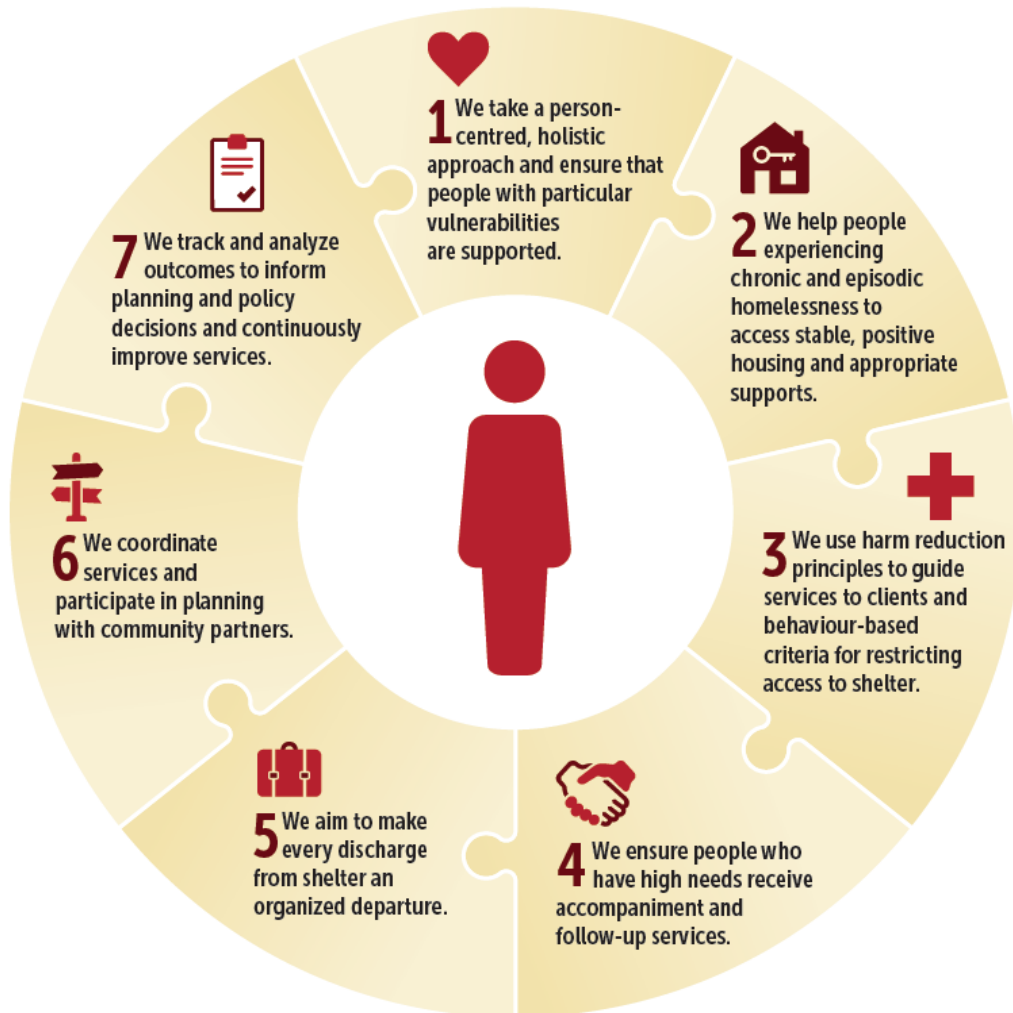# What Role Can Emergency Shelters Play in Ending Homelessness?
The Salvation Army's 7 Operating Principles

Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness Conference

November 2, 2015

The Salvation Army
Canada & Bermuda Territory

1 We take a person-centred, holistic approach and ensure that people with particular vulnerabilities are supported.

2 We help people experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness to access stable, positive housing and appropriate supports.

3 We use harm reduction principles to guide services to clients and behaviour-based criteria for restricting access to shelter.

4 We ensure people who have high needs receive accompaniment and follow-up services.

5 We aim to make every discharge from shelter an organized departure.

6 We coordinate services and participate in planning with community partners.

7 We track and analyze outcomes to inform planning and policy decisions and continuously improve services.

Poster available for download and more detailed overview of the Operating Principles available in English & French at:

www.SalvationArmy.ca/emergency shelters

http://ArmeeDuSalut.ca/principes-de-gestion-des-refuges-durgence/

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53 Salvation Army Emergency Shelters in Canada

CORE QUESTION

What are the best practices for ending homelessness, and how can Salvation Army emergency shelters measure their effectiveness in achieving this outcome?

