

# RAPID RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS

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## SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

## PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

October 2017  
1<sup>st</sup> Edition



## A. INTRODUCTION

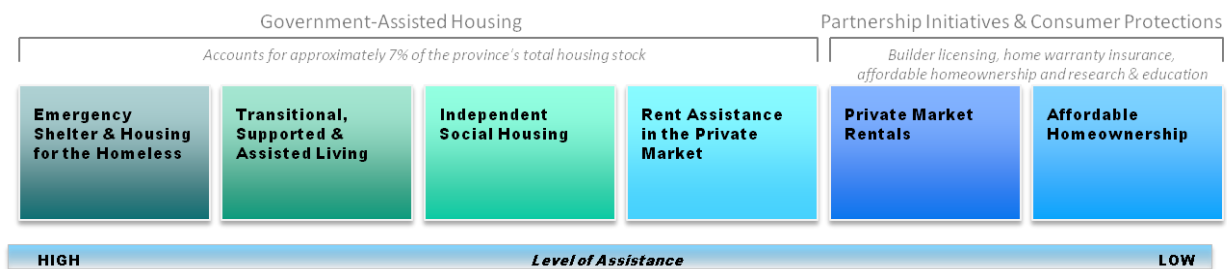
In 2017, the Province of British Columbia announced the Rapid Response to Homelessness (RRH) as an immediate response to the growing issue of homelessness across the province. Partnering with non-profit organizations, government authorities and community groups, BC Housing will create new housing units with support services for individuals who are experiencing Homelessness or are At Risk of Homelessness.

RRH is an innovative housing solution that provides an immediate housing option and necessary support services for vulnerable individuals, utilizing construction techniques such as modular design to expedite production and rapidly create new, provincially-owned housing units. Modular units will be deployed on land made available by program partners, and can potentially be relocated to future sites as needed. Property management and support services will be delivered by non-profit partners.

RRH responds to the challenge of homelessness by providing Residents with a safe place to live and access to necessary support services. RRH is part of a suite of programs along the housing continuum (Figure 1)<sup>1</sup>.

This framework outlines key program elements and defines the roles and responsibilities of BC Housing and its partners in the delivery and management of the program.

**Figure 1: Housing Continuum**



## B. PRINCIPLES

**Affordable housing is established in communities with demonstrated need**

**Housing and supports are accessible and Resident focused**

- Housing and supports are accessible to all eligible Residents, regardless of ethno-cultural background, religious beliefs, disability, mental health status, gender identity or sexual orientation. A range of services will be available to ensure access for a diverse population.
- Operators will be aware of the nature, dynamics and impact of violence against women and work to create a safe and secure environment.
- Operators will engage with Residents to assist them in identifying and pursuing their personal and housing goals. This includes providing resources and information to Residents on housing, health care, income and employment services.
- An atmosphere of dignity, compassion and respect is maintained.

<sup>1</sup> The housing continuum extends from emergency shelter and housing for those experiencing Homelessness through to affordable rental housing and homeownership. This diagram illustrates the level of supports and services residents may need to maintain a stable housing situation and ranges from housing with integrated on-site programs and services through to independent housing in the private market.

**Operations are transparent and accountable**

- Project partners maintain reliable records and fulfil regular reporting obligations.
- Operators adopt written policies and procedures that are responsive to Resident needs and communicate their policy and procedure regarding complaints and appeals to all Residents.
- A monitoring system provides assurance that an adequate quality of service is provided.
- Project partners will work towards achieving predetermined program goals and targets.
- BC Housing conducts reviews and assessments to confirm that services delivered are effective at meeting the program's objectives.
- BC Housing will regularly report to the Provincial Government and the public on the effectiveness of the program.

