

BRIDGE HOUSING IN CANADA

A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and
Operating Bridge Housing Effectively



Prepared for

the Canadian Alliance
to End Homelessness

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1. Background Information

1.1 What is Bridge Housing?

Bridge Housing is a short-term, service-intensive housing program designed to provide people experiencing homelessness that have more complex and often concurrent barriers to exiting homelessness, with a safe, stable, and supportive environment. While in this program, participants are actively and intensively supported toward securing permanent housing. By focusing on the adult experience of progressive engagement through tailored intensive individual supports, this program “bridges” the gap between homelessness and long-term housing solutions by combining stabilization supports with targeted action-oriented engagement that accelerates permanent housing access. In addition to its steadfast commitment to housing focused solutions, this program model also ensures access to health and social services necessary to promote life stability until sustainable community-based service connections are in place.

1.2 What are the Objectives of Bridge Housing?

Bridge Housing has five co-occurring objectives:

1. Offer an immediate, safe, and stable alternative to unsheltered homelessness for people that want to exit homelessness, as well as people that have had multiple attempts at housing and support approaches that have been unsuccessful.
2. Provide intensive, housing-focused services to rapidly connect participants with permanent housing opportunities.
3. Address urgent needs (health, income, identification, benefits, etc.) that are creating barriers to housing.
4. Support skill-building and resource navigation within a trauma informed service model that recognizes that the journey from homelessness to housing is not a linear process.
5. Promote system flow by reducing caseloads of street outreach workers, reducing reliance on emergency shelters, and shortening the duration of homelessness.

1.3 Who is Bridge Housing Intended For?

Bridge Housing has a specific purpose for a very specific clientele. It is not a resource or service for anyone experiencing homelessness. It plays an important, but niche role within the system of care. A person served through Bridge Housing must be interested in permanent housing, but benefit from temporary, stable housing and support while the pathway to permanent housing is being travelled. It serves two primary groups:



- 1. People that are unsheltered and have expressed a desire to have support with their journey to exit homelessness, but cannot, or will not use shelters, and have more complex and co-occurring support needs. It is acknowledged that congregate shelter settings may not be resourced to support all people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.**

The referral source for this group through Coordinated Access are street outreach workers that are housing-focused and assisting people that are unsheltered in mobilizing a pathway out of homelessness. There are no self-referrals from an unsheltered situation. The population engaged either will not use shelters (for example, has tried shelter but had a bad experience) or cannot use shelters (for example, has too many possessions or is service restricted based upon a past event within the shelter).

Typically, those served have multiple support needs such as needing to secure identification; addressing the absence of adequate income; and, navigating health, mental health and/or addiction supports. For some, support needs can also include things like: figuring out where they can live because of legal restrictions or service support needs (for example, availability of public transit to get to regular medical appointments); working on mediation for family reunification; working through the extent of supports and system/resource navigation required because of the unique circumstances of the person (for example, an elderly person with what appears to be early onset of memory loss and increasingly compromised executive functioning); and, arranging for connections to home community in order to return, if from elsewhere.

- 2. People that have had multiple attempts at housing with supports, but keep returning to homelessness because of more complex and co-occurring support needs.**

It is commonly accepted that Critical Time Intervention, Intensive Case Management, and Assertive Community Treatment approaches have proven to help people find and maintain housing via scattered site model¹. While largely successful when practiced with fidelity, is not successful 100% of the time. Approximately one in five people served through other approaches will not succeed. Bridge Housing addresses the housing pathway supports that would benefit this 20% of people experiencing chronic homelessness and complex, co-occurring needs.

¹ References on Success Rates for High Fidelity CTI, ICM and ACT models include: Mental Health Commission of Canada (2014). At Home/Chez Soi Final Report via https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/drupal/mhcc_at_home_report_national_cross-site_eng_2_0.pdf; Recovery Research Institute (2020): Helping to Secure Stable Housing First Among homeless Individuals Can Improve Mental Health and Quality of Life via https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/drupal/mhcc_at_home_report_national_cross-site_eng_2_0.pdf



Common for both groups is that there are barriers to housing access or stability that need to be resolved for a successful tenancy to be possible. This is not about “housing readiness” in the traditional sense. This is about resolving barriers so that the person can be successful in their housing. It is all about being practical in resolving these barriers, not about feelings/beliefs of readiness on the part of a support worker.

1.4 How is Bridge Housing Different from Traditional Transitional Housing?

Unlike traditional transitional housing, Bridge Housing is not a longer-term (years) program with requirements to “earn” or “learn” housing readiness. It operates with a clear, short-term timeline (6-9 months), a singular focus on permanent housing, and a streamlined approach to services. Whereas transitional housing often emphasizes extended stays, program compliance, or therapeutic models, Bridge Housing emphasizes rapid resolution of homelessness and direct pathways into permanent housing. All supports provided through Bridge Housing are customized, not an expectation that there is participation of all people in the likes of workshops or classes as a condition of stay.

1.5 Where Bridge Housing Fits Within the System

Bridge Housing fits within the system of care in five unique ways:

1. A strategic “flow” intervention

Bridge Housing functions as a critical flow intervention within a system of care. It creates movement between emergency responses and permanent housing with appropriate supports. By offering short-term stability for people who are already interested in permanent housing but cannot immediately move in, Bridge Housing helps reduce bottlenecks and ensures housing resources are used more effectively.

2. Complementary, not duplicative

Bridge Housing is not designed to replace shelters, transitional housing, or permanent housing. Instead, it fills a very specific niche: short-term stability combined with high service intensity to accelerate permanent housing outcomes. This clarity of purpose helps maintain a well-functioning system where each component (shelter for immediate crisis, Bridge Housing for short-term stabilization, and permanent housing for long-term stability) works in alignment rather than duplication.



3. Enhancing equity and outcomes

Without Bridge Housing, many people risk losing their housing opportunity if they cannot quickly complete tasks such as securing documentation, activating/reactivating income supports or addressing immediate health needs. Bridge Housing provides the necessary stability to ensure vulnerable program participants do not fall through the cracks during this transition. It also enhances equity by creating more reliable access opportunities for individuals who may struggle to move directly from shelter, streets, or institutions into permanent housing.

