

Regional Forum on Housing First Best Practices: World Café Dialogue

October 15, 2015

Question 1: What supports are needed to foster a collaborative effort between agencies, community, and government, to end homelessness to adopt a community-wide Housing First approach?

Participants were asked to identify three top priorities from their discussions, which included:

- Information sharing about specific clients
- Communication and relationship building between agencies
- Shared outcomes
- Education and creating a climate of inclusiveness
- Diversity of Services that are client centred
- Networking and collaboration between stakeholders
- Creating a culture of inclusion
- Taking services to the people
- Key- contact people identified for fast-track processes
- Coordinated intake programming

Other dialogue comments pertaining to Question 1 are:

- Ensuring the key point person has resources or information about resources
- Trust building with someone who is passionate
- Policy changes or flexibility
- Fast-track policies which work
- Get priority needs streamlined
- Intentional meetings between service providers and the people on the street

Question 2: What will it take to promote a culture of inclusiveness and respect for those currently experiencing homelessness?

Participants were asked to identify three top priorities from their discussions, which included:

- Reducing judgement
- Understanding needs of all parties
- Advocacy- knowing what to share?
- Public education: demystifying myths, understanding mental health is not a choice
- Promoting social responsibility: community, schools
- Integration of social programs into the community: shelters in community centres and multi-income residences
- Create a culture of inclusiveness and respect
- Being open to using models that have already worked
- Education and continued exposure “Bring it home”

Question 3: How do you see yourself/your organization participating in a Housing First approach/contributing to an end to homelessness?

Participants were asked to identify three top priorities from their discussions, which included:

- Peers engaging to support referral
- Collaborative services to increase access to funding
- Reference to all age groups
- Wrap around supports (social and professional)
- Cultural sensitivity
- Meeting basic needs
- Landlord relationships: building and development
- Skills to stay housed after programs end

Question 4: What would engage more people in working toward an end to homelessness?

- Incentives: more programs, economic benefits
- Having a plan: communicating success stories (gives hope)
- Demystify bias
- Relationship building between all parties: police, health, business, service providers
- Need to see observable results
- Educate in reference to stigma, bias, diversity of circumstances (not them versus us)
- Need client personal integration (self-determination- A Plan)
- Educate the public: de-mystifies, tell the positive stories, work beyond binaries
- Community problem, community involvement, shared ownership

Question 5: What will it take to align current homelessness efforts with a city-wide, Housing First approach?

- Using City as a Liaison to mediate between the most powerful landlords in Abbotsford and services
- Creation of approved landlords willing to rent to the homeless population: connected to the City, policy creation, and real estate communication
- Prevention strategies: stigma reduction, education, schools, increased care model, changing the language-harm reduction vs. stigma reduction
- On-going support for landlord and client: relationship building, advocacy, establishing expectations
- Compensation/Incentive for landlord: tenancy agreements, responsibility
- How do we communicate/educate landlords on client needs? Education, wrap-around support approach, mediate, advocate
- How do we bring people in carrying their “social networks and friends” with them?
- Lack of housing
- What is the best protocol with the landlords?

- HIFIS database: HPS workers have access
- Inventory of housing and services available
- A single system with multiple access for entry
- More money: possible \$11 tax per house per year
- Common agreement on definitions
- City councilors getting involved
- Building support with community for Housing First
- Recruiting landlords: 1) Through education to reduce barriers with criminality from mental health and/or addictions and 2) Assurance of monthly income and the protection of property
- Support of clients with a HUB approach
- Affordable housing: 1) low cost affordability and 2) income
- Tax deduction for low cost housing for landlords with respect to property taxes
- 24 hour/7 day support for landlords and tenants
- Transitional housing supply
- Educate City Council and general public in all communities about Housing First
- Get agencies to work together
- Support workers to secure and maintain housing
- Education for landlords
- Communication plan for building empathy in the community
- Include the homeless and compensate for their participation

Question 6:

1. **What supports are needed to foster a collaborative effort between agencies, community, and government, to end youth homelessness?**
2. **What will it take to promote a culture of inclusiveness and respect for youth who are homeless?**
3. **What would engage more people in working toward an end to youth homelessness?**

- Need as many supports as adults in housing, need choices and options
- Housing options are required: transitional housing, group homes, Housing First, and wrap-around support
- Needs are the same as adults, but the response is different
- Youth homelessness is more hidden which creates different barriers for housing
- Shelters are “temporary supportive housing” for youth
- The need for connecting regions for services, information and support
- A lot more opportunity for change with youth
- Look at identified needs and create goals, short-term steps, and support to find housing
- Look at other options for funding: youth agreement with social worker
- Collaborate with services (e.g. RCMP, social workers, hospital, reconnect workers)
- Different barriers to housing for youth that needs to be identified
- Supports of mentorship, for aging-out youth

- Using a tool to assess the risk of the youth for housing
- Every step of the way there are barriers for housing
- Youth agreement with Ministry of Children and Family Development is a barrier for housing
- Rules, social workers, goals can be
- Let youth identify their own goals, have their own voice, have their own choice