

The Home for Good program evaluation: A policy and research collaboration to assess and improve supportive housing during the COVID-19 pandemic

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to acknowledge the sacred land on which MAP and Unity Health Toronto operate. It has been a site of human activity for 15,000 years. This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. The territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Today, the meeting place of Toronto is still the home of many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island, and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in the community, on this territory. We are also mindful of broken covenants and the need to strive to make right with all our relations.

TEAM AND FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Houselink and Mainstay Community Housing (HLMS) – formerly Mainstay Housing

Mainstay staff time - **In-kind support**

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AGENDA

1. Background
2. Partnership Context: Research Collaboration
3. Home for Good Program At HLMS
4. Evaluation Methods
5. Study Findings and Key Takeaways
6. Next Steps for HLMS

BACKGROUND

- This project is an evaluation of the Home for Good (HFG) program at **Houselink and Mainstay Community Housing (HLMS) – formerly Mainstay Housing**
- The evaluation study was carried out by researchers at MAP Centre for Urban Health Solutions at St. Michael's Hospital, in collaboration with Houselink and Mainstay Community Housing (HLMS)
- Evaluation is approved by St. Michael's Hospital Research Ethic Board
- All participants consented to be part of the evaluation study

PARTNERSHIP CONTEXT

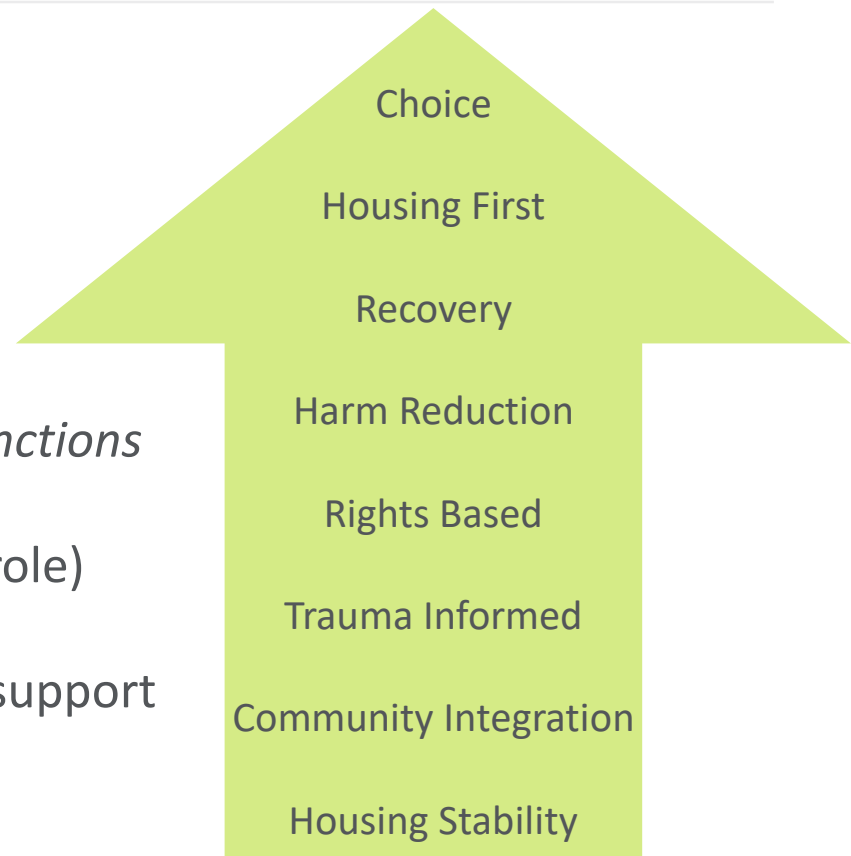
- 1. Limited research on successful supportive housing models**
- 2. Shared interest on new or improved housing models in the City of Toronto**
- 3. Opportunity for mutual learning:**
 - How does supportive Housing function?
 - Interest in exploring ways to assess housing program outcomes
 - Understanding the process of housing transitions for people moving into private market housing