4. System efficiency and effectiveness

Bridge Housing contributes directly to overall system efficiency. By freeing up shelter beds and reducing lengths of stay in emergency accommodations, it allows the homelessness response system to serve more people in need. The effectiveness of Bridge Housing should not be measured by how long someone stays in the program, but rather by how often it leads to permanent housing access and how quickly access occurs. This alignment with system-level outcomes makes Bridge Housing a powerful lever for improving system performance.

5. Integration with Coordinated Access

Within a Coordinated Access framework, Bridge Housing is a targeted intervention. Households can be referred once individuals have embarked on a pathway to a permanent housing resource but require temporary stabilization before moving in. This intentional connection prevents Bridge Housing from becoming a holding pattern or a siloed program. Instead, it ensures the program is used purposefully: to bridge the final gap between homelessness and a permanent home for people with more complex and co-occurring needs, as well as more barriers to realizing an end to their homelessness.



2. Program Model

Bridge Housing provides short-term, service-intensive housing that stabilizes individuals experiencing homelessness while they finalize arrangements for permanent housing. The purpose of the program is not to offer long-term accommodation, but to function as a bridge, ensuring people have a safe, structured environment in which to complete the steps required to exit homelessness. This section outlines the model of operations in detail.

2.1 Referrals and Inflow Process

All referrals to Bridge Housing flow through the community's Coordinated Access system. This ensures that the program is used intentionally and only for those who require short-term stabilization as they transition into permanent housing. Eligibility is determined by either being unsheltered and referred by a street outreach worker; or, having been housed (often multiple times) but being unable to sustain the housing because of complex and often co-occurring support needs.

2.2. Consent and Program Explanation

Admission begins with a clear explanation of the program. Staff provide information about the temporary nature of the stay, the primary focus on securing permanent housing, the services available, and the expectations of participation. People must give informed, written consent to participate in services, including permission for data collection and information sharing with partners, in accordance with privacy laws.

2.3 Intake and Needs Assessment

Once consent is obtained, staff conduct a structured intake within twenty-four hours of admission, capturing demographic information and service needs. A comprehensive needs assessment is completed within seventy-two hours to identify documentation gaps, income supports, health concerns, and other barriers to housing. Together with the Bridge Housing participant, staff develop an individualized housing plan that guides the work of the program and is updated regularly throughout their stay.

2.4 Orientation to the Program

New program participants receive a thorough orientation upon entry. They are introduced to the building's safety protocols, food services, visitor policy, and programming opportunities. Staff also provide an orientation to the neighbourhood, highlighting nearby resources such as transit, grocery stores, health clinics, and community centres. Orientation emphasizes that the program is time-limited and designed exclusively to facilitate a transition into permanent housing.



2.5 Documentation and Identification

Bridge Housing staff actively assist participants in securing government-issued identification and other essential documents. This includes birth certificates, health cards, social insurance numbers, and any paperwork required to complete a housing application. Partnerships with government agencies and nonprofit providers are leveraged to expedite the process.

2.6 Income and Budgeting

Staff support participants in establishing or stabilizing their income, whether through employment, public benefits, disability assistance, pensions, or veteran supports. Budgeting assistance is provided to prepare people for the financial responsibilities of independent living, including rent, utilities, food, and transportation.

2.7 Case Management

Each Bridge Housing participant is assigned a case manager who meets with them regularly, no less than once every few days, to review progress, update plans, and troubleshoot barriers. Case managers provide individualized support, coordinate services, and document all interactions in the case management system. The case management relationship is central to helping participants stay focused on their housing goals. Case management happens in the participants unit (personal space) as this supports individualized plans that focus on the basic skills a participant will need to be successfully housed within the community.

2.8 Case Reviews and Case Conferencing

To strengthen collaboration, case reviews occur on a weekly basis. Staff and supervisors review participant progress, identify challenges, and coordinate responses.

Case conferencing ensures that all available expertise and resources are brought to bear in moving participants toward housing. Case conferencing occurs no less than once per month. Differentiating case reviews from case conferencing, the case conference often includes external allies and partners as well as the program participant and is a deeper dive into resolving profound barriers to realizing permanent housing with necessary supports.

2.9 Community Resource Connection

Bridge Housing connects program participants to a wide range of community resources, including primary healthcare, mental health supports, addictions services, employment programs, education opportunities, and cultural activities. Staff not only make referrals but also follow up to confirm that services were accessed and outcomes achieved. Streamlined linkages reduce barriers and promote long-term housing stability.



2.10 Partnerships and On-Site Services

Partnerships are essential to Bridge Housing. Formal memoranda of understanding with allied organizations allow services to be delivered on-site, reducing access barriers and wait times. Health care providers, cultural supports, income support workers, harm reduction teams, and other partners play a direct role in the daily functioning of the program.

2.11 Wellness Checks

Accepting that many people that are served through Bridge Housing live with addictions or other impactful health issues, staff conduct frequent wellness checks (usually every 90 minutes) to ensure the safety and well-being of all program participants. The frequency of wellness checks can be increased for those with higher risk profiles. Wellness checks are both a safety measure and a tool for building supportive relationships.

2.12 Documentation of Engagements and Referrals

All contacts, referrals, and progress updates are recorded in the case management system. Staff are expected to complete case notes within forty-eight hours to maintain accountability and provide accurate data for system-wide evaluation.

2.13 Food Services

Nutritious meals are available daily through in-house preparation, off-site catering that is delivered, or working with participants to independently create their own meals. Program participants should have access to shared cooking facilities to practice independent living skills and prepare for life in their own housing.

2.14 Visitor Policy

Unlike many other forms of temporary accommodation, Bridge Housing has visiting hours and encourages participants to invite visitors to come to the Bridge Housing site. Visitor policies are in place to balance participant autonomy with safety and community standards. When beneficial, coaching on establishing healthy boundaries and guest management practices increase participant confidence and agency. Visitors must comply with all program rules and sign in and out of the building. Restrictions may be imposed if visitor behaviour compromises safety or disrupts the program environment.

2.15 Crisis Protocols

Bridge Housing maintains clear crisis protocols to respond to medical emergencies, overdoses, mental health crises, and incidents of violence. All staff are trained in de-escalation techniques, trauma-informed care, harm reduction, and CPR/first aid. These procedures ensure consistent and effective responses to crises.