**The service environment is welcoming, safe and secure**

- The health and safety of staff and Residents is of the highest importance. While unlawful discrimination is not tolerated, operators are not expected to deliver services in circumstances where the safety or security of any individual may be threatened.
- Operators will have safety protocols in place that provide clear guidance for Resident and staff safety. Protocols should be reviewed periodically by the non-profit partner.
- Operators will adopt practices which ensure the safety and security of women, men, transgendered individuals, women and children, couples and families, as applicable.
- Co-ed sites will adopt practices and standards that minimize the risk of male violence and ensure that the specialized safety and security needs of women Residents are met.
- Co-ed sites will adhere to principles of safe access, safe shared spaces, safe sleeping areas, and privacy.
- Where possible, gender specific common space should be made available for women Residents.

**Financial, physical and environmental sustainability**

- BC Housing is committed to being a leader in environmentally sustainable housing and will strive to incorporate environmentally responsible construction and management techniques into all projects.
- BC Housing is committed to the financial and physical sustainability of housing developed through this program.

**Collaboration among project partners to improve program effectiveness**

- Program effectiveness is enhanced through open and collaborative working relationships among operators, partner agencies, landowners, other government agencies and BC Housing.
- Program delivery is responsive to community needs and funding reflects local needs assessments, strategic plans, best practice research and evidence-based analyses.
- Projects are prioritized in communities where support from municipalities and other project partners is maximized.

**C. GOALS**

1. Break the cycle of Homelessness by providing safe, affordable housing and the supports needed to help Residents remain Housed appropriately.

## **D. OBJECTIVES**

1. Rapidly deploy new units of safe and affordable housing with support services for individuals experiencing Homelessness or At Risk of Homelessness.
2. Support communication, partnerships and collaborative initiatives across the supportive housing sector.

## **E. OUTCOMES**

1. Additional units of housing with supports are available for individuals experiencing Homelessness or At Risk of homelessness.
2. The immediate needs of the Residents are met by providing safe and affordable housing, and access to support services

## **F. INDICATORS**

1. Number of new units created for eligible Residents.
2. Number of RRH Operator Agreements established with non-profit housing partners.
3. Full occupancy of the units is maintained with no extended vacancies.

## **G. PROJECT DESIGN**

Project locations will be identified in collaboration with project partners and may include land owned by municipalities, the province or non-profit organizations. The units will be delivered and owned by the Provincial Rental Housing Corporation<sup>2</sup>.

Project sizes will average approximately forty to fifty units, depending on community needs, and will include features such as communal amenity spaces, laundry, kitchen and social gathering spaces.

BC Housing will manage the procurement process in accordance with provincial requirements, managing and facilitating the delivery of projects to specification.

## **H. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**BC Housing** is responsible for:

- Procuring and constructing suitable housing units.
- Working with municipalities and other land owners to identify and secure suitable sites on which to deploy or construct the units.
- Selecting non-profit operators to manage each site.
- Provide funding through RRH Operator Agreements for property management and support services.
- Developing province-wide standards and guidelines with project partners.
- Approving and reviewing annual operating budgets and expenditures.
- Conducting regular monitoring and program evaluation.
- Working with and supporting operators by:
  - Assigning a BC Housing representative to act as a liaison;
  - Providing clear guidelines and expectations;
  - Providing information, resources and assistance where appropriate;

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<sup>2</sup> Provincial Rental Housing Corporation is incorporated under the Business Corporations Act (British Columbia). PRHC is the land holding corporation for provincially owned social housing. BC Housing administers PRHC, which buys, holds and disposes of properties, and leases residential properties to non-profit societies and co-operatives.

- Supporting capacity development, partnership development, best practices dissemination and service integration;
- Identifying gaps in service provision and working collaboratively to respond to gaps; and
- Providing database support.

**Landowners** are responsible for:

- Partnering with BC Housing in the identification, review and selection of appropriate sites.
- Providing necessary permissions to facilitate the occupation and use of the land for affordable housing purposes.
- Cooperating with BC Housing and the operator regarding the installation and ongoing management of the units.

