



ENDING HOMELESSNESS

YEAR ONE REPORT CARD

2015 - 2016

GRANDE PRAIRIE'S FIVE YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS 2015-2019



Message from the Community Advisory Board on Homelessness (CABH) Chair

"Ending homelessness is a daunting task. We are pleased to have made strides towards that end in our city. By creating great processes, responding to our experiences and learning from them and with tremendous cooperation by agencies, government and landlords, we are indeed changing lives!"

– Angie Peters



Table of Contents

- 1 Provincial Outcomes
- 2 Accomplishments and Activities in Year 1
- 4 Priorities for Year 2-5
- 5 Housing First Networks/Partnerships & Funders

Housing First Philosophy

"Housing First" is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centers on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional supports and services as needed.

City of Grande Prairie Homeless Initiatives

The City of Grande Prairie Homeless Initiatives partners with local agencies to administer the Housing First Philosophy.

The Homeless Initiatives team consists of the following:

- Homeless Initiatives Supervisor
- Housing First Specialist
- Research & Evaluation Analyst
- Community Housing Coordinator
- ETO Data Specialist & Housing Support Fund Administrator
- Administrative Assistant

Year 1 Provincial Outcomes 2015-16

Alberta's 7 largest cities work together to track, compare and learn from our achievements in four key Housing First outcome areas. In 2015-16, Grande Prairie accomplished the following:

Outcome 1: Those housed through the program will remain stably housed

What we did:

April 1, 2015-March 31, 2016:

- 210 people were housed (923 since 2009)
- 13 participants successfully completed the program
- 93% of participants were able to maintain their housing (80% since 2009)

Outcome 2: Those housed in the program will show a reduction in inappropriate use of health and justice systems

What we saw reductions of:

- 79% in days incarcerated
- 47% in court appearances
- 12% in Emergency Room visits
- 52% in days in hospital
- 16% in police incidents
- An increase of 8% in EMS interactions

Outcome 3: Those housed in the program will demonstrate improved self-sufficiency, via stable income

What we worked on:

- 66% increase in participants connected to income from Alberta Works and/or AISH, 50% increase in connections with a Pension and 11% increase in full-time employment.
- 76% and 82% reduction in the number of participants with no income or on Employment Insurance (EI).

Outcome 4: Those in the program will demonstrate engagement in mainstream services

What we started:

Within three months of participants beginning the Housing First program:

- 45 received a new diagnosis for a physical health issue and 58 participated in active health treatment
- 23 received a new diagnosis for a mental health issue and 31 participated in active mental health treatment
- 12 participated in treatment for addictions
- 48 were connected to counseling
- 48 were connected to a non-hospital health service
- 37 were connected to financial services
- Federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy
- 67 Individuals received Housing Loss Prevention support



Grande Prairie's 5 Year Plan to End Homelessness - Accomplishments in Year 1

The City of Grande Prairie Homeless Initiatives has organized its efforts to end homelessness into four main goal areas, outlined in our Five Year Plan to End Homelessness: 2015-19. Progress has been made in all four goal areas.

1. Increased Infrastructure

What we've done:

A Designated Unit Pilot has been in development, with plans to begin and evaluate in Summer and Fall 2016. Designated Units are housing units secured through a legal partnership with the landlord, increasing the amount of housing stock in Grande Prairie available to Housing First participants and decreasing program costs related to move-in and move-out.

Landlords and Property Managers have an increased understanding of housing needs:

- 20% of Housing First landlords attended conversation cafes where they could network with Housing First staff
- 100% of Housing First landlords have attended orientation to the Housing First program
- 10 new landlords became part of Housing First's network, bringing the total number of landlords to 40
- 42% of Housing First staff noticed that landlords in the Housing First program were more engaged in the past 12 months

A Transitional Supportive Housing Pilot for individuals with complex needs began at Rotary House in February 2016. Participants live in affordable suites supported by staff for 16 hours per day. This project is the result of collaboration between Alberta Health Services, Homeless Initiatives, Rotary House, HIV North and Canadian Mental Health Association.

A Youth Needs Assessment Survey was completed identifying housing and support gaps specific to youth including a need for hands-on, youth-centered support for navigating systems, mental health, substance abuse and gaining housing.

A Youth Navigator based at Sunrise House Youth Emergency Shelter has been supporting youth in areas identified by the Youth Survey, including housing, since January 2016.

A Street Outreach Team based at HIV North Society has been working since September 2015 to support individuals experiencing homelessness. This team also provides after-hours and supplemental support to Housing First program participants.



2. Strong, Cohesive and Integrated Community Partnerships

What we've done

City of Grande Prairie's Mayor Bill Given has **become a member** of the Community Advisory Board on Homelessness.

A community-based group has formed to understand the link between discharge from facilities/institutions and homelessness, and advocate for a **comprehensive discharge planning system**. Discharge is a significant source of flow into homelessness in Grande Prairie.

Based on Housing First program data, we know that in the 12 months prior to housing:

- 17% of Housing First participants were discharged from a health facility
- 16% were discharged from an addictions treatment facility
- 13% were discharged from a correctional facility
- 41% were staying at an emergency shelter

An **ID Program** was created through consultation between Housing First and Alberta Health Services staff. This program assists individuals experiencing homelessness to obtain and store identification.