2.16 Programming and Activities

Structured programming is offered to provide meaningful daily engagement but is not a requirement of stay. All structured programming is completely voluntary. Workshops and seminars may address topics such as tenant rights, cooking, employment readiness, wellness practices, or financial literacy. Activities are designed to reduce idleness, promote skills, and strengthen connections to the community.

2.17 Cultural, Age, and Gender Responsiveness

All services and programming within Bridge Housing are designed to be culturally safe, age-appropriate, and gender-responsive. Staff and partners work to ensure that Indigenous residents, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, seniors, and youth feel respected and supported. Partnerships with culturally specific organizations enhance the program's inclusivity and relevance.

2.18 Exit Planning and Criteria

Exit planning begins at intake and remains a central focus throughout the person's stay. Staff coordinate with housing providers, landlords, and community supports to ensure smooth transitions into permanent housing.

People may be exited earlier for serious safety violations, acts of violence, or refusal to engage in housing-focused services. In such cases, staff connect the individual with shelter or outreach supports to prevent a return to unsheltered homelessness. For those participants who do not secure housing during their stay, they are eligible for re-entry through the Coordinated Access process in the future.



3. Policies and Procedures

To maintain consistency and accountability, each Bridge Housing program is required to maintain written policies covering key areas such as:

3.1 Program Philosophy & Guiding Principles

- Permanent housing with supports framework
- Trauma-informed and harm reduction approaches
- Strengths-based and person-centred care
- Equity, diversity, inclusion, and cultural safety

3.2 Admissions, Eligibility, and Referrals

- Eligibility criteria and exclusions
- Referral pathways (e.g., Coordinated Access)
- Admission process and documentation
- Prioritization
- Participation Expectations

3.3 Participant Rights & Responsibilities

- Statement of participant rights (privacy, dignity, respect, self-determination)
- Participant responsibilities (conduct, fees if applicable, respect for others)
- Complaint and grievance procedure
- Confidentiality and privacy policy (aligned with legislation)

3.4 Case Management & Housing Supports

- Intensive case management model (caseload ratios, service expectations)
- Service planning and housing plans
- Goal setting and progress review
- Housing search and landlord engagement support
- Tenancy readiness and life skills support
- Housing stabilization and follow-up services



3.5 Program Operations & Facility Management

- Daily routines (check-in/out, curfews if any, quiet hours)
- Room/unit assignments and transfers
- Visitor and guest policy
- Pet policy and animal care guidelines
- Storage policy (personal belongings, amnesty lockers)
- Food services and meal access
- Facility checks and safety inspections

3.6 Health, Wellness, and Safety

- Harm reduction and substance use policy (safe use, storage, disposal)
- Overdose prevention and Naloxone administration
- Mental health crisis response and suicide intervention
- Infectious disease prevention and response (COVID-19, influenza, TB, etc.)
- Medication management and self-administration
- Domestic violence/intimate partner violence response protocol
- Wellness checks (scheduled and as-needed)

3.7 Expectations & Conflict Resolution

- De-escalation and crisis intervention policy
- Violence, threats, weapons, and contraband policy
- Eviction, discharge, and appeal process
- Restorative/behavioural agreements or warning system

3.8 Community & Program Engagement

- Resident meetings and feedback process
- Community building activities and peer engagement
- Participant involvement in program development

3.9 Staff Roles & Responsibilities

- Intensive Case Manager role profile
- Staff code of conduct and ethics
- Professional boundaries policy
- Staff training and supervision requirements



3.10 Collaboration & System Integration

- Coordinated Access participation
- Case conferencing and multidisciplinary collaboration
- Partnerships with health, justice, employment, and cultural supports
- Information sharing protocols

3.11 Emergency & Critical Incident Response

- Emergency evacuation procedures
- Critical incident reporting (overdose, violence, medical emergencies)
- Fire safety and drills
- Severe weather and power outage protocols
- Serious occurrence reporting requirements

3.12 Administrative & Compliance Policies

- Documentation standards (case notes, HIFIS/HMIS data entry, consent forms)
- Performance measurement and outcome tracking
- Privacy and data protection (FOIP/PHIPA/HIPAA as applicable)
- Policy review and continuous quality improvement

Please note that this is not a comprehensive list of policies, policies are reflected by the unique needs of the community and participants the Bridge Housing program is serving.

A Sample Policy is included in Appendix A.



4. Operations

4.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

Program performance is measured primarily by the rate of exits to permanent housing, the average length of stay, and successful engagement with community resources. Data is reported to the system of care on a regular basis to ensure Bridge Housing fulfills its intended role as a targeted, time-limited intervention that accelerates permanent housing outcomes.

4.2 Built Form Considerations

The physical environment of Bridge Housing must be carefully designed to balance privacy, dignity, and independence with opportunities for community connection and service delivery. The built form directly influences the safety, effectiveness, and cultural appropriateness of the program.

Multi-Unit Residential Buildings

Bridge Housing can be effectively operated within multi-unit residential buildings. This model allows for independent units for each participant, with the infrastructure already in place to support housing, food preparation, and common areas. Multi-unit buildings are well-suited for integration into neighbourhoods, helping reduce stigma while promoting community inclusion.

Converted Motels

Converted motels provide another viable option for Bridge Housing. Motel conversions offer speed of implementation, as the existing infrastructure already includes private rooms and bathrooms. Renovations may be required to add kitchenettes, enhance common spaces, or upgrade security. While efficient, motels must be adapted thoughtfully to create a supportive and welcoming environment that feels like housing, not an institution.

Independent Units with Shared Common Spaces

Whenever possible, participants should be provided with independent units to promote dignity, privacy, and a sense of ownership. Unless housing as a couple, only one person should be assigned to each unit. Independent units should be complemented by shared common spaces, allowing people to engage with peers and staff, build social connections, and access programming. This balance supports both independence and community.



Need for Common Spaces

Common spaces are an essential feature of Bridge Housing. These areas provide opportunities for social interaction, group programming, and informal support among program participants. Comfortable and flexible common spaces reduce isolation, encourage positive community norms, and create a sense of belonging during a transitional period. Common spaces can also be used for delivering workshops and seminars.

