

# Not Soon Enough!

## Responding to the Crisis of Homelessness for Single Women in Hamilton

Deirdre Pike, Senior Social Planner  
Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton



Katherine Kalinowski, Associate Executive Director  
Good Shepherd Centres

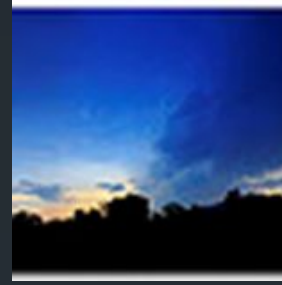


# Where we were – 5 years ago



- System? What system?
- Why a gender lens
- Services then
- Lack of investment in women's system coordination

# The Perfect Storm



- Everyone's angry! women, police, hospital, other agencies
- VAW shelters resist admission of single women
- Transitional Housing programs threatened
- Deaths of several local women with Hx of homelessness

How research helps

Validate concerns of storm

Data = investment in recommendations

“Not to Be Forgotten: Homeless Women in Hamilton”

SPRC 2011



## NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN:

### HOMELESS WOMEN IN HAMILTON

Summary Report • May 2011

“Women’s homelessness is not an extraordinary phenomenon but one closely intertwined with women’s vulnerabilities in the labour market and at home.”

*Fran Klodnitsky, Landscapes on the margins: Gender and homelessness in Canada*

Since the late 1980s, homelessness in Canada among women has been rising, both in absolute numbers and in the complexity of the issues facing homeless women. Among Hamilton’s homeless youth population, there are almost as many women as men.

This report attempts to give at least a partial picture of the conditions faced by homeless women in Hamilton with the aim of bringing more attention to the challenges they face and to help agencies in their planning of services for this population.

The full report is available on the SPRC website at <http://sprc.hamilton.on.ca/>

Prepared by:  
Sara Mayo, Social Planner (Geographic Information Systems)

**SPRC**  
SOCIAL PLANNING  
& RESEARCH COUNCIL  
OF HAMILTON  
162 King William Street, Suite 103,  
Hamilton, ON L8R 3N9  
Phone: 905.522.1148 Fax: 905.522.9124  
E-mail: [sprc@sprc.hamilton.on.ca](mailto:sprc@sprc.hamilton.on.ca)  
Website: [sprc.hamilton.on.ca](http://sprc.hamilton.on.ca)

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# OUTCOMES

- 2011 Women's Housing Planning Collaborative
- **Membership:** Native Women's Centre/Honouring the Circle, YWCA, St. Joseph's Healthcare – Womankind Addiction Services, Mission Services – Inasmuch House, Phoenix Place, Good Shepherd Women's Services (Ex-officio - HRSDC, City of Hamilton, MCSS, SPRC)
- April 2012 HPS funding to serve single women experiencing homelessness and to increase coordination of services

# Project SOS – A Collaborative Approach

- Hybrid Model
- Partnership:
  - Good Shepherd (Mary's Place shelter and Mobile Caseworkers – ICT model)
  - Native Women's Centre (Honoring the Circle Transitional Housing)
  - YWCA Hamilton (Transitional Housing)
- Focus on easing bottleneck in system
- Trauma-informed
- Harm reduction
- Recovery focus

# Leveraging Existing Community Capacity

- Threw everything on the table –
- Intentional in operational collaboration
- Who we served and how
  - 24 hour crisis support
  - Shelters
  - Womankind – overflow beds, addiction services, 16 post-treatment rent supplements
  - Transitional housing – 65 YWCA, 20 HTC, 5 Phoenix Place, 30 Good Shepherd 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage
  - Good Shepherd Barrett Centre
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage Works, GSW (social enterprise)
  - Shelter Health Network, N.P., women's clinic
  - Clinical Social Worker, dedicated OW Worker (City of Hamilton)

# Value Added

- Increased Awareness –
  - Conferences
  - How's the Weather
- Advisory – Women with Lived Experience





# Value Added

- New data
- Increased Coordination



One of the successful components of the Women's Housing Planning Collaborative was the creation of a social media campaign called "How's the Weather?" The campaign uses Twitter (@howstheweather\_), Facebook and a website to raise awareness of women facing homelessness in Hamilton and what we can do collectively to make change happen in women's lives. Visit [howstheweather.ca](http://howstheweather.ca) for more information.

The **Women's Housing Planning Collaborative (WHPC)** exists to develop, coordinate, advocate for and facilitate a gender specific, comprehensive and seamless system of services to meet the needs of women experiencing homelessness. It is supported by the S.O.S. Advisory Committee.