PARTNERSHIP CONTEXT CONT'D



HOME FOR GOOD PROGRAM

- **Provincially funded program since 2018**
- Provide Permanent Affordable Housing
- Place-based support (on-site)
- Step up: Intense support (staff *provides functions* of case management and housing worker role)
- Step down: Connect tenants to moderate support



HOME FOR GOOD AT HLMS

Aim: Provide Permanent Affordable Housing

“The last 10, 15 years of my life have been basically a rollercoaster, I had some addiction issues and issues like depression”



“I was homeless for the last ten years of my life and I've had a really, really rough time as a young man living in the city, securing stable housing, spent a lot of time on the streets, a lot of time going to different drop-in around the city, spent a lot of the times within shelters.”

PARTNERSHIP TIMELINE

Partnership Initiation 2018

- Gap Identification

Study Initiation -2019

- Co-creating evaluation study design/research questions

REB 2020

- Developing Research Protocol process/ **Addition of COVID-19 - Context**

Study preparation

- Creating data sharing agreement/collaboration agreement

Study Implementation 2021

- Data Collection: Quantitative, Qualitative, and administrative data linkage

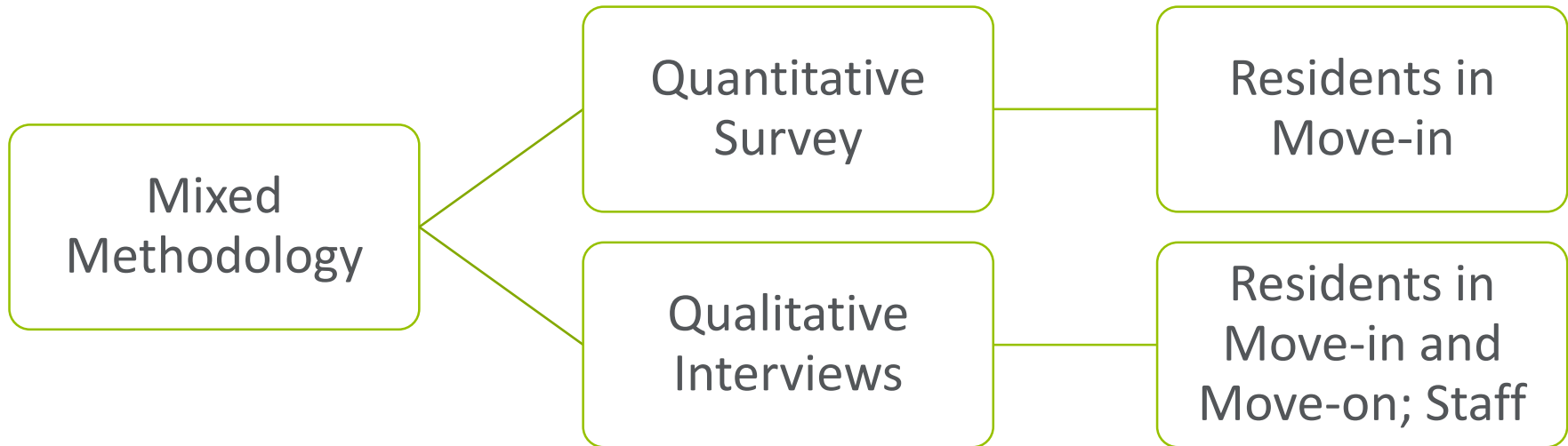
Reporting/Knowledge sharing/ publication

- Community presentation, Community report, academic publications

COVID-19 CHANGES AND ADAPTATION

Early phase of COVID-19 (March-April 2020)	HFG program in-person community activities were put on hold Implementation of public health measures with staff on-site Increased staff turn over Study activities pivoted from in-person to virtual
COVID-19-Adaptation	On-site staff to assist tenants to access remote services (distribution of phones/internet access) Office modifications and common area: new counseling room spaces with Plexiglas/New staff room; PPE distribution, enhanced on-site cleaning measures and hand hygiene stations Increased food distribution (groceries and warm meal). Community walk-in meal and coffee program Move-In component reopened to housing during the COVID-19 Move-on component put on hold, then completely pause due to funding
Outcomes	Avoided COVID-19 outbreak within the program building Conducted the evaluation study within COVID-19 context with the support of HLMS on-site staff