Meeting Spaces

Dedicated meeting spaces are required to facilitate case management, service navigation, and confidential conversations. These spaces must be private, soundproof, and professional in appearance to foster trust and maintain confidentiality between staff, program participants, and allied partners. Meeting spaces also allow for case conferencing and collaborative work with community providers.

Need for Storage

Adequate storage must be available both for residents and for program operations. Residents need secure, lockable storage for personal belongings to promote safety and reduce theft or conflict. Program storage is required for supplies such as food, cleaning materials, programming equipment, and crisis response kits. Storage capacity should be factored into the design from the outset.

Need for Food Preparation Space

Food services are an integral part of Bridge Housing, and the built form must accommodate them. Facilities should include a commercial-grade kitchen or adequate catering infrastructure to provide daily meals. In addition, where possible, participants should have access to kitchenettes or shared kitchens to practice independent living skills. Food preparation areas must comply with all health and safety regulations and be designed to serve the scale of the facility.

Safety and Security of Building Access

The safety of participants, staff, and visitors requires strict management of building access. Entry points must be controlled through locked access doors, key fobs, or monitored reception areas. Visitor access should be logged and supervised, particularly for non-resident guests and allied professionals delivering on-site services. Security measures should be robust but non-intrusive, supporting both safety and dignity.

Providing Safety for Diverse Population Groups

The built form must be responsive to the needs of different population groups.



For example, women may require a dedicated wing or floor to ensure safety and comfort. Similarly, culturally safe spaces should be designated to support Indigenous residents, 2SLGBTQIA+ residents, and other groups requiring specific protections. Thoughtful design reduces risks of conflict, harassment, or re-traumatization, ensuring that all program participants can feel safe and respected during their stay.

4.3 Staffing Considerations

The effectiveness of Bridge Housing relies heavily on the staff team. While the physical environment provides safety and stability, it is the staff who create the supportive, housing-focused culture that enables participants to succeed. Staffing considerations must ensure that adequate coverage, professional competence, and staff well-being are maintained at all times.

Dedicated Staff On-Site 24/7

Bridge Housing must be staffed around the clock to ensure safety of participants, provide timely support, and respond to crises as they arise. Having dedicated staff present 24 hours a day, seven days a week, communicates stability and reliability to residents. Night coverage is particularly important to manage emergencies, maintain security, and address issues that may arise outside of standard office hours.

Staff Ratios by Shift

Staffing ratios should reflect the size and design of the facility, the intensity of support required, and the needs of the resident population. Smaller facilities may operate effectively with a single staff member on duty overnight, while larger facilities require multiple staff per shift to ensure adequate coverage of all units and common spaces. Ratios should be set to balance resident safety, staff workload, and budget considerations, with adjustments made based on occupancy and observed need.

Service Orientation and Core Competencies

All staff must share a common service orientation that reflects the principles of housing-focused, person-centred care. Staff must demonstrate proficiency in core competencies that are essential for supporting individuals experiencing homelessness in a transitional environment:

- o **Trauma-Informed Care**

Staff must understand the prevalence and impact of trauma and respond in ways that promote safety, choice, and empowerment. Trauma-informed care reduces the risk of re-traumatization and builds trust.



- **Harm Reduction**

Staff approach substance use from a harm reduction perspective, recognizing that safety and dignity are priorities. This includes providing education, supplies, and nonjudgmental support, as well as responding compassionately to overdoses or drug poisonings.

- **Motivational Interviewing**

Staff use motivational interviewing techniques to help participants explore their own reasons for change, strengthening motivation and commitment to housing goals.

- **Cultural Responsiveness**

Staff must demonstrate cultural awareness and humility, providing services that respect the diverse cultural, spiritual, and identity-based needs of participants. This includes responsiveness to Indigenous, Black, racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+, and newcomer communities.

- **Documentation**

Accurate and timely documentation is required for accountability and system-wide evaluation. Staff must be skilled in writing clear case notes, tracking progress, and maintaining data integrity.

- **Privacy and Confidentiality**

All staff must safeguard participant information in accordance with privacy laws and agency policies. Confidentiality fosters trust and ensures ethical service delivery.

- **Strengths-Based Approach**

Staff focus on participant strengths and resilience rather than deficits. This orientation empowers residents and fosters hope.

- **Progressive Engagement**

Services are delivered in a progressive engagement model, beginning with immediate needs and gradually increasing intensity as trust builds and housing goals advance.

- **De-Escalation**

Staff must be skilled in verbal and non-verbal de-escalation techniques to manage conflict and reduce the risk of harm.



- o **Person-Centred Goal Setting**

All housing and service plans must be developed collaboratively with the program participant, respecting their priorities and aspirations that co-occur with their desire to exit homelessness.

- o **Overdose and Drug Poisoning Response**

All staff are trained to recognize and respond to overdoses, including the administration of naloxone or other life-saving interventions.

- o **First Aid, Mental Health First Aid, and CPR**

Basic first aid, CPR, and mental health first aid training are required for all staff to ensure preparedness for health-related emergencies.

- o **Engagement in Natural Settings**

Staff must be comfortable engaging with program participants in their natural setting, whether that is in their unit, in common areas, or within the neighbourhood. Services must be delivered without judgment and with respect for the person's lived experience.

Ensuring Adequate Coverage

Staffing coverage must be matched to the number of units and the service intensity of the program. Larger facilities require additional staff to ensure that all areas of the building are monitored and that staff are available for resident engagement. Coverage plans should account for staff breaks, sick days, and vacation to ensure continuity of care. Staffing models must also consider the need for specialized roles such as case managers, housing navigators, peer support workers, and program support staff, as well as roles and duties that may be performed by external allied organizations.

Role and Functions of Supervisors and Managers

Supervisors and managers are responsible for program oversight, quality assurance, and staff support. Their functions include supervising case management, ensuring adherence to policies, monitoring outcomes, and providing coaching and mentorship to staff. Managers must also serve as liaisons with community partners, funders, and system planners to ensure Bridge Housing operates as an integrated part of the homelessness response system.



