

Housing First for long-term shelter clients

Lessons from Toronto's Hostels to Homes Pilot
CAEH Conference, Winnipeg, October 27, 2017





Homelessness & the shelter system in Toronto

Homelessness in Toronto



16,000 people use the shelter system in a year



6,375 people are homeless on any given night, which includes:



5,092 people in shelters (Sept 2017)



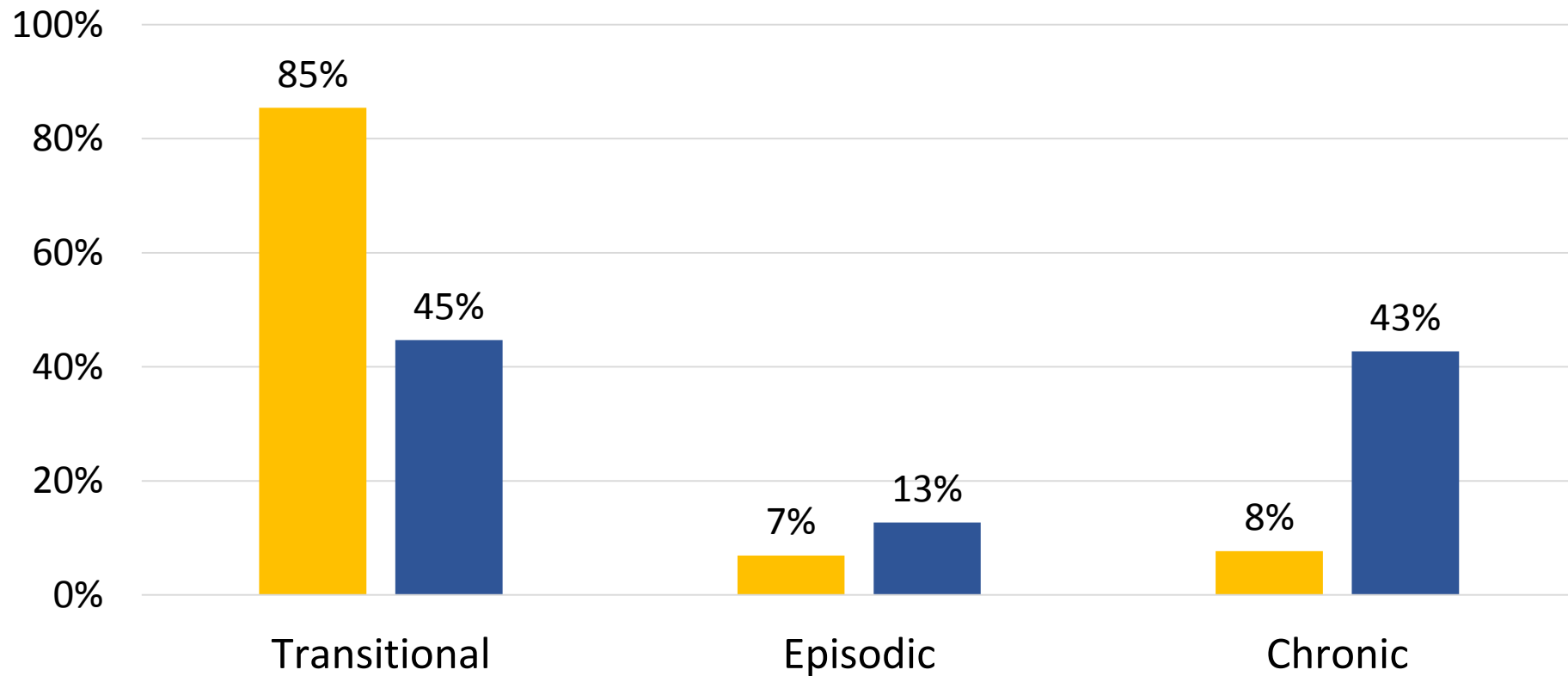
836 people in VAW shelters, corrections and health care facilities (2013 SNA estimate)



447 people sleeping outdoors (2013 SNA estimate)

Length of shelter use

Most people use shelters infrequently and for short periods of time, but the few that remain use the majority of the resources.



■ Percentage of clients ■ Percentage of sleeping units occupied

Housing Stability system transformation to shift our focus from only this...