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

## The Salvation Army's Territorial Emergency Shelter Initiative

– **Research and consultations**

– **Emergency Shelter Operating Principles**

– **Role of emergency shelters in ending homelessness**

– **Appendix: Implementation?**

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Research & consultations

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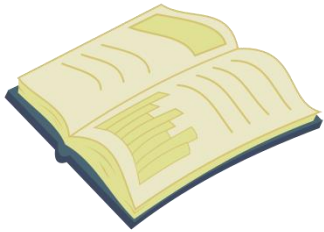
Extensive literature review

Surveys: 53 TSA shelters (100% response rate)

Site visits: 7 cities

Interviews & focus groups – total individuals consulted: 319

- **207 Salvation Army officers and staff**
- **39 non-TSA funders, shelter providers, sector leaders**
- **73 TSA shelter clients**
  - **38 men and 35 women**

Time Line

We are here:

PHASES 1–3	OPERATING PRINCIPLES	PHASE 4	PHASE 5
Lit Review, Survey, Consultations, & Recommendations	APPROVED	Internal Communications & Planning	Full Roll Out & External Communications
Jan–Dec 2014	**Jan–Feb 2015**	**Spring – Fall 2015**	**Winter 2015 +**

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THE SALVATION ARMY
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Emergency Shelter Operating Principles

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1 We take a person-centred, holistic approach and ensure that people with particular vulnerabilities are supported.

- **Change happens through relationships of trust, care, and understanding.** Staff deliver services in a way that is trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, and strengths-based
- **Spiritual care plays a key role in helping people transform their lives.** All staff take a holistic approach; chaplains in particular ensure that spiritual needs are met in an interfaith context

- People with **particular vulnerabilities** includes:
  - those who may experience **greater barriers to entering a shelter** (e.g. people with physical disabilities; people who are transgender) and
  - people who experience **greater challenges in leaving the shelter** and breaking the cycle of homelessness (e.g. people experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness)
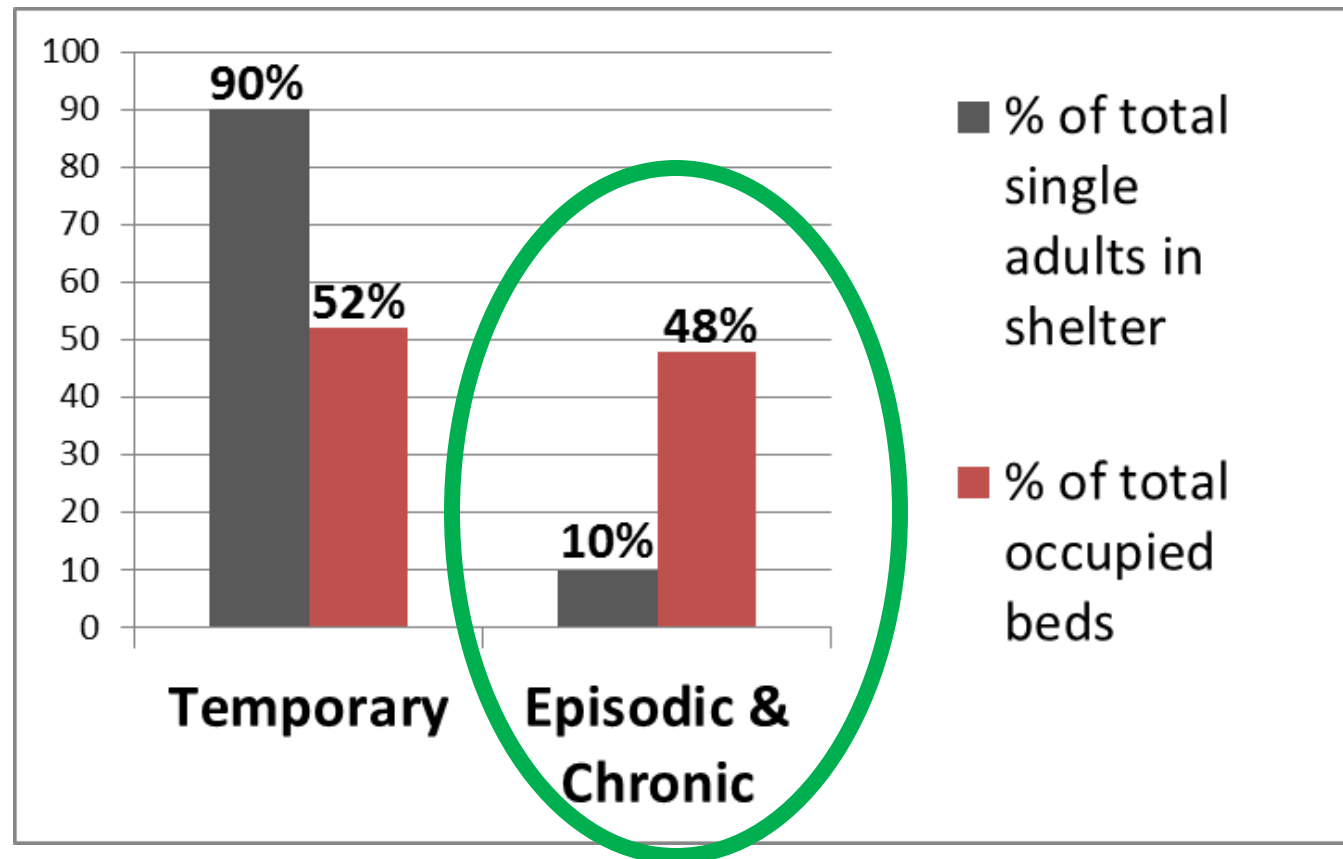
2 We help people experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness to access stable, positive housing and appropriate supports.