HOME FOR GOOD: EVALUATION RESEARCH



DATA COLLECTION

- **Housing workers:** 1 focus group interview with 5 staff
- **Move-In component:** 12 tenants completed both quantitative and qualitative interviews
- **Move-On:** 10 qualitative interviews completed with tenants in private market housing
- **For those left in transition:** 11 qualitative interviews

(NB: Interviews were conducted by a peer-researcher and members of the research team. All research activities were carried out remotely using ZOOM. A room was set up with a laptop at the program building to facilitate data collection. Program tenants and staff were compensated.)

MAIN RESULTS: COVID-19

“I've been having some issues with mental health lately and I'm just worried I'm going to end up just sitting and waiting to die and then it's just depressing so and I wouldn't mind some help.”



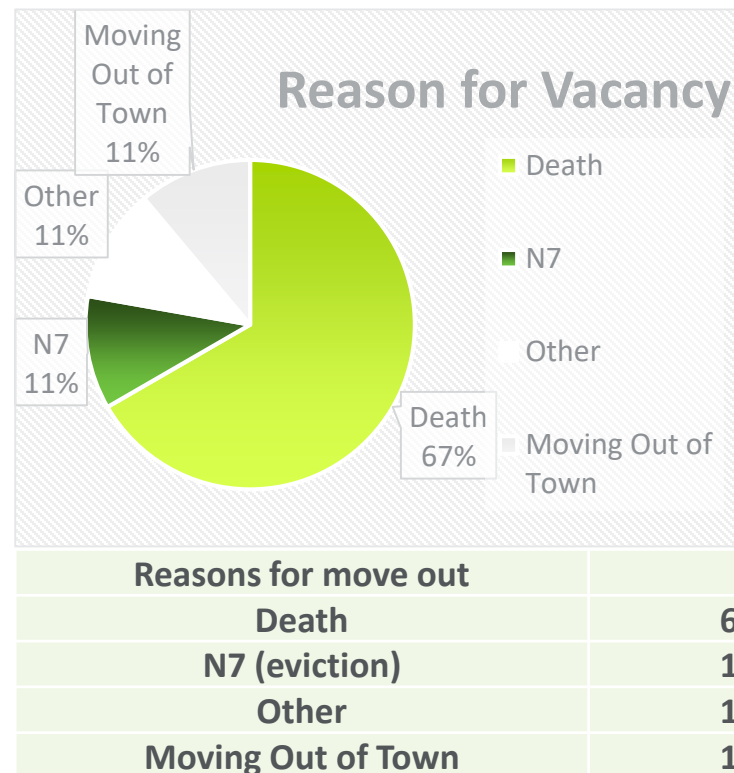
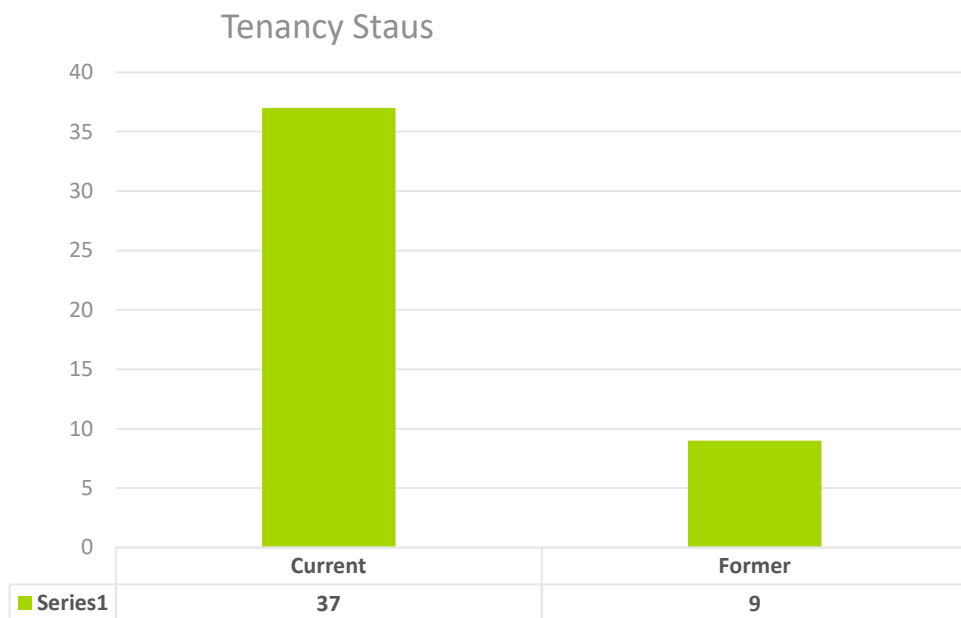
“..during COVID yeah, when you hear them say stay home as much as possible I can and I don't have to have anybody in my place whereas remember in the shelter I was in a room full of five women. this definitely is you know, yeah, like I'm thankful. Very Thankful”