Supporting Wellness and Reducing Burnout

The work of Bridge Housing staff can be emotionally demanding, with exposure to trauma, crises, and human suffering. To sustain staff effectiveness and well-being, the program must prioritize wellness supports. This includes regular supervision, access to debriefing after critical incidents, opportunities for professional development, and employee assistance programs. Staff must be encouraged to use vacation and personal time, and organizational culture should normalize discussions of compassion fatigue, moral injury, and secondary trauma. Protecting the wellness of staff is not only an ethical responsibility but also a practical necessity for program stability and quality of care.

4.4 Neighbourhood Considerations

The success of Bridge Housing is influenced not only by what happens inside the program but also by how the facility is situated within and connected to its surrounding neighbourhood. Location, accessibility, and community relations all play critical roles in ensuring that the program supports residents effectively while fostering positive connections with neighbours.

Proximity to Services

Bridge Housing should be located within reasonable proximity to essential services such as grocery stores, health clinics, pharmacies, community centres, and employment or training opportunities. Residents benefit from being able to access these services independently, reducing reliance on staff and fostering skills for community integration. Proximity to services also reinforces the program's focus on preparing people for permanent housing by encouraging habits of independence and self-sufficiency.

Proximity to Transit

Reliable and affordable transit options are essential for residents to access housing appointments, employment, education, and health services. Bridge Housing should therefore be located in areas with convenient transit connections. Accessibility to transit supports residents' independence and ensures that case management, community resource connection, and employment goals can be pursued without undue barriers. Transit access also reduces isolation and helps residents remain integrated with the broader community.

Relations with Businesses and Housed Neighbours

Strong relationships with surrounding businesses and housed neighbours are critical for reducing stigma and preventing conflict. Bridge Housing programs should be proactive in establishing clear lines of communication with the community, addressing concerns, and demonstrating accountability. Staff can mitigate conflict by ensuring residents understand expectations regarding respectful behaviour in the neighbourhood,



while also advocating for residents' dignity and right to be present in public spaces. Proactive engagement helps reduce the likelihood of complaints, tensions, or opposition, while building goodwill and support for the program.

Community Liaison Committee

The design and implementation of a Community Liaison Committee is an effective tool for fostering ongoing dialogue between Bridge Housing, residents of the neighbourhood, local businesses, and other stakeholders. The committee should include representatives from the program, community members, business operators, and, where appropriate, participants of Bridge Housing. Meetings should be held regularly to review operations, discuss concerns, and identify opportunities for collaboration. The committee provides a structured forum for transparency, accountability, and relationship building, helping to maintain community confidence and reduce misunderstandings.

A Sample Terms of Reference for a Community Liaison Committee is included in Appendix B.

4.5 Funding and Operational Sustainability

For Bridge Housing to achieve its intended impact, it must be supported by sustainable funding and sound operational practices. Adequate resources ensure not only that the program can meet the housing-focused needs of participants, but also that it can maintain quality standards, retain skilled staff, and demonstrate value within the broader homelessness response system.

Funding Sources and Models

Bridge Housing may be financed through a blend of public and philanthropic funding sources. Public funding typically comes from municipal, provincial/territorial, or federal housing and homelessness programs, often tied to system-level performance goals. Private contributions from philanthropic organizations, corporate sponsors, or faith-based groups can supplement these funds, providing flexibility to enhance services or cover costs not eligible under government programs. Effective funding models are diversified to reduce dependence on a single source, and multi-year commitments are pursued to ensure stability. Programs must also align with the broader system of care to ensure Bridge Housing is recognized as a necessary and funded intervention within the homelessness response continuum.

Cost per Participant

The cost of operating Bridge Housing is typically measured on a per-participant basis, accounting for both housing and service components.



Because Bridge Housing is service-intensive and short-term, per-participant costs may appear higher than traditional transitional housing programs. However, the emphasis on rapid exits to permanent housing results in overall system savings by reducing reliance on shelters, hospitals, and other high-cost emergency services. Programs should calculate and regularly review per-participant costs to ensure efficiency and demonstrate value to funders.

Monitoring Reductions in Emergency Service Use

Bridge Housing contributes to system-level cost savings by reducing the use of more costly emergency services. Residents who are stabilized in Bridge Housing are less likely to rely on hospital emergency rooms, crisis mental health services, emergency shelters, and police interventions. Programs should track these reductions on a frequent basis through partnerships with health systems, law enforcement, and shelter providers. Monitoring these outcomes provides strong evidence of the program's impact, supporting continued funding and expansion.

A Sample Operating Budget for Bridge Housing is included in Appendix C.

4.6 Communications

Effective communication is critical to the success and sustainability of Bridge Housing. Clear, transparent, and timely communication builds trust with the community, demonstrates accountability to funders, and reinforces public understanding of the value of Bridge Housing within the homelessness response system. This section outlines communication practices for community relations, funder engagement, performance reporting, public education, and incident management.

Community Updates

Bridge Housing programs should provide regular updates to the neighbourhoods in which they are located. Updates should include information on program operations, successes in moving participants into permanent housing, upcoming events or initiatives, and ways the community can stay engaged. Community updates should be delivered at least quarterly, using accessible formats such as newsletters, social media posts, or public meetings. By proactively sharing information, programs reduce misinformation and help foster positive neighbourhood relationships.

Funder Updates

Regular updates to funders are necessary to maintain accountability and demonstrate progress. These updates should provide both quantitative and qualitative data: the number of participants served, rates of exit to permanent housing, average length of



stay, and examples of successful housing outcomes. Updates should also highlight partnerships, system-level impacts, and innovations in service delivery. Funders should receive written reports at least semi-annually, supplemented by meetings or presentations as requested. Timely and transparent communication ensures continued confidence in the program and helps secure long-term funding commitments.

Data Dashboards

Dashboards provide a visual and accessible method for communicating key performance indicators. Bridge Housing programs should maintain real-time or regularly updated dashboards that track occupancy, length of stay, exits to permanent housing, service connections, and participant demographics. Dashboards can be tailored for internal management, funder reporting, and community presentations. They serve as a tool for accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement, ensuring that program outcomes remain visible and measurable.

A Sample Dashboard is included in Appendix D.