"Just housing" is not enough: housing needs to be:

- **Stable:** affordable, secure tenure, well maintained, right size
- **Positive:** safe, not abusive or exploitative

Principle 2 puts the focus on people who have been homeless for a long time:

3 We use harm reduction principles to guide services to clients and behaviour-based criteria for restricting access to shelter.

- **"Harm reduction principles"**
  - **Staff** provide services in a respectful, non-judgmental way that puts client safety first

- **"Behaviour-based criteria"**
  - Assessing risks to intoxicated client, to other clients, and to staff

- Restrictions minimized to ensure all who need shelter can access it (how minimal depends on the community and availability of other low-barrier shelters – client choice is important)

- Staff and clients emphasized: The bottom line is that shelters save lives. Given the role that shelters can play in meeting basic needs and protecting people from serious harms, The Salvation Army is committed to ensuring that our shelters are as accessible and welcoming as possible.

4 We ensure people who have high needs receive accompaniment and follow-up services.

– **"Accompaniment" –** a worker physically goes with a client to meet with a service provider, access a resource, view an apartment, etc.

– **"Follow-up supports"** – workers connect with housed clients to help them settle in to a new home, make connections with local service providers and resources, etc.

– These supports are intended to be focused on people who have multiple barriers to accessing services (i.e. people with **high needs** and/or a chronic/episodic pattern of homelessness)

– TSA shelters "**ensure people receive**" these services; TSA may not provide them directly, but rather partner with external agencies.

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**5** We aim to make every discharge from shelter an organized departure.

- An **"organized departure"** occurs when a client leaves the shelter for another type of housing that better suits their current needs.
- Ideally, a client is leaving the shelter for **stable and positive permanent housing.**

- In some cases, clients may prefer to access a **transitional housing** program first. The Salvation Army provides transitional housing options and supports these choices, but **does not require a client to complete any predetermined steps before assisting them to access permanent housing**.
- We want to avoid discharging to homelessness. This means length of stay should not be arbitrary, but should support an organized departure.

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6 We coordinate services and participate in planning with community partners.
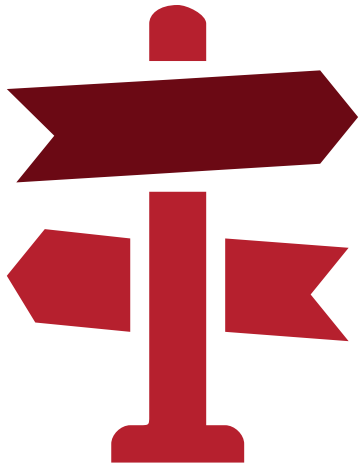
Service Coordination

- **Emergency shelters are the "front door" to a broader system of supports**

- Ensuring clients get access to the right services while in shelter, and that those relationships continue into the community, is key