### Women's Housing Planning Collaborative Members

Good Shepherd Women's Services  
 Native Women's Centre/Honouring the Circle Mission Services  
 Phoenix Place  
 Womankind Addiction Services – St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton  
 YWCA Hamilton

### Ex-Officio Members

City of Hamilton Housing Services Division  
 Ministry of Children and Youth & Ministry of Community and Social Services Ontario  
 Service Canada Homelessness Partnering Strategy  
 Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton

*"I came from Nigeria and became homeless in Hamilton. We don't have a word for this in my home country."*

S.O.S. Participant



### Contributors to [howstheweather.ca](http://howstheweather.ca)



### Supporting Our Sisters is funded by:





## Value Added

- New Investments 2.1 m 2011-2014
- Recent RFP

# Back to the Future

- Crisis remains
- Occupancy pressures in shelters persist
- SOS adopts Housing First
- Increased shelter beds for single women
- Temp. investments in YWCA Transitional Living program and housing/case management supports for non-HF eligible women
- Managed alcohol program beds for women
- Implementation of Good Shepherd Staying Home
- Establishment of Willow's Place

# Women's Housing Planning Collaborative



- WHPC asked to contribute to next steps
- Women's advisory
- Service coordination
- Broadening stakeholder engagement

# Successes

- Partnership with City of Hamilton
- System building and partnerships with youth, men's and Aboriginal sectors (e.g. HF table, SPDAT implementation)
- Growth in WHPC membership
- Enhanced staff capacity – trauma-informed, CCL, relationships
- Service coordination – operations committee
- Integration of paid peer support into programs
- Women's Advisory

# Challenges



- Where are they coming from? How many are there?
- Right sizing the system for women
- VAW/Homelessness...addressing the dichotomy in funding and service models
- Service erosion – trustee, transitional housing, 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage Works
- Gentrification & lack of affordable, appropriate housing options for women
- Access to mental health and addiction services
- Investment in the “beyond survival....what comes next?”



If any component of the system decides to behave differently, the system changes. You can literally shake it up!

Roseanne Haggerty



If any component of the system decides to behave differently, the system changes. You can literally shake it up!

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# Thank You

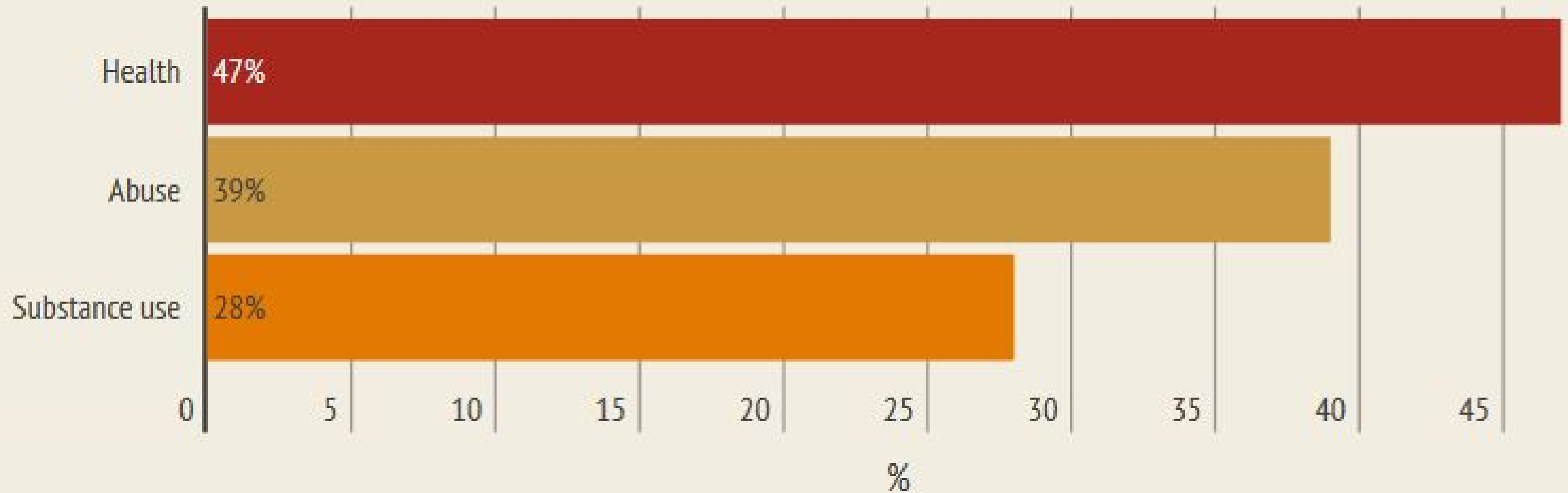
[KatherineKalinowski@GoodShepherdCentres.ca](mailto:KatherineKalinowski@GoodShepherdCentres.ca)

@KatherineKGSC

[dpike@sprc.hamilton.on.ca](mailto:dpike@sprc.hamilton.on.ca)

@deirdrepike

# Dominant Risk Factors



# Housing at Intake

▪ Streets	3%
▪ Emergency Shelter	25%
▪ VAW Shelters	23%
▪ Hidden Homeless: unsafe	9%
▪ Hidden Homeless: other	10%
▪ Institutional Discharge	8%
▪ Transitional Housing	3%
▪ Supportive Housing	1%
▪ Market Housing	4%
▪ Subsidized housing	6%

# What the Numbers Told Us

- 300 women
- 45 years – average age
- 25% SOS clients were mothers of children under 18 years, none in their custody. (Number of women: 91, total children: 155)
- 18% of SOS clients self-identified as Aboriginal
- 3% of SOS clients identified as Trans or outside gender binary
- 52% on OW, 27% on ODSP, 17% other income
- For women whom transitional housing was their first placement and who exited to regular housing, average time in transitional housing was 6.8 months.
- 88% of SOS clients remained housed while accessing SOS supports