Public Education on Benefits of Bridge Housing

Public education is an essential part of sustaining community support. Bridge Housing programs should actively communicate the benefits of the model, including its role in reducing homelessness, improving community safety, and lowering reliance on costly emergency services. Public education campaigns may include fact sheets, media interviews, social media outreach, and presentations to community groups. By highlighting success stories and system-level impacts, programs can counter stigma and build broader public understanding of why Bridge Housing is an essential intervention.

Incident Management

When incidents occur within or near Bridge Housing facilities, timely and accurate communication is critical. Programs must have a clear incident management protocol that outlines who communicates, what information is shared, and through which channels. Communication should be factual, respectful of privacy, and oriented toward reassurance and resolution. Internally, staff and participants must be informed quickly to maintain safety and trust. Externally, funders, community partners, and the public should receive consistent updates as appropriate to the scale and nature of the incident. A proactive and transparent approach to incident management reduces the risk of misinformation and helps preserve community confidence.



4.7 Continuous Quality Improvement

Bridge Housing must be committed to ongoing learning and adaptation. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) ensures that the program not only meets its immediate objectives but also evolves to reflect best practices, emerging needs, and system-wide priorities. By establishing clear performance measures, gathering meaningful feedback, and acting on findings, Bridge Housing maintains high standards of effectiveness and accountability.

Overview of Key Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators (KPIs) provide a framework for measuring success and guiding program improvement. For Bridge Housing, KPIs should include:

- The percentage of participants who exit to permanent housing.
- The mean and median length of stay.
- Reductions in returns to shelter or unsheltered homelessness.
- Rates of engagement with community services such as health care, income supports, and employment programs.
- Participant satisfaction and perceptions of safety and support.

Tracking these indicators consistently allows staff and stakeholders to assess whether Bridge Housing is fulfilling its intended role as a time-limited, housing-focused intervention.

Data Collection, Analysis, and Interpretation

Data must be collected systematically, with clear standards for what information is gathered, when it is recorded, and how it is analyzed. Core data includes demographics, service utilization, case management contacts, referrals, and outcomes at exit. Staff should document data in a timely fashion (within 24 hours of interactions) to maintain accuracy. Analysis should occur monthly for operational decision-making, quarterly for reporting, and annually for program evaluation. Attention should be paid not only to outputs, such as number of services delivered, but also to outcomes, such as housing stability and reduced reliance on emergency systems. Programs should look for trends, disparities, and areas where progress is slower than expected, and use these insights to drive adjustments in practice.

Advisory Group of Current or Former Participants

Including the voices of people with lived experience is essential to meaningful CQI. Bridge Housing should maintain an advisory group made up of current or former participants who can provide input on program design, service delivery, and participant experience. This group should meet regularly, receive support for effective participation,



and be compensated for their time and expertise. Incorporating participant perspectives helps ensure that the program remains responsive, respectful, and effective.

Advisory Group of Allied Professionals

Bridge Housing does not operate in isolation but as part of a broader system of care. An advisory group of allied professionals, such as representatives from health care, income support agencies, housing providers, law enforcement, and community organizations, should be established to provide feedback on program integration and coordination. Regular consultation with allied partners helps identify gaps, strengthen partnerships, and align Bridge Housing operations with community-wide strategies to reduce homelessness.

Exit Interviews

Exit interviews are a valuable tool for learning from participants' experiences. When individuals leave Bridge Housing, whether for permanent housing, another program, or an early exit, staff should conduct a structured interview to capture feedback. Questions should address the quality of services, the usefulness of programming, the adequacy of supports for securing housing, and suggestions for improvement. Exit interviews provide firsthand insights into what is working well and what requires change, and findings should be incorporated into CQI processes on an ongoing basis.



5. Conclusion

Bridge Housing represents a critical innovation in Canada's homelessness response system. By providing short-term, service-intensive housing with a singular focus on permanent housing outcomes, Bridge Housing fills a gap between crisis responses and long-term solutions. It is not designed to replace shelters, transitional housing, or permanent supportive housing, but rather to complement them by relieving pressure on emergency systems, preventing people from falling through service gaps, and accelerating pathways to a home of one's own.

For communities and non-profit organizations, Bridge Housing offers both opportunity and responsibility. Its success depends on strong partnerships, skilled staff, cultural safety, and unwavering commitment to housing outcomes. For policymakers, it requires stable funding, alignment with national housing strategies, and attention to equity across diverse geographies and populations.

If implemented with fidelity, Bridge Housing can reduce reliance on high-cost emergency systems, improve housing stability for people with the most complex needs, and foster greater efficiency and compassion within the homelessness response system. Most importantly, it provides hope and a tangible bridge to a permanent home, which affirms Canada's commitment to dignity, inclusion, and the right to housing for all.



Appendices

Bridge Housing In Canada



Appendix A – Sample Policy for Bridge Housing

SUBJECT: <i>Boundaries and Ethics</i>	POLICY #:
SECTION:	PAGE #: of

IMPLEMENTATION DATE:	APPROVED BY:
REVISION DATES:	

PURPOSE

This policy outlines the boundaries and ethics that staff must abide by while working in the Bridge Housing program.

POLICY

Priority of Participant Interests

- Bridge Housing staff must maintain the best interests of participants as a priority, with due regard to the respective interests of others.
- Bridge Housing staff do not discriminate against any person on the basis of age, abilities, ethnic background, gender, language, marital status, national ancestry, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.
- Bridge Housing staff collaborate with other professionals and service providers in the interests of participants with the participant's knowledge and consent. Bridge Housing staff recognize the right of participant determination in this regard and include participants (or legally mandated participant representatives when participants are not capable of giving consent) in such consultations.
- Bridge Housing staff limit their involvement in the personal affairs of participants to matters related to service being provided.



- In exceptional circumstances, the priority of participants' interests may be outweighed by the interests of others, or by legal requirements and conditions. In such situations participants are made aware of the obligations the worker faces with respect to the interests of others, unless such disclosure could result in harm to others.
- Bridge Housing staff seek to safeguard the rights and interests of participants who have limited or impaired decision-making capacity when acting on their behalf, and/or when collaborating with others who are acting for the rights and interests of the individual.

Demonstrate Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity

- Bridge Housing staff strive to understand culture and its function in human behaviour and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.

Bridge Housing staff acknowledge the diversity within and among individuals, communities and cultures.

