

# Reducing Homelessness for Women Through Trauma-Informed Inclusive Services

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# Our Mission

- We are dedicated to breaking cycles of family violence, homelessness, and poverty. When and where she needs us most, we provide emergency shelter, housing, counselling, child development and support. Our mission is to help foster healthy women, healthy families, and thriving communities.

# The YWCA Practice Framework

- The Practice Framework is a comprehensive document developed to focus and guide staff at the YW in a unified philosophy.
- The document also serves to clarify for the general public the YW's clear focus on women, particularly those who are vulnerable.

# 7 Practice Principles

1. Safety First
2. Violence informed and trauma sensitive
3. Women centred and feminist- based frameworks
4. Intersectional and anti-oppressive approach
5. Inclusive low-barrier services
6. Harm reduction
7. Support for women as mothers

# Women and Homelessness

- Today women make up nearly half of all people using emergency shelters and temporary housing.
- In Canada, the reality is that women make up a significant and growing percentage of the homeless population and the gendered experience of women's homelessness is unique.

# Women and Homelessness

- Women are at increased vulnerability without a safe place to call home. Women sleep on the streets, trade sex for a place to stay and remain in abusive relationships to avoid the cycle of homelessness

# Housing and Supports

Our goal is to ensure that all women who are experiencing abuse, poverty, social isolation and/or homelessness have access to our services.

## We believe

Women are the experts in their own lives and we need to listen to women as they tell us about their experiences in their own time, language and ways.

Equity and inclusion are meaningful words and we are committed to providing women with safe and respectful support.

Women and their children **have the right** to safe, appropriate and affordable housing, education, child care and economic security.

Women and their children have the right to **live free of violence and abuse.**

In order to make informed decisions, women need access to **information, resources and options.**

Women should have the greatest opportunities for **empowerment, self-determination and control over decisions** that impact their lives.

**Low barrier services** which do not impose unnecessary rules or conditions meeting women when and where they are at.

Our practice is based on guiding principles that can counter the impacts of dominance and oppression. **We focus on a woman's strengths,** what has happened to her rather than what is 'wrong' with her.

# Timeline...

- 2015 – Housing and Shelter programs begin the transition to Harm Reduction
- Early 2016 – Practice Framework is released after nearly 1 year of development
- April 2016 – Intensive Case Management Outreach Program opens
- September 2016 – Purpose built building for Community Housing Program opens

# How we do what we do.

- In 2012 the Winter Emergency Response Program (WERP) came to life
- During the past four years of seasonal shelter these are our observations
- In 2016, with funding from Alberta Human Services, we have expanded to offer Intensive Case Management Outreach and a Housing Strategy that is specifically geared to supporting women off the streets and into stable housing options
- Our program expansion adds to the continuum of services that are offered by the YWCA of Calgary with the aim of reducing homelessness for women

# Our Practices

- Intake process designed to be as flexible and non-intrusive as possible – not replicating the power and control dynamics that women have already experienced
- Reducing practices such as “banning” and eviction
- Harm reduction approach
- Working with women who have been identified as the most marginalized in the city based on the relationships we have established
- Acknowledging that women have partners and working with them based on their choices
- Housing retention and eviction prevention support

# A Client Story...

# Moving Forward

At the end of September, AHS announced that they would be directly responsible for the continued funding of WERP which means the addition of the following:

- Year round service provision
- An additional Intensive Case Manager position to support women beyond overnight shelter into housing
- 4 additional beds within our transitional housing building that allow for extended temporary housing for women
- Flexibility in funding to provide financial assistance for damage deposits, start up costs, transitional costs and other barriers that may be preventing a woman from being housed

**Thank you for being here and for the  
work that you do!**