“I definitely have been a lot more isolated [during the pandemic]. I really interact with less people. Of course, spending more time inside.”

“We've had a lot of deaths which is really hard because I've never, I've never experienced so much passing away.”

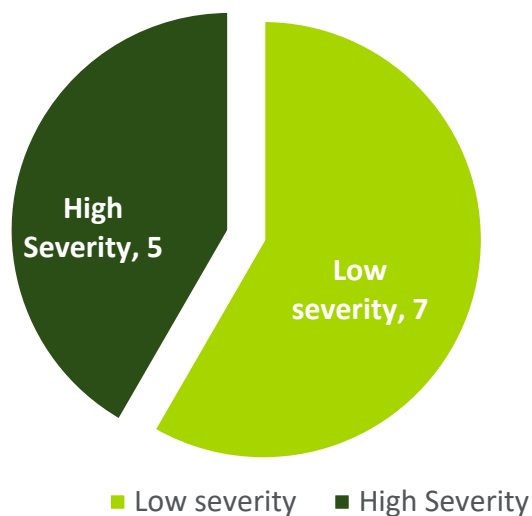
HFG: MOVE-IN COMPONENT OUTCOMES

- 46 out 60 (or 76.7%) individuals housed

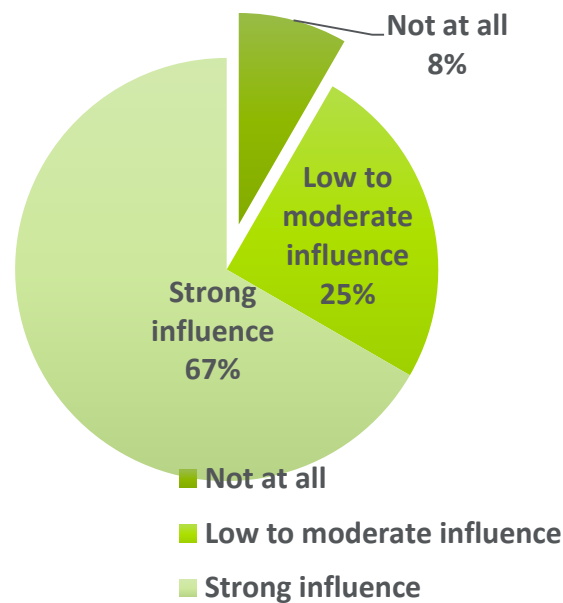


COVID-19 AND MENTAL HEALTH SYMPTOMS

Mental health: Colorado Symptoms Index

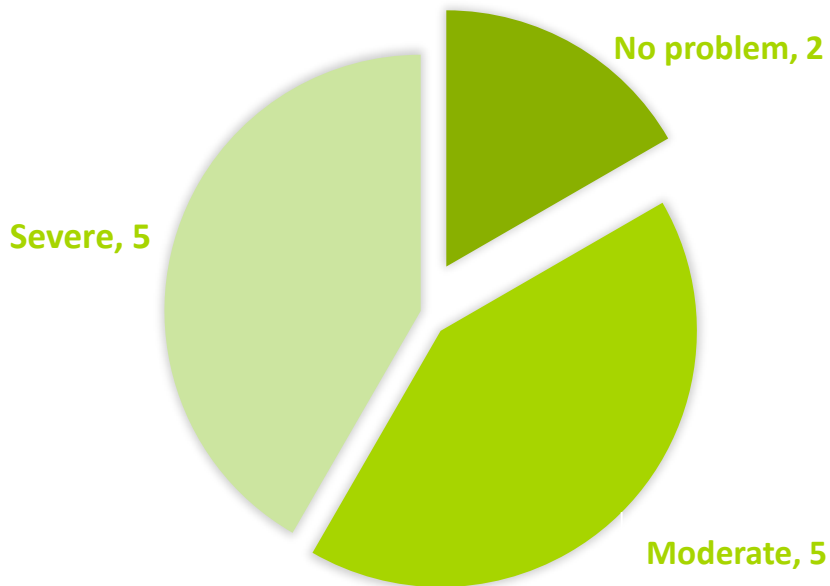


COVID-19 worsened or deteriorated your mental health conditions