3. Strengthened Community Resources

What we've done

A Survey with Housing First Agencies was completed, identifying areas of success as well as areas for **improvement within the Homeless Initiatives** team. The Homeless Initiatives learned that Housing First staff feel supported when working to make improvements to the program. Staff also feel comfortable sharing concerns and issues with other Housing First agencies and noticed an increase in the level of collaboration between Housing First agencies in the past 12 months as a result of Homeless Initiatives efforts. This survey will be completed annually.

A **Housing First Specialist** was added to the Homeless Initiatives Team to support Housing First agency staff, provide training and implement standards of practice. To date, all Housing First case managers and team leads have received up-to-date training in Intro to Housing First, Case Management and Case Notes/Documentation. All agencies have also received in-depth feedback on a review of their case management and goal-setting practices.

A **Research & Evaluation Analyst** was added to the Homeless Initiatives Team to establish consistent data management practices and explore and support different areas of the Housing First program. This includes systematically gathering agency, community and participant feedback on a regular basis.

Winter Programs were available at Rotary House, the Grande Prairie Friendship Centre and the Saint Lawrence Centre between October 2015 and April 2016.

- 6570 visits were made to winter drop-in programs at all three locations
- 13 individuals at Saint Lawrence Centre and 31 at the Grande Prairie Friendship Centre were connected to Housing First
- 65 fresh food hampers were provided to 52 people by the Grande Prairie Friendship Centre, supporting a total of 297 people (family/dependents/couch surfers)

4. Awareness & Engagement

Local Media have become more aware of homelessness as a social issue in the past year. Public awareness has also increased.

- 68% of Housing First staff feel that the media has become more aware of homelessness as a social issue in the past year and 58% feel that community members/agencies are more aware
- 9 stories about Grande Prairie's Housing and Homeless Supports were featured in 2015-16 in the Daily Herald Tribune, informing the public about Housing First philosophy, local agencies and more

Engaging with individuals who are homeless:

- 4 people who were currently homeless participated as key informants for an evaluation of Grande Prairie's Winter Response programming, providing valuable insight and feedback that will inform future program decisions
- 23 individuals using the Rotary House Mat/Intox winter warming centre completed a survey on best practices for drop-ins. Respondents told us that they were able to build trusting relationships with staff, participate in meaningful activities and get guidance when needed. They also told us that Rotary House was a safe place to go

Priorities for Year 2 - 5

Increased Infrastructure

Evaluate, improve and build the **Designated Unit Pilot** and the **Transitional Housing Pilot**.

Support service providers to establish **Congregate, 24 Hour Permanent Supportive Housing**.

Continue to build support and housing options for youth, families, women fleeing domestic violence and individuals discharged from facilities/institutions.

Advocate with City Council for development policies that require at least 10% of new developments to contain affordable and social housing.

Educate City planners on housing needs, including increased stock and units for families.

Assess Aboriginal Housing needs.

Community Partnerships

Support Individuals navigating mental health, justice and addiction through partnerships with Alberta Health Services and Alberta Justice.

Create an Integrated Team of Professionals to support individuals with complex needs, in addition to the current Chronic High Needs Committee.

Collaborate with the RCMP with a common goal of supporting Housing First participants and individuals experiencing homelessness.

Increase Aboriginal Involvement in service provision, including recruitment of Aboriginal staff to Housing First teams and investment in cultural teachings for Housing First teams.



Strengthened Community Resources

Increase opportunities for individuals using the **Intox/Mat program** and **drop-in programs** to connect with **Housing First**.

Collaborate with and provide education about Housing First for **drop-in and shelter staff**.

Create a robust **evening support program** for Housing First participants.

Build agency capacity by following up on evaluation findings; continue to evaluate program performance and collaboration.

Evaluate and assess the feasibility of a **rent bank** for Grande Prairie.

Awareness & Engagement

Distribute regular **social media updates**, **press releases** and **community newsletters**.

Complete a **Point-in-Time Count** of individuals experiencing homelessness in October 2016.

Plan a **Housing Conference** for Grande Prairie that engages community members and Housing First participants.

Develop a system for obtaining **feedback from Housing First participants** on program and housing satisfaction.

Housing First Networks & Funded Partners

Accredited Supportive Living Services - Permanent Supportive Housing, Prevention and Diversion & Intensive Case Management
Canadian Mental Health Association - Intensive Case Management
Centerpoint Facilitation Inc. - Rapid Rehousing
YMCA of Northern Alberta – Centralized Triage, Permanent Supportive Housing & Prevention and Diversion
HIV North Society - Street Outreach Team
Sunrise House Youth Emergency Shelter - Youth Navigator
Rotary House – Transitional Supportive Housing Pilot;
Winter Programming
Grande Prairie Friendship Centre - Winter Programming
Saint Lawrence Centre - Winter Programming
Community Advisory Board on Homelessness
7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness

Funders

Government of Canada – Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS)
www.edsc.gc.ca/eng/communities/homelessness/index.shtml
Government of Alberta – Outreach Support Service Initiative (OSSI)
www.humanservices.alberta.ca/homelessness/16050.html
City of Grande Prairie
www.cityofgp.com





HOMELESSNESS IS NOT WHO YOU ARE; IT'S WHERE YOU ARE.