Planning

- Participate in networks and at planning tables, ensuring The Salvation Army emergency shelters have a voice and provide leadership on homelessness issues
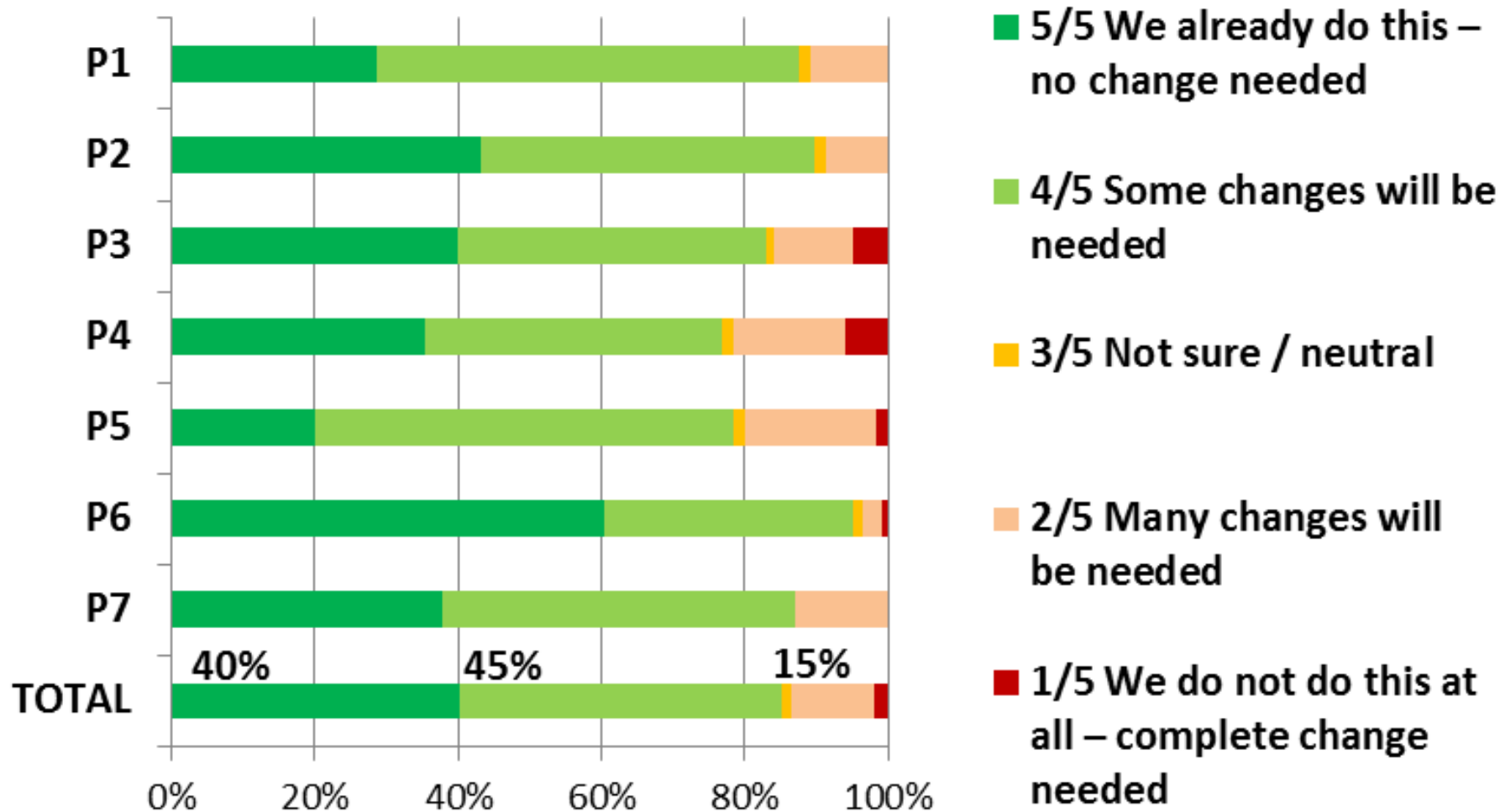
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7 We track and analyze outcomes to inform planning and policy decisions and continuously improve services.

– We need good quality information to accurately assess our effectiveness, continuously improve services, and contribute leadership to homelessness services systems planning. This includes:

- How many people use our shelters "chronically" or "episodically"?
- What are the different interventions / resources offered to each group? Do they have organized departures?
- How many people who leave the shelter come back?
- Are shelter users satisfied with the services they are receiving? Do they feel they have received person-centred, holistic care?

# Poll: Readiness to Implement Principles

Legend:
- 5/5 We already do this – no change needed
- 4/5 Some changes will be needed
- 3/5 Not sure / neutral
- 2/5 Many changes will be needed
- 1/5 We do not do this at all – complete change needed