- Bridge Housing staff acknowledge and respect the impact that their own heritage, values, beliefs and preferences can have on their practice and on participants whose background and values may be different from their own.
- Bridge Housing staff seek a working knowledge and understanding of participants' racial and cultural affiliations, identities, values, beliefs and customs.

Where possible, Bridge Housing staff provide or secure social work services in the language chosen by the participant. If using an interpreter, when possible, Bridge Housing staff preferentially secure an independent and qualified professional interpreter.

Ethical Responsibilities in Professional Relationships

It is the responsibility of the worker to establish the tenor of their professional relationship with participants and others, and to ensure that the relationship serves the needs of participants, and others to whom there is a professional duty, over the needs of the worker. In establishing a professional relationship, the worker takes into account relevant contextual issues, such as age, culture and gender of the participant, and ensures the dignity, individuality and rights of the person and vulnerable members of society are protected.



Appropriate Professional Boundaries

- Bridge Housing staff maintain appropriate professional boundaries throughout the course of the professional relationship and after the professional relationship.

No Exploitation for Personal or Professional Gain

- Bridge Housing staff do not exploit professional relationships for personal benefit, gain or gratification.
- Bridge Housing staff do not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploit others to further their personal, religious, political or business interests.

Declare Conflicts of Interest

- Bridge Housing staff avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgement. Bridge Housing staff inform participants when a real or potential conflict of interest arises and take reasonable steps to resolve the issue in a manner that makes the participants' interests primary. In some cases, protecting participants' interests may require termination of the professional relationship with proper referral of the participant to another professional.
- When Bridge Housing staff provide services to two or more people who have a relationship with each other (e.g., couples, family members), Bridge Housing staff clarify with all parties which individuals will be considered participants and the nature of the professional relationship with other involved parties.

Avoid Physical Contact with Participants

- Bridge Housing staff avoid engaging in physical contact with participants.

No Romantic or Sexual Relationships with Participants

- Bridge Housing staff do not engage in romantic relationships, sexual activities or sexual contact with participants, even if such contact is sought by participants.
- Bridge Housing staff do not engage in romantic relationships, sexual activities or sexual contact with former participants.



- Bridge Housing staff do not engage in a romantic relationship, sexual activities or sexual contact with students whom they are supervising or teaching.

No Sexual Harassment

- Sexual harassment refers to unwelcome sexual comments or lewd statements, unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome requests for sexual favours or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in circumstances where a reasonable person could anticipate that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.
- Bridge Housing staff do not sexually harass any person.

Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues

Respect

- Bridge Housing staff relate to both internal colleagues and colleagues from other disciplines with respect, integrity and courtesy and seek to understand differences in viewpoints and practice.

Collaboration and Consultation

- When collaborating with other professionals, Bridge Housing staff utilize the expertise of other disciplines for the benefit of their participants. Bridge Housing staff participate in and contribute to decisions that affect the well-being of participants by drawing on the knowledge, values and experiences of the profession.
- Bridge Housing staff co-operate with other disciplines to promote and expand ideas, knowledge, theory and skills, experience and opportunities that improve professional expertise and service provision.
- Bridge Housing staff seek the advice and counsel of colleagues whenever such consultation is in the best interests of participants.
- Bridge Housing staff keep themselves informed about colleagues' areas of expertise and competencies. Bridge Housing staff only consult colleagues who have, in the judgement of the worker, knowledge, expertise and competence related to the subject of the consultation.



- Bridge Housing staff honestly acknowledge the work and the contributions made by others.

Management of Disputes

- Bridge Housing staff remain open to constructive comment on their practice or behaviour. Bridge Housing staff base criticism of colleagues' practice or behaviour on defensible arguments and concern, and deal with differences in ways that uphold ethical principles.
- Bridge Housing staff who have ethical concerns about the actions of a colleague attempt to resolve the disagreement through appropriate channels established by their organization.

Ethical Responsibilities to the Workplace

Professional Practice

- Bridge Housing staff acknowledge and strive to carry out the stated aims and objectives of Niagara Region consistent with the requirements of ethical practice.
- Bridge Housing staff work toward the best possible standards of service provision and are accountable for their practice.
- Bridge Housing staff use the organization's resources honestly and only for their intended purpose.

Bridge Housing staff appropriately challenge and work to improve policies, procedures, practices and service provisions that:

- Are not in the best interests of participants.
- Are inequitable.
- Are in any way oppressive, disempowering or culturally inappropriate; and demonstrate discrimination.



Appendix B – Sample Community Liaison Committee Terms of Reference

CLC TERMS OF REFERENCE TEMPLATE

1. Purpose of the Community Liaison Committee (CLC)

A Community Liaison Committee (CLC) is designed to foster open communication and collaboration between a Bridge Housing program and the surrounding community. It provides a structured forum where stakeholders can discuss concerns, share information, and work toward constructive solutions.

A well-functioning CLC helps bridge the gap between public perception and the realities of program operations, ensuring that challenges are addressed proactively rather than reactively. By maintaining regular engagement, the CLC supports transparency, strengthens relationships, and promotes the successful integration of the Bridge Housing program into the surrounding community.

Example Purpose Statement:

"The purpose of this CLC is to serve as a forum for ongoing communication and collaboration between [Program Name] and community stakeholders, ensuring transparency, addressing shared concerns, and supporting the successful integration of the program into the community."

2. Objectives of the CLC

(List key objectives that the CLC aims to achieve.)

- Foster open and transparent communication between the program and the community.
- Provide a venue for constructive discussions and problem-solving.
- Increased awareness and understanding of homelessness and the role of the program in the local homelessness response system.
- Develop strategies to promote positive relationships and mutual trust.
 - Balance program operations with community concerns.

(Add any additional objectives specific to your community.)



3. Membership Composition

Stakeholder Group	Recommended Participants	Notes
Program Representation	At least one staff member in a leadership role	Can include executive leadership
Community Members	Residents	Priority for direct neighbors
Business Representatives	Local business owners	Especially those near the program
Social Services Providers	Agencies supporting Bridge Housing guests	Includes outreach workers
Local Government	City or municipal official	Related to housing/ community services
Public Safety	Law enforcement or safety reps	Optional
Lived Experience	Individuals with past or current homelessness experience	Strongly recommended

(Modify table based on community needs.)