Prevention



Emergency Response



Housing Stability



to include this...

Prevention



Emergency Response

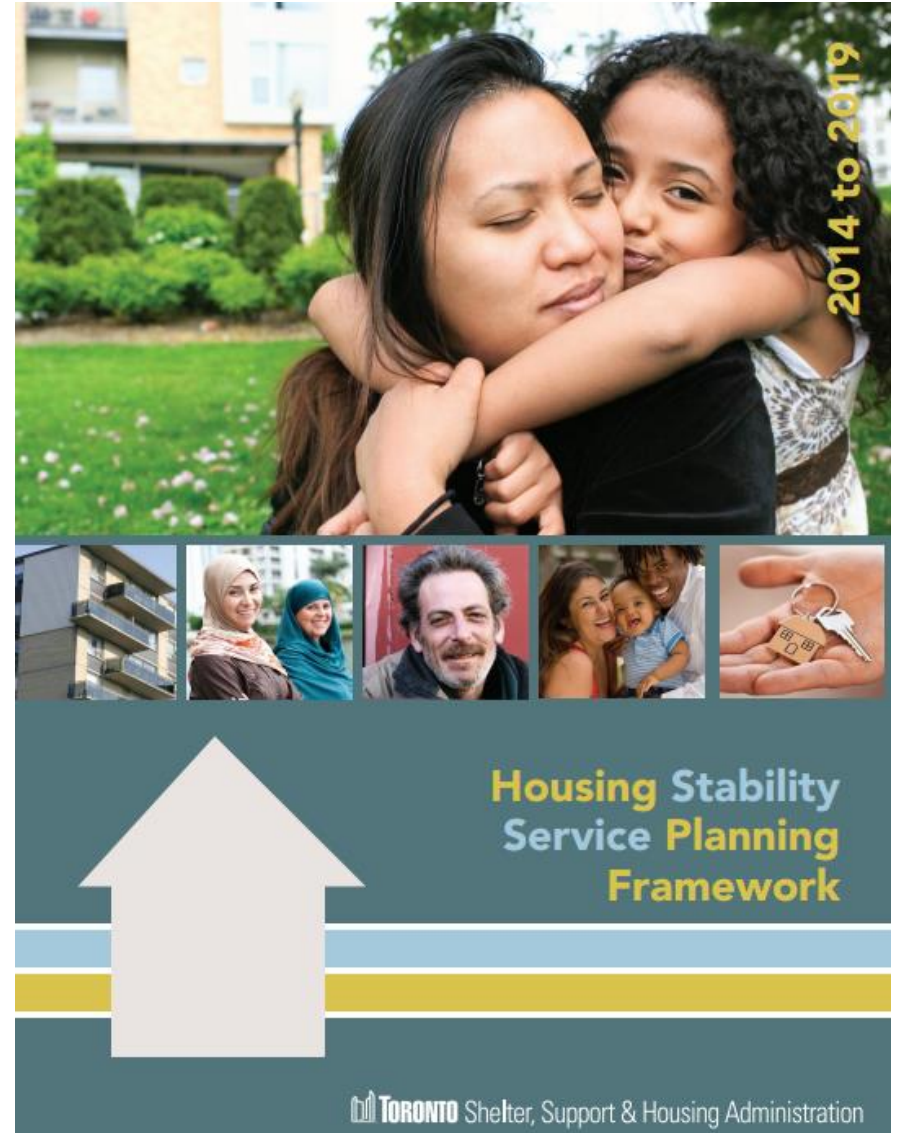


Housing Stability



Housing Stability Service Plan, 2014 - 2019

Key Action 2.2:
Develop a service delivery model that addresses the complex needs of those that stay in shelter more than one year