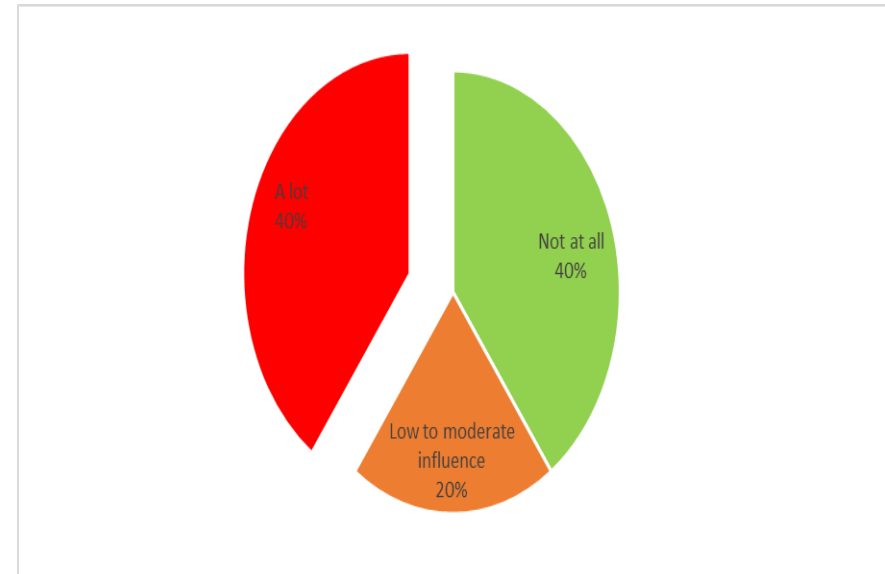


ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE AND COVID-19

Alcohol and Drug Use (GAIN-Short Screener)

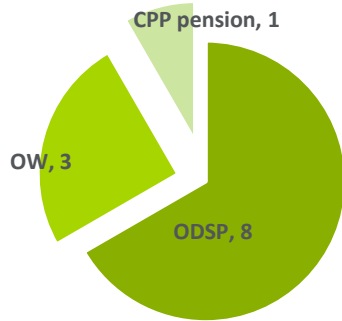


FCOVID-19 worsened or increased your alcohol or drug problems over the last 3 month



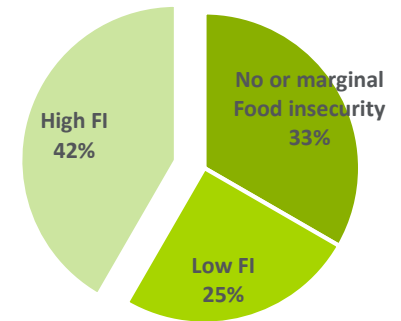
Income and Food insecurity

Income source



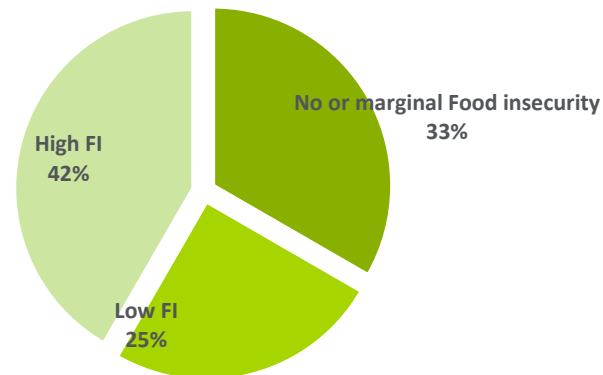
- In 2020, ODSP and OW \$14,028 or \$8,796 per year for a single person, respectively.
- Poverty line of \$20,057 per year for a single person

