



Sandy Hill  
Community Health Centre  
Centre de santé communautaire  
Côte de sable

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# Harm Reduction in Housing First

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Intensive Case Management

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## Brief Overview:

- ICM program was created to support chronically homeless individuals with severe Substance Use disorders
- We are a Housing First program offering rental supplements in market rent units
- The rental supplements follow the client, not the unit.
- Our Intensive Case Management program allows 2 hours per week per client
- Currently we have 114 clients. 108 of which are currently housed

## Housing First Defined:

- “The Housing First Model was developed by Pathways to Housing to meet the housing and treatment needs of this chronically homeless population. The program is based on the belief that housing is a basic right and on a theoretical foundation that includes psychiatric rehabilitation and values consumer choice. ” 1

# Harm Reduction

- “Harm reduction is defined as an approach aimed at reducing the risks and harmful effects associated with substance use and addictive behaviours, for the person, the community and society as a whole, without requiring abstinence.”<sup>2</sup>

## Our presentation will demonstrate:

- Harm Reduction is client directed
- It looks different to everyone
- The goal is to reduce the harm without requiring abstinence
- It can be used in all domains of daily living
- People with severe substance use disorders can attain and maintain housing
- Harm Reduction should be available to anyone who is interested
- Any agency can implement a Harm Reduction approach
- Harm Reduction Works!!!

Questions?

Moving Forward...





The duration of our presentation will be used to discuss the harm reduction approach within the context of the housing first model

We have divided this topic into 4 categories:

- 1.Harm Reduction in the Housing Search Process
- 2.Harm Reduction at Move-In
- 3.Harm Reduction and Housing Retention
- 4.Harm Reduction in the event of Housing Loss/Eviction

# 1) Housing Search Process

We support clients in the housing search process, this can include;

- Searching for market rent apartments (with our clients)
- Providing first and last month's rent when required
- Tailoring the housing search to the needs of the clients
- We do not own any buildings or sub-lease any apartments

# 1) Housing Search Process

## Client Profile: Julie

- 38 year old female, diagnosed with Schizophrenia, PTSD and Depression (not medicated)
- Extensive history of trauma. Since the age of 12, heavily involved in Sex Work.
- Delusions, Hallucinations, disorganized speech and behaviors are often exasperated when Julie is exposed to new people or situations
- Homeless, or vulnerably housed, for the past 15 years

# 1) Housing Search Process

## Presenting Issue(s):

- Julie was accepted into our ICM program in May 2011
- By September 2011, she had lost “....any hope of ever finding an apartment of [her] own”. Julie expressed that “....[there is no point] looking anymore because everyone that sees me would never say yes I can live there...”
- She felt that severe mental health and addiction issues would keep her homeless for the rest of her life. Julie felt she needed “better odds of securing an apartment”

Intervention(s):

Outcomes(s):

## 2) At Move-In

We support clients with the move in process. This can include:

- Directing payment to Landlord/Utility Company
- Facilitate/pay for rental insurance
- Complete a unit inspection, document pre-existing damages
- Store an extra set of keys at our main office

## 2) At Move-In

### Client Profile: Don

- Male, mid 60s, diagnosis with Depression (unmedicated) and Traumatic Brain Injury
- Chronic Alcohol use, weekly Marijuana use, bi-weekly Crack Cocaine use
- Homeless for 21 years, living in Men's Shelters or a domiciliary
- Repeated head trauma and cognitive development deficits have impacted Don's short-term memory and ability to interpret and retain new information

## 2) At Move-In

### Presenting Issues:

- Don has been living in shelters for the past 21 years. His social skills were reflective of his lengthy social and economic marginalization
- Pre-existing, marginalized, behaviors created many issues for Don
- The transition from the shelter system to community based independent housing was overwhelming

Intervention(s):

Outcomes(s)

## 3) Housing Retention

We support clients in maintaining their housing. This can include:

- Working with landlords
- Funds for unit repair
- Support with bug/vermin infestation, and/or property damage
- Supporting with Landlord and Tenant Board issues
- Assisting with apartment takeovers
- Assessing/cleaning units if someone is in hospital/jail.



## 3) Housing Retention

### Client Profile: Chris

- Male, mid 40's, daily Intervenes Drug User, occasional crack user
- Had a stroke 4 years ago, permanent paralysis of left arm, mobility issues, walks with a cane
- Due to health history, he now has memory issues and difficulties completing Activities of Daily Living (ADL's)
- He has 2 guests living with him. Their behaviors have caused issues with his landlord

# 3) Housing Retention

## Presenting Issue(s):

- Chris has severe bed bug issues
- The landlord has been into his unit to take photos
- Chris is worried about eviction

## Intervention(s):

## Outcome(s):

## 4) Housing Loss/Eviction

We support client through the loss of their apartment, this can include:

- Helping obtain representation for LTB hearings
- Providing accurate information regarding the eviction process
- Support at the Landlord and Tenant Board
- Assist in new apartment search, prior to pending eviction date

## 4) Housing Loss/Eviction

### Client Profile: Ryan

- Male, Mid 30s, daily alcohol use
- Often consumes rubbing alcohol if he lacks appropriate funds for regular alcohol
- Has a history of violence and damaging his apartments
- History of depression, anxiety, and has violent nightmares. He does not take medication for any of these issues
- He has been evicted multiple times due to his substance use behaviors

## 4) Housing Loss/Eviction

### Presenting issue(s):

- Ryan was facing eviction and a hearing at the Landlord and Tenant Board due to interfering with the reasonable enjoyment of others and damaging property in the complex
- Ryan wanted to mediate an agreement with the Landlord in hopes of getting more time to conduct a new apartment search

Intervention(s):

Outcomes(s):

# Wrap Up

- Discussion and questions
- Ben and Christine's Mantra

## References:

1. S, Gulcur L, Nakae M. (2004). American Journal of Public Health. *Housing First, Consumer Choice, and Harm Reduction for Homeless Individuals With a Dual Diagnosis*. AM J Public Health. 2004 April; 94 (4): 651-656
2. Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Socio-economic Series. *Harm Reduction: Stable Housing for Homeless People with Substance Use Issues*. 2005 September; 05-027.

# Additional Resources

<http://www.homelesshub.ca/costofhomelessness>

<http://www.champlainhin.on.ca/>

<http://ottawa.cmha.ca/programs-and-services/community-support/>

<https://pathwaystohousing.org/>

<https://www.shchc.ca/programs/oasis>