowded, insecure, inappropriate, or poorly maintained housing, or lacking stability or financial security.

barriers

Those issues which may make it difficult for a person to maintain stability, a job, housing, and/or personal relationships, i.e. addictions, mental health problems, racism, etc.

correctional facilities

Jails and prisons.

emergency shelter

Short-stay housing, typically 30 days or less.

faith-based groups

Organizations that are religious or affiliated with an established church.

hidden homelessness

Living in temporary accommodations such as with family or friends, in hotels, or in time-limited residential programs.

hierarchy of needs

A theory which establishes five levels of needs: physiological (food, sleep, etc.), safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. According to this theory, the lower level needs must be satisfied before real attention can be paid to higher needs.

housing first

A program philosophy based on the idea that permanent housing – as opposed to transitional housing – must be provided before any and all other issues or barriers are addressed. With a Housing First program, residency is not dependent on accessing support services.

income assistance

Government programs that provide financial help to people and families who cannot work, are temporarily out of work, are awaiting income, or need emergency funding.

outreach

The efforts of an organization or agency to connect with clients or potential clients.

RTA (Residential Tenancy Act)

The legislation that defines the rights and duties of tenants and landlords.

social housing

Housing that is operated as a cooperative, by government, or by non-profit societies.

subsidized housing

All types of housing that receive assistance from government, including social housing as well as rent supplements for people living in private market housing.

supportive housing

Housing with on- and/or off-site support services to help people stabilize their personal situations.

transition housing

Housing with on- or off-site support services provided for between 30 days and several years.

APPENDIX H

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