Food insecurity



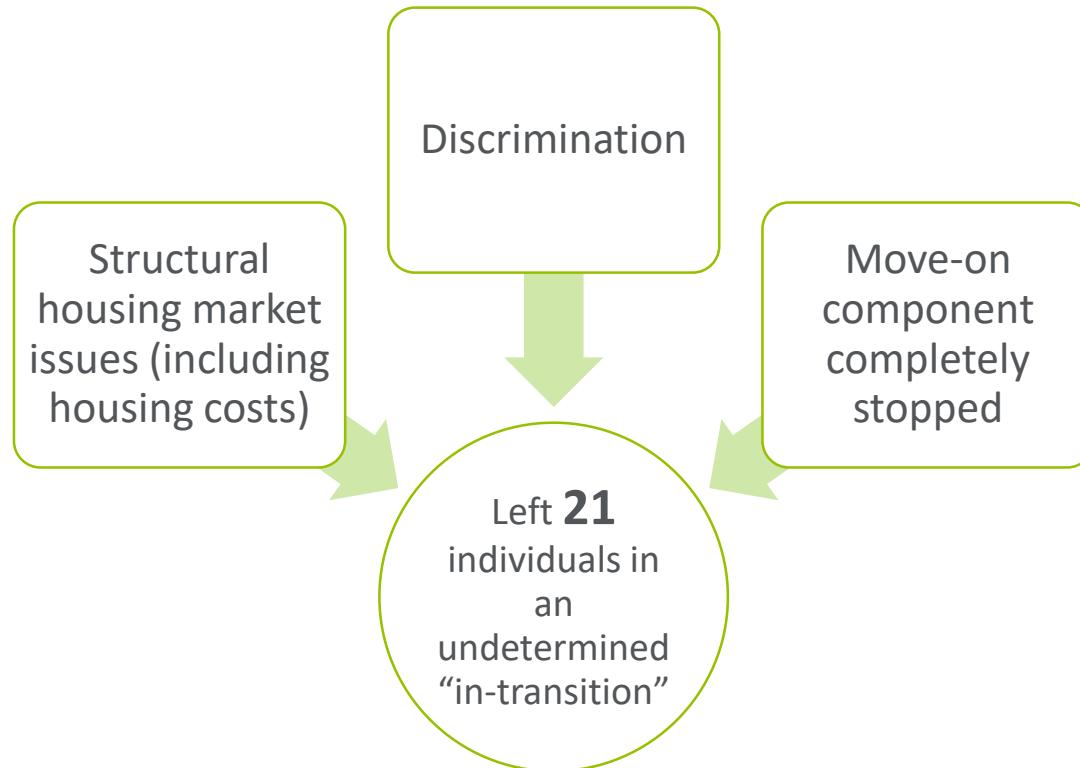
COVID-19

COVID-19 worsened or deteriorated your general food security status



HFG: MOVE-ON COMPONENT OUTCOMES

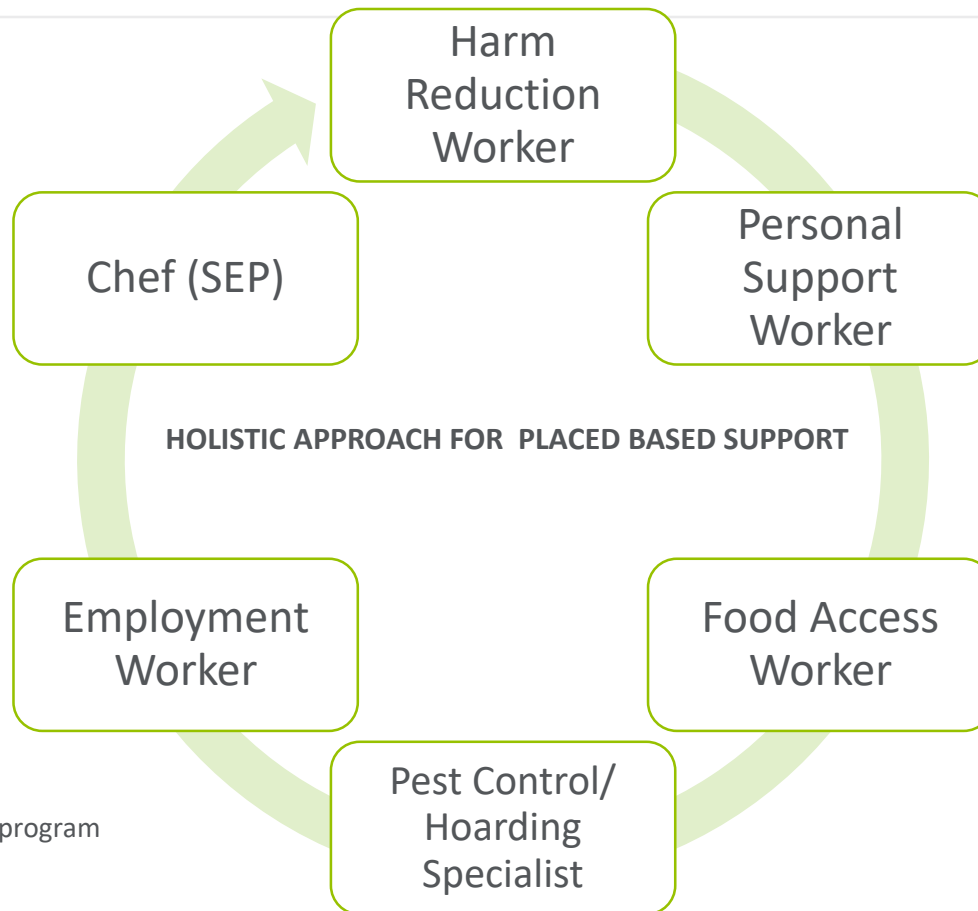
11 individuals moved to private market housing



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Housing is an important step, but remains a complex process:
- Moving to housing: Tenants expressed fear, anxiety, joy and being blessed or thankful;
- During the **COVID-19 pandemic**, single-unit housing helped participants adhere to public health measures
- Infestations and personal safety remained an issue and a risk factor for both mental and physical health;
- Most individuals that remained in the **“in-transition”** expressed their frustration and felt abandoned in the middle of the process;
- **Move-On:** The process of moving into private market housing was long and difficult, but tenants were happy to have a more independent life. They also reported new challenges such as increased cost of living.

NEXT STEPS FOR HLMS: ON-SITE SERVICES



(SEP) Supportive employment program

- Groceries were delivered
- Warm meals were delivered (5N2 and food bank)
- Starting commercial kitchen within the building
- Learning about health concerns and malnutrition with UofT



- Partnership with ALC housing provider to support clients within the building
- Community Health Centres – connection to primary care services and programs
- Looking to bring mobile health services

- Onsite programming - walking, coffee group
- Dying Alone – research application submitted
- Laptop available at site to facilitate virtual appointments (Wi-Fi at site)

- Pest control blitz
- Safety - Improved control access
- Cleanliness - more staff
- Tenant rights education - CERA

NEXT STEPS FOR HLMS: SERVICE ADVOCACY

1. Raising awareness about the challenges to house individuals in private housing market
 - Increased calls for supportive housing units
 - Offering education for private market landlords
2. Tenants expressed the need for placed-based support
 - Advocacy to increase mixed-income housing with supports
3. Food insecurity issues
 - Advocating to raise ODSP/OW basic income and shelter allowance
4. Engaging in community-based research to build evidence that will drive effective public policies on supportive housing
 - Issues around dying alone



THANK YOU!!

Read the full report [here](#).

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