Hostels to Homes Pilot Design

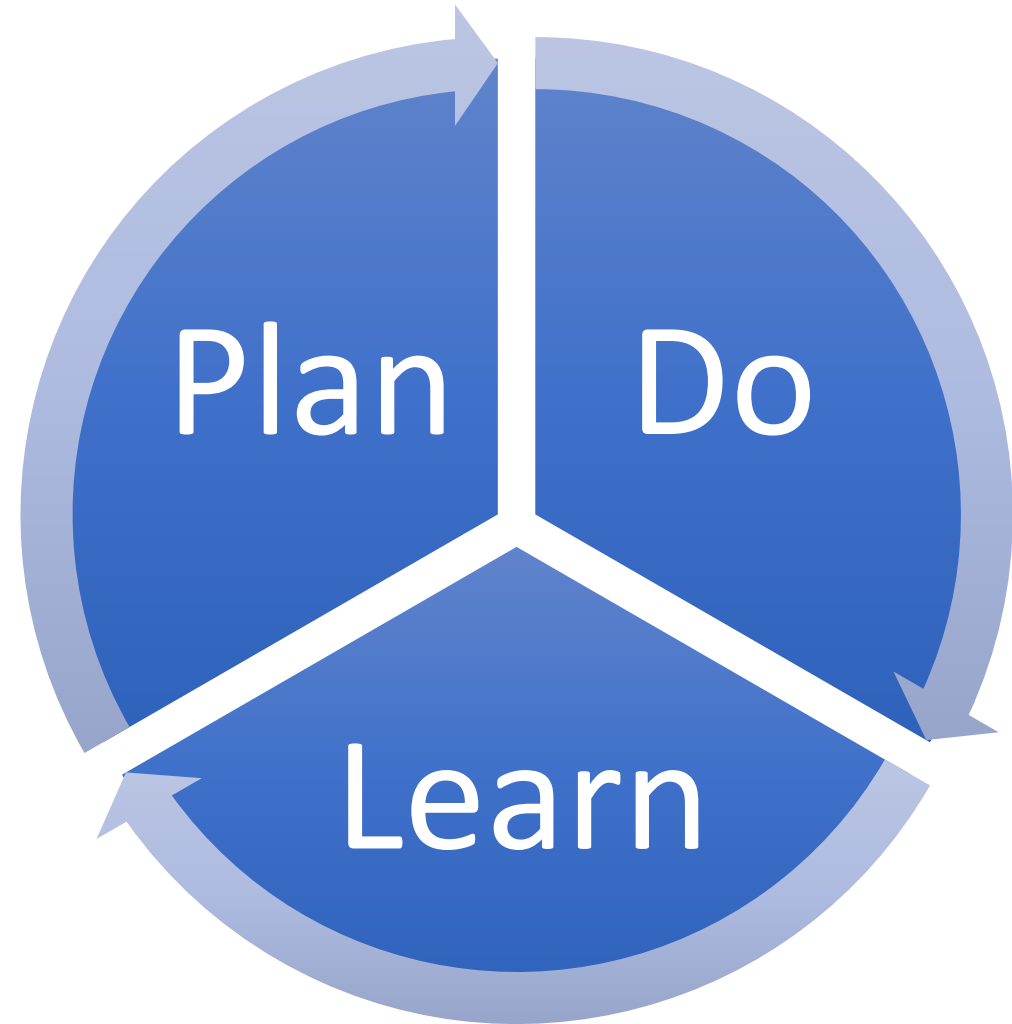


Goals

1. Pilot a service delivery model involving external housing workers in shelters
2. Implement and evaluate standardized assessment tool
3. Better understand the profile and service needs of people staying in shelters long-term
4. House 200 long-term shelter clients and support housing retention
5. Free up shelter capacity for short-term use

Evaluation approach

- H2H process & outcomes evaluation underway
- Preliminary results
- Separate 3rd party Housing Support Assessment Tool evaluation



Pilot service model



Targeted
Engagement

Housing
access

Housing
stabilization

Standardized Assessment, Individualized Service Planning, System Navigation

Engagement



- Target population: single adults staying in shelters long-term
- 1650 clients identified with over 1 year in shelter
- Phased engagement across 30+ shelter sites, starting at those with highest proportion of long-term clients
- Over 300 clients approached, 220 enrolled in pilot

Housing access

- Context:
 - CMHC AMR: Bachelor - \$972, 1 bed - \$1,137
 - 1.3% vacancy rate
 - 99,993 households on social housing waiting list
- H2H Housing access support
 - Housing Allowance
 - Help with ID, taxes, social assistance
 - Housing search & accompaniment, landlord recruitment & liaison
 - Move-in support including furniture bank



As a housing worker, my mindset is about *when* someone will be housed, not *if* they will be housed.