TOTAL: 40% | 45% | 15%

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**THE SALVATION ARMY
TERRITORIAL EMERGENCY SHELTER INITIATIVE**

Role of emergency shelters in ending homelessness

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ROLE OF EMERGENCY SHELTERS

1. Meet immediate needs for shelter, food, bed, safety
2. Connect people with housing and community-based supports
3. Contribute to system planning
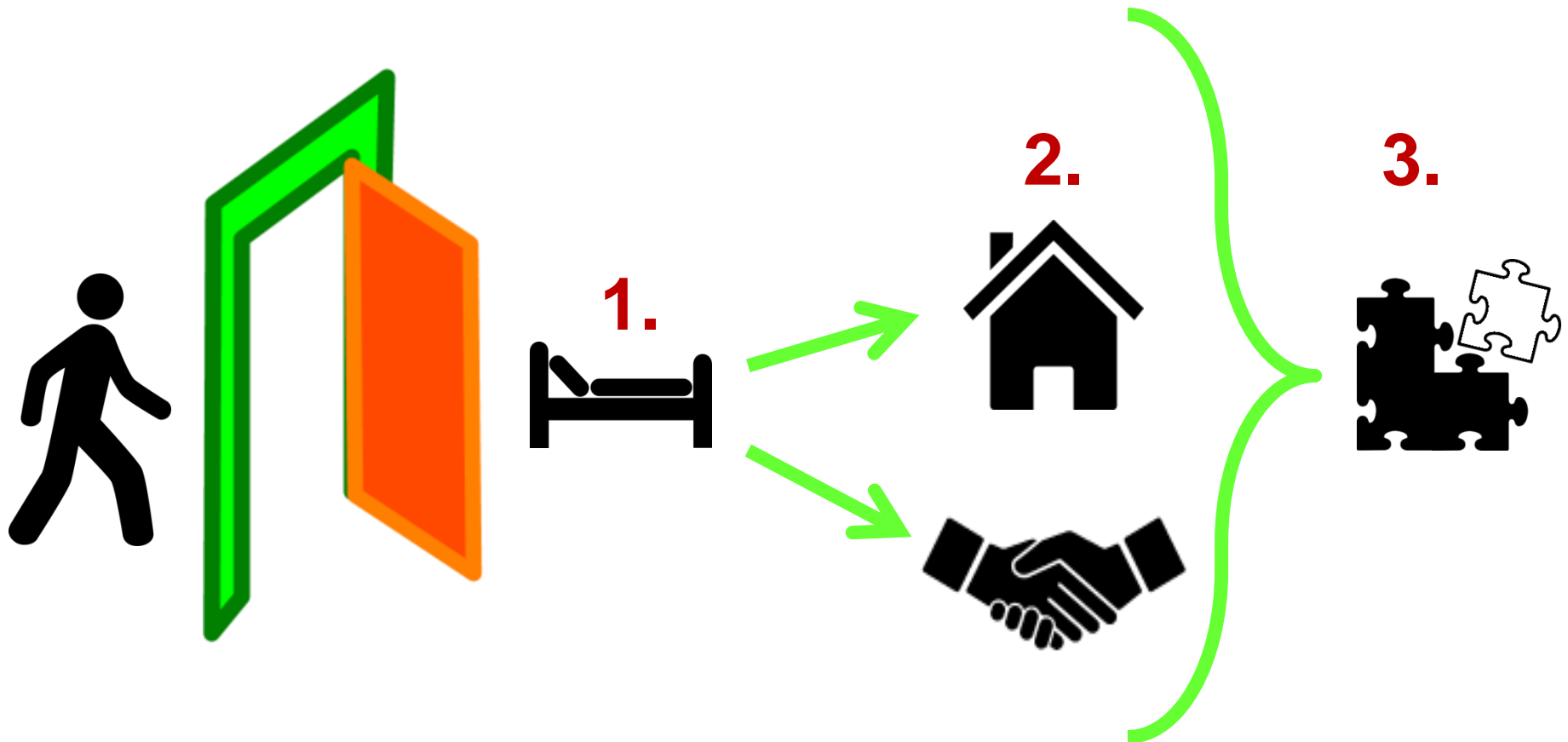
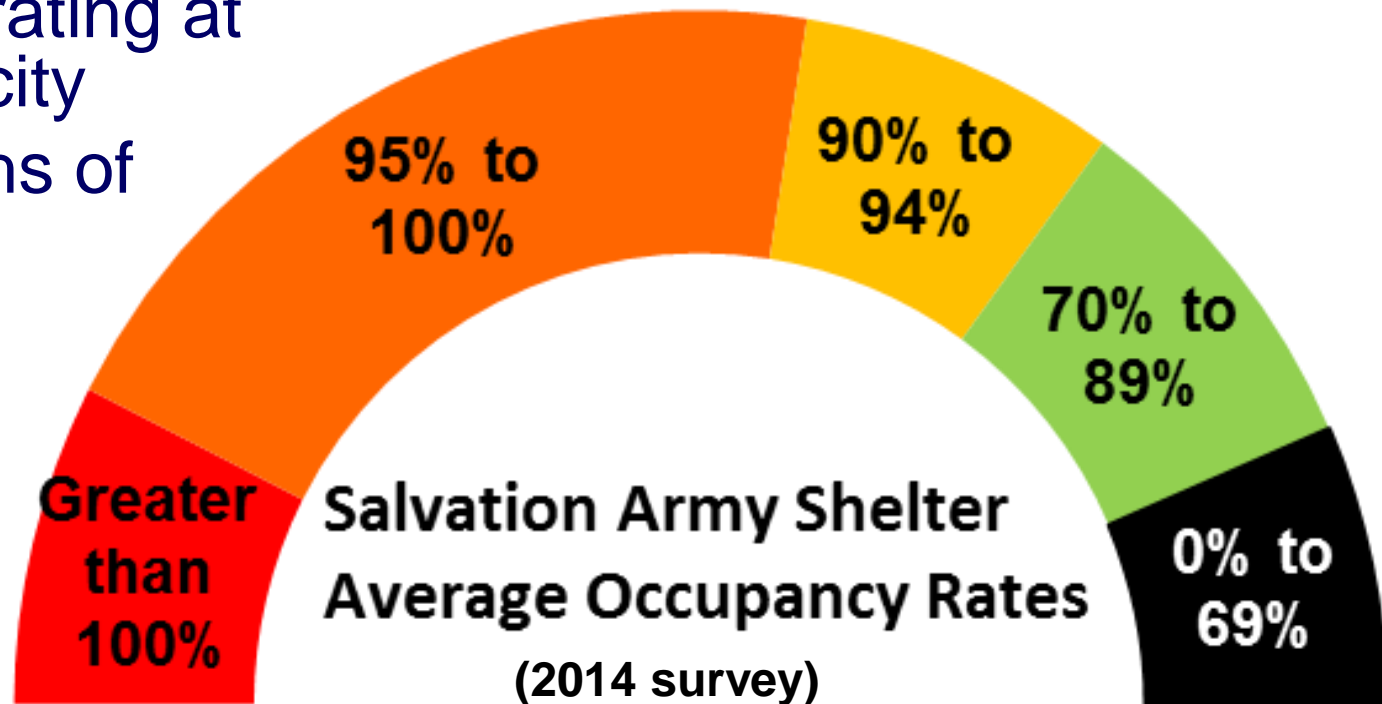# 1. We need to think about long-term, sustainable solutions – but we can't lose sight of immediate needs.

