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# Best Practice Guideline for Ending Women's and Girl's Homelessness

Prepared on behalf of: All Our Sisters

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# Authors

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In partnership with Women's Community House

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All Our Sisters



Toutes nos  
Sœ u r s

# Best Practice Guideline

- Designed to synthesize existing literature in an effort to develop best practices for ending women's and girl's homelessness.
- Open access: [The Homeless Hub](#)
- 176 pages

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# Organization of Best Practice Guideline

Introduction

Pathways into homelessness

Barriers from exiting homelessness

Housing needs/preferences

Suggestions for housing

Needs, preferences and suggestions for services

Housing First

Trauma Informed Care

Recommendations (systemic)

Research

Reflection

Summary

Appendices

References

# Methodology

- Scoping literature review
  - Five part framework by Arksey & O'Malley (2005)
- Scholarly and grey literature
- Criteria
  - a) Published between 1995-2015
  - b) English language
  - c) Westernized context
  - d) Gendered
- Where information was common to multiple references, five diverse sources were utilized to reflect a variety of voices

# Background

*"If you want to move forward, you need to understand the problem"*

(CAEH, 2012, p. 4).

## WHEN YOU PICTURE A HOMELESS PERSON DO YOU SEE A WOMAN?

LOOK AGAIN



11,000

girls and young women  
16-24 years of age use  
homeless shelters

63%

use shelters for  
abused women

37%

use homeless shelters

*"I lived in motels; I lived in shelters; I lived in vans; I actually had no place to live. I lived in some homes that weren't where I should have been, and kind of wandering a lot, wandering around, but here I am"* (Milligan, 2012, p. 88).

*"...a woman's experience is very different, and just as profound and absolute as that of men on the streets or in shelters"* (Homes for Women, 2010, p. 5).

Sources: Saegert, The National Shelter Study: Emergency Shelter Use in Canada 2005-2009, 2012. Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter & Gulliver, The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013. Statistics Canada, Residents of Canada's Shelters for Abused women, 2010.

H4W TPE  
Homes for women Together for everyone

[www.homesforwomen.ca](http://www.homesforwomen.ca)

# Common Considerations for Women and Girls who are Homeless

- a) Hidden homelessness
- b) Trauma and violence
- c) Challenges to mental health
- d) Substance use/ addiction
- e) Poverty

## Common Recommendations for Ending Women's and Girls Homelessness

- Housing: The only true, long term solution
- Unique: No consensus on specific types of independent accommodations
- Transitional housing effective for those with high support needs
- Safe, secure, affordable, permanent, accessible, adequate and supported
- Assistance in obtaining housing, feeling a sense of community, having flexibility in housing programs, and options and choice in housing selection.

# Population Specific Recommendations for Ending Homelessness

## **Women and Girls with Children**

- Interpersonal violence
- Housing: Subsidized, supportive, safe for mothers and children
- Education, employment, and spirituality

## **Young Women and Girls**

- Leave/ evicted from a dysfunctional, abusive, and impoverished home
- Housing: Private, safe, independent congregate living situations where organizations and supports are available if needed.
- Positive adult mentorship, employment and developing life skills and independence

## **Older Women**

- Financial instability, relationship breakdown/spousal death, lifetime trauma, poor health/ health decline
- Housing: Independent, supportive (dry, congregate if substance use)
- Accessible, supportive, and individualized care

## **Women and Girls Engaged in Survival Sex**

- Involved at young age, meet basic needs, complex trauma, criminalization
- Housing: Female only, clustered or congregate, supportive housing with a private room
- Substance use and mental and physical healthcare support

## **Women and Girls who Have Been Trafficked**

- Involved at young age due to family disruption, child welfare services, forced migration, complex trauma, fear of criminal consequences
- Housing: Immediate, safe, supported area unknown to trafficker
- Early identification, legal, substance use, and mental and physical healthcare

## **Women and Girls Involved in the Judicial System**

- Recidivism: Jail to homelessness and back again, inadequate exit plans
- Housing: Safe, private, independent accommodations. Others prefer congregate housing that is low threshold with structured programs.
- Focus on substance use, education, employment skills, life skills

## **Women and Girls who Identify as LGBTQQIP2SAA**

- Familial rejection/discrimination, leaving home to seek services or independence
- Limited discussion of housing: Safe and rapid housing, area tolerant of difference
- Physical and mental health care, stigmatization in services

## **Indigenous Women and Girls**

- Colonialism, reserve culture, racism, discrimination, and oppression
- Housing: Congregate style accommodation linked to services, supports culture
- Mental health and substance use support, continuity of care, culturally appropriate services

## **Newcomer Women and Girls**

- Migration, stress related outcomes, interpersonal violence, language and cultural barriers, unfamiliarity with accessing services and housing
- Housing: Independent, safe, supported, in a community of other newcomers
- Employment and education

## **Rural/Remote Women and Girls**

- Poverty, lack of employment, lack of transportation, geographic distance to services/work, high cost of basic needs, migrating to urban community
- Housing: Improve critical lack of housing, options and choice (supportive and transitional housing), close proximity to services
- Improve service integration and accessibility

## **Women who Have Served in the Military**

- Exiting military (e.g. military sexual trauma, premature discharge), no exit plan
- Housing: Discharge planning from military to housing options
- Services that accommodate unique needs, employment, trauma support, assistance with military benefits

# Conclusion

- Housing and service provision: INDIVIDUALIZED
- Systemic action → prevention → rapid re-housing with adequate supports

*Believe in "...a world transformed- be stricken by the injustice of the skies. Be motivated by glimpses of a better world. Become part of the catalytic mix."* Westley, Zimmerman & Patton, 2007

# Limitations

- Research
  - No standardized definition of homelessness in Canada
  - Need to measure and evaluate services and housing outcomes

# Tips for Use

- Which issues are in the foreground for women and girls, and which issues are in the background?
- Women and girls may occupy multiple social locations simultaneously, therefore use this guideline in reference to how the individual identifies oneself/ priority concerns

Questions?

A black marker is shown drawing a curved line under the word "Questions?". The marker is positioned at the bottom right of the frame, with its tip pointing towards the end of the underline. The word "Questions?" is written in a cursive, handwritten style on a piece of lined paper. The lines on the paper are vertical and evenly spaced.