4. Selection Process

(Outline how members will be selected.)

- Open call for applications.
- Selection panel with representatives from key stakeholders.
- Selection criteria based on community involvement, relevant experience, and constructive engagement.

Term Length: [Insert duration]

Renewal Policy: [Specify process for renewing terms]



5. Roles and Responsibilities

(Define roles for CLC members.)

Facilitator/Chairperson

- Guides meetings and maintains productive discussions.
- Works with members to set meeting agendas.
- Represents the CLC in communications with external stakeholders.

Secretary (Optional Role)

- Takes meeting minutes and distributes them.
- Maintains records of discussions and actions taken.

Communication Lead (Optional Role)

- Manages communication between the CLC and the broader community.
- Ensures meeting summaries and updates are shared publicly as appropriate.
- Coordinates with local media or community groups for engagement opportunities.

All Members

- Actively participate in meetings and discussions.
- Share perspectives while respecting differing viewpoints.
- Maintain confidentiality.

6. Meeting Structure and Frequency

(Customize the meeting schedule and structure.)

☐ Monthly ☐ Bi-Monthly ☐ Quarterly ☐ Other: _____

Meeting Format: ☐ In-Person ☐ Virtual ☐ Hybrid

Suggested Agenda Topics: (Modify to suit community needs.)

Bridge Housing updates on key data points:

- Current Occupancy
- Average length of stay
- Exits to Permanent Housing



- Key Demographics (de-identified)
- Community concerns and feedback
- Discussion of ongoing and emerging issues
- Development of action items and next steps

7. Decision-Making Approach

(Define how decisions or recommendations will be made.)

☐ Consensus-Based Decision Making ☐ Majority Vote ☐ Other: _____

(Provide guidance on documenting decisions, especially if full consensus is not reached.)

8. Confidentiality and Code of Conduct

(Specify any rules for maintaining confidentiality and respectful discussions.)

- Members sign a confidentiality agreement
- Respectful and solutions-focused discussions are required
- No discriminatory or inflammatory language allowed
- Process for addressing breaches of conduct: [Specify consequences]

9. Communication and Public Engagement

(Describe how CLC activities will be shared with the community.)

- Meeting summaries shared via program website/community newsletter
- Dedicated CLC email for public inquiries: [Insert email]
- Periodic public forums or information sessions

(Modify based on preferred engagement methods.)

10. Review and Adjustment of Terms of Reference

(Set a schedule for reviewing and updating this document.)

- Reviewed annually
- Updates approved through [insert approval process]
- Changes communicated to all members and stakeholders



11. CLC Duration and Evaluation

(Determine how long the CLC will operate and how effectiveness will be assessed.)

- Established for an initial period of [one/two] years, with periodic evaluations.
- Reviewed based on feedback from members and community stakeholders.
- If deemed no longer necessary, a transition or dissolution process will be planned.



Appendix C: Sample Operating Budget

Bridge Housing - Sample Annual Operating Budget

(25 Units, 24/7 Staffing) All amounts in CAD

Category	Description	Annual Cost
Personnel 1 Program Manager (1 FTE)	Oversight, supervision, reporting	\$95,000
Intensive Case Managers (9 FTE)	24/7 staffing, case planning, housing-focused support	\$630,000
Peer Support/Lived Experience (2 FTE)	Engagement, mentoring	\$100,000
Relief/Casual Coverage	Vacation, sick, peak coverage	\$50,000
Subtotal Personnel		\$875,000
Benefits & Payroll Costs (20%)	El, CPP, vacation, health/dental	\$150,000
Total Staffing		\$1,050,000
Program & Client Support Life skills & socio-recreational	Budget for programming, activities	\$20,000
Food & household supplies	Shared kitchen supplies, cleaning, liners	\$50,000
Transportation & ID assistance	Bus tickets, taxis, document fees	\$15,000
Subtotal Program		\$85,000
Facility Operations		
Rental/lease/mortgage	Based on ownership/financing costs	\$150,000
Utilities	Health, hydro, water, internet	\$120,000
Repairs & maintenance	General upkeep, snow/lawn, waste	\$40,000
Insurance & licensing	Property, liability professional	\$25,000
Subtotal Facility		\$335,000
Administration & Evaluation		
General admin & office	Phones, computers, office supplies	\$20,000
Staff training & professional development	Trauma-informed care harm reduction, MI training	\$15,000
Program evaluation	Tools, fidelity reviews, outcomes evaluation	\$25,000
Subtotal Admin		\$60,000
Contingency (5%)	Unforeseen expenses	\$78,000
Total Annual Operating Budget		\$1,608,000



Appendix D: Sample Data Dashboard

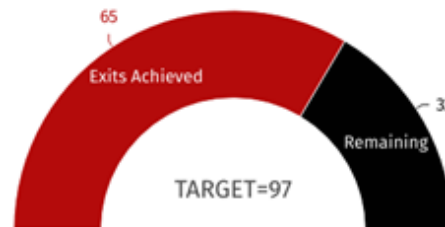
SAMPLE BRIDGE HOUSING DASHBOARD



Community Resource Connections (Since January)



PROGRESS TOWARDS ANNUAL HOUSING TARGET



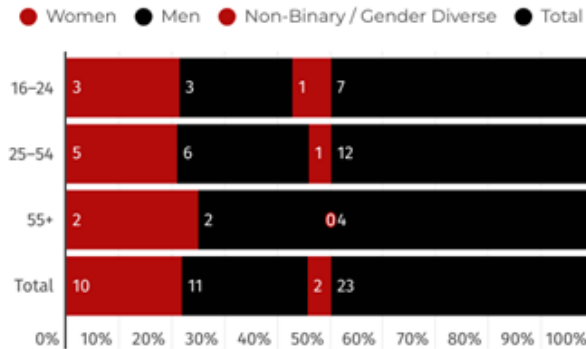
MONTHLY EXITS TO PERMANENT HOUSING



SAMPLE BRIDGE HOUSING DASHBOARD



CURRENT PARTICIPANTS BY AGE AND GENDER IDENTITY



POST BRIDGE HOUSING RETENTION RATES