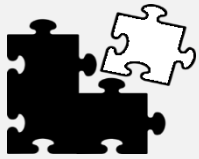Photo: John Bonnar

2. We need to ensure we take system factors into account when assessing the effectiveness of efforts to end homelessness.

- Gentrification → less affordable housing stock
- Rising rents, inadequate social assistance
- Long wait lists for social housing & supportive housing
- Increasing shelter use
- Shelters operating at or over capacity
- Longer lengths of stay
- Increasing requests of shelter staff (data, services, outcomes)

Greater than 100%
95% to 100%
90% to 94%
70% to 89%
0% to 69%

Salvation Army Shelter Average Occupancy Rates

(2014 survey)

3. Emergency shelters are a key component of any systems approach.

- The 7 Operating Principles are for some Salvation Army emergency shelters an affirmation of a path they are already on. For others, many changes will be needed.

- While there is significant variation in practice, the Operating Principles reflect the aspirations of TSA shelter staff – the 7 principles are the elements that staff identify as necessary to help clients move on from homelessness.

- The 7 Principles reflect a systems approach – ending homelessness requires all hands on deck.

Questions?

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Territorial Emergency Shelter Initiative

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APPENDIX

IMPLEMENTATION
To what degree are we doing this already? To what degree are we ready to move further in this direction?

IMPLEMENTATION?

- **Shelter Practices Survey & Consultations (2014):**
  - 53 Salvation Army shelters surveyed in May–June 2014; 100% response rate
  - Survey was administered <u>before</u> Operating Principles were created, so the shelter practices shared in the survey do not always line up with the shelter practices discussed in the Principles

- **Readiness Self-Assessment – Webinar Poll (2015):**
  - In April 2015, all Salvation Army shelters received a PDF of the Operating Principles and 48 participated in webinars. Following presentation of each principle, a poll was administered: "How ready is your shelter to …" implement each principle.

P1 Implementation?

We take a person-centred, holistic approach and ensure that people with particular vulnerabilities are supported.

Shelter Practices Survey & Consultations (2014):

– 91% of TSA emergency shelters offer casework services

- However, individualized attention is a challenge: in some shelters, there is 1 caseworker per 9 clients; in other shelters, there may be 1 caseworker per 60 clients or 80 clients.

Readiness Self-Assessment – Webinar Poll (2015):

- 28.5% said "We already do this – no change needed"
- 59% said "Some changes will be needed"
- 12.5% said "Neutral/not sure" (1.8%) or "Many changes" (10.7%).
- 0% said "We don't do this at all – Complete change needed"

P1

P2 Implementation?