**Operators** are responsible for:

- Resident management, property management and the delivery of support services;
- Complying with operational guidelines, program and performance standards;
- Maintaining adequate and accurate Resident service records;
- Submitting required program financial data and entering data into the Database;
- Informing BC Housing of any critical incidents or issues that may materially affect the operator's ability to fulfil the terms of the RRH Operator Agreement;
- Managing staff and providing appropriate training;
- A clear service mandate that outlines how the program will meet Residents needs; and
- Developing partnerships with other service providers to enhance service delivery.

## **I. OPERATING FUNDING AND AGREEMENTS**

Selected operators will enter into an RRH Operator Agreement with BC Housing to operate the units. Agreement terms will be for up to three (3) years. Operating budgets will be negotiated for each operator annually, based on information submitted by the operator.

Program funding will take into account local demand and compliance with program guidelines. BC Housing will administer funds for eligible program costs directly to the operator. Eligible program costs include:

- Program staff salaries;
- Direct program expenses;
- Property management expenses; and
- Administration.

Operators may secure additional funding from other sources for Resident services and activities not outlined in the RRH Operator agreement.

## **J. RESIDENT ELIGIBILITY AND RENT**

Individuals who have an income that is at or below the Housing Income Limits (HILs)<sup>3</sup> and are experiencing Homelessness or are At Risk of Homelessness, are eligible for housing and supports.

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<sup>3</sup> Housing Income Limits (HILs) represent the maximum income for eligibility to be a Resident. This maximum is based on the cost of housing in the local community such that the Resident cannot obtain rental housing in good condition meeting National

Adults (aged 19 and older) are the primary target population but families and youth may also be served provided appropriate approvals, accommodation and support services are established and are consistent with the operator's mandate.

Children under the age of 19 can receive housing and supports if they are accompanied by their parent/guardian or if they are referred to the operator by a social worker acting under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*. Other than appropriately approved exceptions, individuals under the age of 19, presenting without a parent or guardian, should be referred to child and youth serving agencies and/or the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). The province-wide Helpline for Children (310-1234; no area code required) is an available resource.

Residents will typically pay a fixed rent, set at the shelter component of income assistance. Operators may elect to calculate a rent that is geared to income based on the rent scale outlined in their RRH Operator Agreement.

## **K. SUPPORT SERVICES**

Operators may offer a variety of programs and support services, tailored to the operator's mandate and the unique needs of Residents. All operators will offer the following core services to help Residents achieve and maintain stability in housing, enhance access to other community-based supports and services, and foster resilience against Homelessness;

- 24/7 staffing
- Meals, provided as often as specified in the RRH Operator Agreement, and that meet the standards of Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide
- No-cost laundry facilities accessible to Residents, either on-site or off-site
- Support for Residents to maintain their residencies, including but not limited to directly assisting with room de-cluttering, rent payment and repayment plans
- Individual or group support services such as life skills, community information, social and recreational programs
- Connecting Residents to community supports and services such as education and employment opportunities, health and wellness services, and life skills
- Other supports designed to assist Residents in meeting their personal and housing goals, including culturally-specific programs
- Case Planning and Resident needs assessment, including the Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT)
- Assistance in accessing Income Assistance, Pension Benefits, Disability Benefits, obtaining a BC Identification Card, or establishing a bank account as appropriate

## **L. REPORTING AND REVIEW**

The intent of the reporting and review process is for BC Housing to work in partnership with operators to identify areas of strength and opportunities to achieve excellence and accountability in the delivery of the program. The cornerstones of review are quality assurance, quality improvement and risk mitigation. Regular reporting and review helps operators and BC Housing to measure progress, work together to better match services to Resident needs, support improved service delivery, and demonstrate the effectiveness of the program. Accordingly, the reporting and review tools are designed to open dialogue with operators to help

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Occupancy Standards without paying more than 30% of Income. This maximum will be established by BC Housing from time to time.



identify and share practices that are working well, as well as elicit feedback from Residents. Reporting and review processes comply with privacy requirements including the *Personal Information Protection Act* and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

### Reporting and Review Tools

The reporting and review system is designed to gather quantitative and qualitative information. Several tools are used to elicit a balanced flow of information (Figure 3) to support the operational needs of BC Housing and the operator, monitor program success, identify emerging needs among people who are experiencing Homelessness or At Risk of Homelessness, and to shape future program planning. Operators may voluntarily administer additional tools, such as Resident surveys, and may choose to discuss the results with BC Housing.