Shelter Practices Survey & Consultations (2014):

– 83% of TSA emergency shelters provide one-on-one intensive support to people experiencing multiple barriers to finding housing (whether directly or through an external agency who comes into the shelter to offer this service)

- However, when asked about staff time and resources, half (49%) of survey respondents said they "primarily" focus their efforts on helping people who are "ready and motivated" to find housing.

Readiness Self-Assessment – Webinar Poll (2015):

– 43.1% said "We do this already – no changes needed"

– 46.5% said "Some changes will be needed"

– 10.3% said "Neutral/not sure" (1.7%) or "Many changes" (8.6%). 0% said "We do not do this at all – complete change needed"
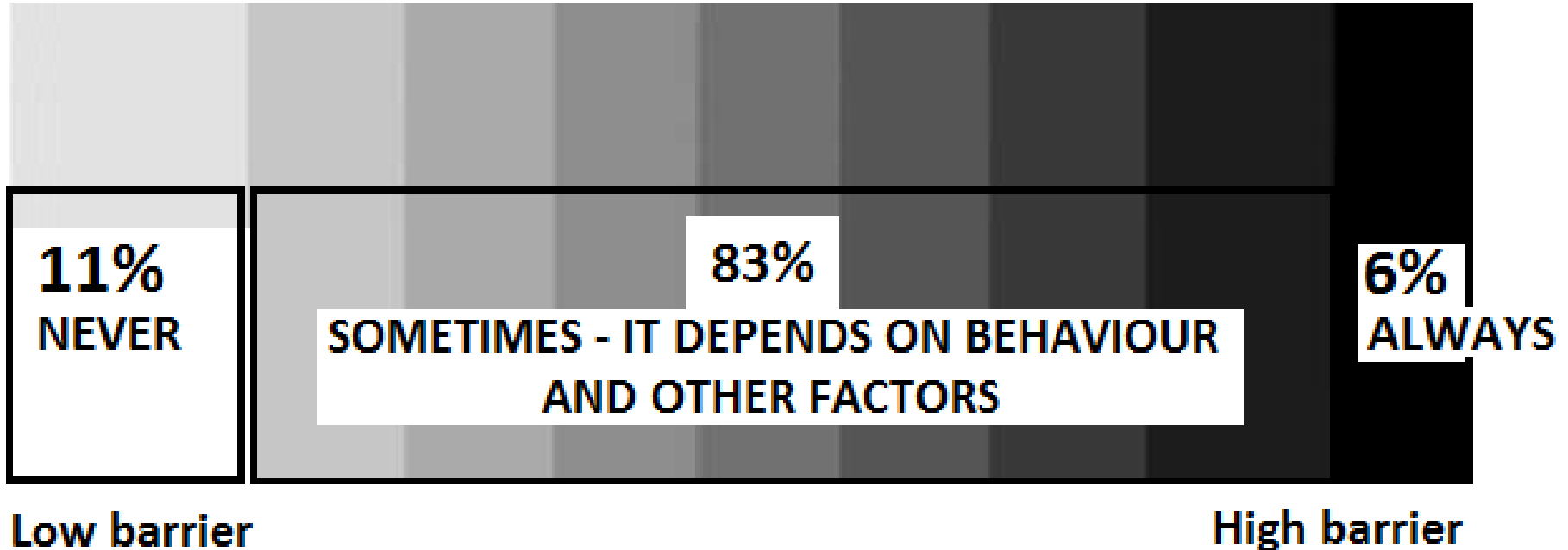
P2

P3 Implementation?

3 We use harm reduction principles to guide services to clients and behaviour-based criteria for restricting access to shelter.

Shelter Practices Survey & Consultations (2014):

When someone is under the influence, are they turned away / discharged?

| 11% NEVER | 83% SOMETIMES - IT DEPENDS ON BEHAVIOUR AND OTHER FACTORS | 6% ALWAYS |

Low barrier   High barrier

P3 Implementation?
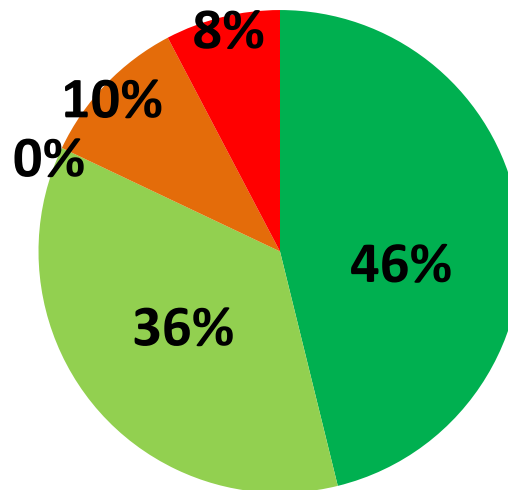
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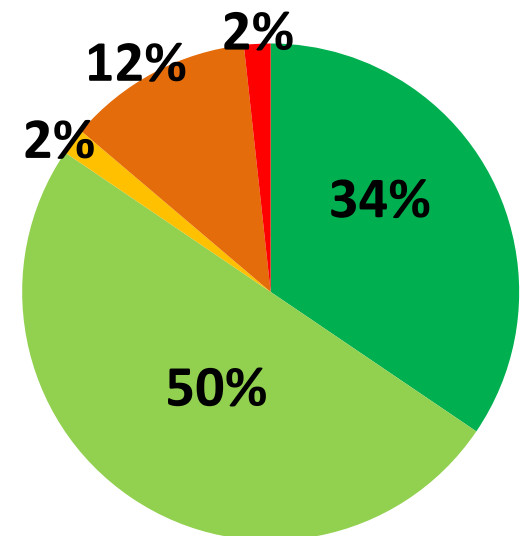
Readiness Self-Assessment – Webinar Poll (2015):

Use of Harm Reduction Principles

Legend:
- 5/5 We already do this – no change needed
- 4/5 Some changes will be needed
- 3/5 Not sure / neutral
- 2/5 Many changes will be needed
- 1/5 We do not do this at all – complete change needed

Use of Harm Reduction Principles pie chart: 46%, 36%, 0%, 10%, 8%

Use of Behaviour-based Criteria

Use of Behaviour-based Criteria pie chart: 34%, 50%, 2%, 12%, 2%

P4 Implementation?

4 We ensure people who have high needs receive accompaniment and follow-up services.

Shelter Practices Survey & Consultations (2014):

- **Accompaniment.** More than half of TSA shelters said they accompany clients to attend appointments (53%) or to view apartment units (55%):
  - 41.5% – service offered by Salvation Army shelter staff
  - 7.5% – service offered by staff of an external agency based in the shelter
  - 5.7% – service offered by both
- **Follow-up – phone. 68%** said their shelter follows up by phone:
  - 60% – service offered by Salvation Army shelter staff
  - 2% – serviced offered by staff of an external agency based in the shelter
  - 6% – service offered by both
- **Follow-up – in person. 49%** said their shelter follows up in person:
  - 37.7% – service offered by Salvation Army shelter staff
  - 5.6% – service offered by staff of an external agency based in the shelter
  - 5.6% – service offered by both

However, there is wide variation in the frequency of supports and the types of supports offered.

P4 Implementation?

4 We ensure people who have high needs receive accompaniment and follow-up services.

Readiness Self-Assessment – Webinar Poll (2015):

- 35.3% said "We do this already – no changes needed"
- 41.4% said "Some changes will be needed"
- 23.3% said "Neutral/not sure" (1.72%), "Many changes" (15.52%) and "We don't do this at all – complete change needed" (6.03%)

P4

P5 Implementation?

5 We aim to make every discharge from shelter an organized departure.

Shelter Practices Survey & Consultations (2014):

– 64% of TSA shelters collect information on the number of clients who are discharged from shelter into stable accommodations

– Challenges – client does not come back and outcome is unknown; client discharged for violence or threats; length of stay determined by funder

Readiness Self-Assessment – Webinar Poll (2015):

– 20% said "We do this already – no changes needed"

– 58% said "Some changes will be needed"

– 21.7% said "Neutral/not sure" (1.7%), "Many changes needed" (18.3%), or "We don't do this at all – complete change needed" (1.7%)

P5

P6 Implementation?

6 We coordinate services and participate in planning with community partners.

Shelter Practices Survey & Consultations (2014):

– Over 90% of TSA shelters reported that they coordinate with other service providers and participate in local planning

– 66% said external service providers in their shelter establish care relationships with clients that extend into the community after they are housed. (E.g. a physician, an addictions counsellor, etc.)

Readiness Self-Assessment – Webinar Poll (2015):

– 60.5% said "We do this already – no changes needed"

– 34.5% said "Some changes will be needed"

– 5% said "Neutral/not sure" (1.5%), "Many changes" (2.5%), and "We don't do this at all – complete change needed" (1%)

P6

P7 Implementation?

We track and analyze outcomes to inform planning and policy decisions and continuously improve services.

Shelter Practices Survey & Consultations (2014):

– Survey: over half of Salvation Army shelters reported that they are collecting data on these questions.

  • However, questions remain about how this data is analyzed and used. Consistency in data collection is an ongoing challenge – multiple funders, multiple definitions, multiple software and reporting systems.

Readiness Self-Assessment – Webinar Poll (2015):

– 38% said "We do this already – no changes needed"

– 49% said "Some changes will be needed"

– 0% said "Neutral / not sure"; 13% said "Many changes will be needed"; and 0% said "We don't do this at all – complete change needed."

P7