**Figure 3: Reporting and Review Tools**

Tool	Frequency	Completed By
Database	Daily	Operator
Financial Review	Annual	BC Housing
Operational Review	As Required	BC Housing

#### Database

Operators report regularly using the Database. BC Housing establishes timelines for data reporting and mandatory fields. Operators are responsible for obtaining Resident consent.


#### Financial Review

Operators submit audited financial statements and other supporting documentation to BC Housing to facilitate an annual review of financial operations.

#### Operational Review

Operational reviews are conducted as needed and typically every three (3) years to determine fulfilment of the terms of the RRH Operator Agreement. The review includes interviews with the operator's management, an on-site visit and physical inspection, and a review of service policies, procedures and other relevant documents, as requested.

### **M. SIGN-OFF**

  
 Vice President Operations  
 BC Housing

  
 Vice President Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer  
 BC Housing

## APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

**Adequate Personal Space:** means having freedom from crowding as identified in the Canadian National Occupancy Standards (see Appendix B).

**At Risk of Homelessness:** means individuals and families living in accommodation where tenancy will be terminated within three (3) months of application (e.g., given notice by landlord) and having no other Housing options, or living in time-limited housing designed to help them transition from Homelessness to living in a more permanent form of Housing (e.g., transitional housing or second-stage housing).

**Case Planning:** means developing a Resident-focused and mutually agreed upon plan to assist a Resident to integrate more fully into their community. Case Planning will include activities such as an explanation of available options, identification of Resident's goals, explanation of how the operator can support the Resident to achieve desired outcomes, and the benefits, alternatives and consequences of planned services.

**Database(s):** means the computer applications provided by BC Housing to meet the operational and informational needs of the operator and BC Housing.

**Homelessness:** refers to a situation where an individual or family is not stably Housed or is living in temporary accommodation where they do not have control over the length and conditions of tenure and do not have Adequate Personal Space. This includes living in: public spaces without legal claim (e.g., on the streets, in abandoned buildings or in tent cities); a homeless shelter, a transition house, a public facility or service (e.g., hospital, care facility, rehabilitation or treatment centre, correctional facility) and cannot return to Housing; or where they are financially, sexually, physically or emotionally exploited to maintain their shelter.

**Housed or Housing:** is defined as accommodation allowing for tenancy of more than thirty (30) days, under conditions in which the individual/family has Adequate Personal Space. This range includes supported, transitional housing to independent social or private market housing. This definition does not include emergency shelters or transition houses.

**Residents:** individuals who are eligible for housing and supports pursuant to the Rapid Response to Homelessness.

**Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT):** means the assessment tool used to measure an individual's level of vulnerability. The tool is designed for use by service providers accustomed to interacting directly with individuals experiencing Homelessness. Training is required to ensure reliable application of the tool. The results are then used to match Residents with Housing.



## **APPENDIX B: NATIONAL OCCUPANCY STANDARD**

**Note:** The National Occupancy Standard (NOS) is a guideline. While it is ideal, it is recognized that the NOS is not always achievable given the available affordable housing options in a community as well as the fact that Adequate Personal Space is perceived differently from person to person.

The NOS has been developed by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to help determine the number of bedrooms a dwelling should have to provide freedom from crowding. The NOS determines the number of bedrooms a household requires given its size and composition.

According to NOS requirements, suitable housing has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households. Enough bedrooms based on NOS requirements means one bedroom for:

- Each cohabiting adult couple;
- Each unattached household member 18 years of age and over;
- A same-sex pair of children under age 18; and
- An additional boy or girl in the family, unless there are two opposite sex children under five years of age, in which case they are expected to share a bedroom.

A household of one individual can occupy a bachelor unit (i.e., a unit with no bedroom).