Housing stabilization



- Follow-up housing support teams at 5 agencies
 - High support (10:1 target client:worker ratio)
 - Moderate support (20:1 target client:worker ratio)
- Referrals to follow-up based on assessed client acuity & location in city
- 1 year+ intensive case management follow-up supports

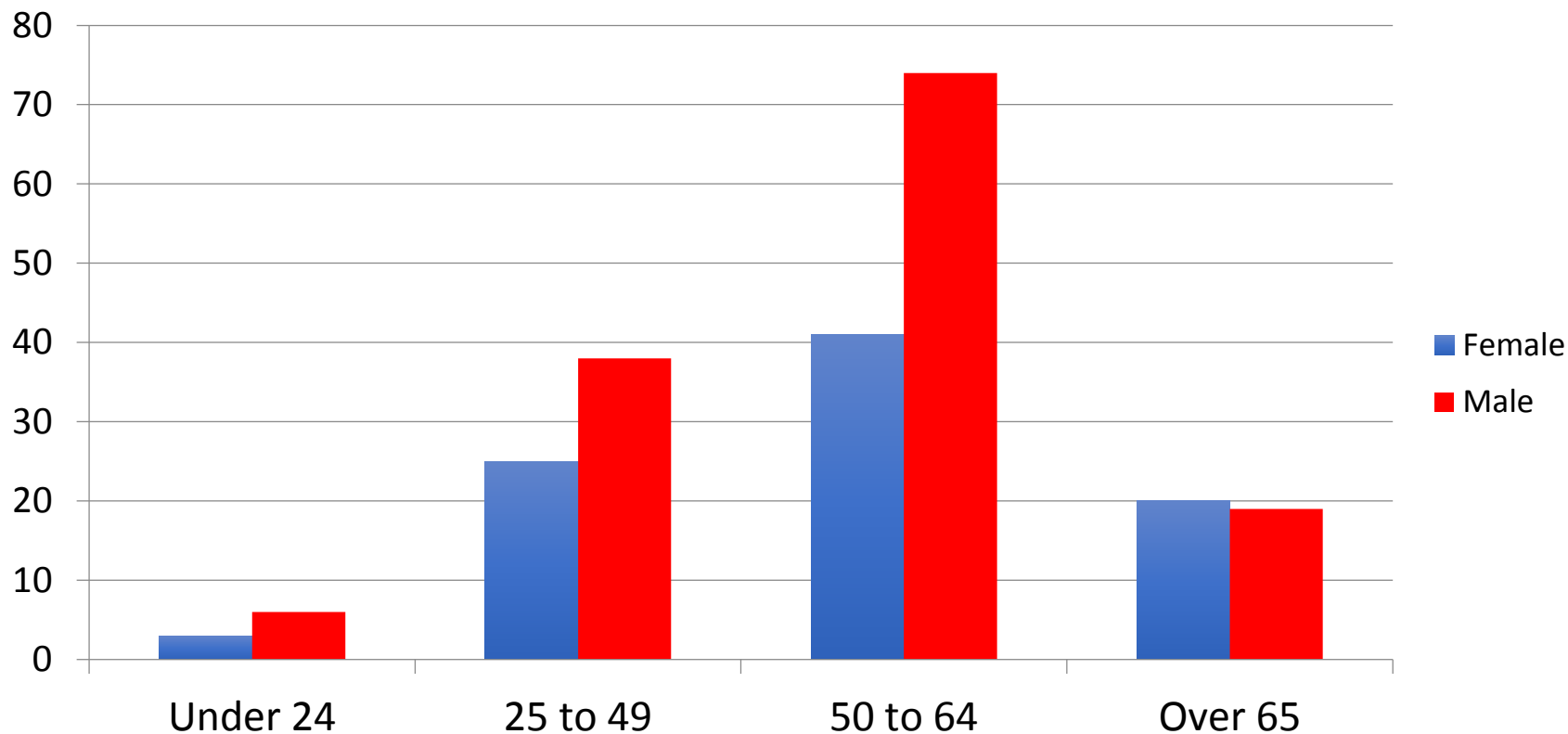
Going to make steak and eggs for my first meal. So excited!



H2H Pilot Results

Engagement: Client profile

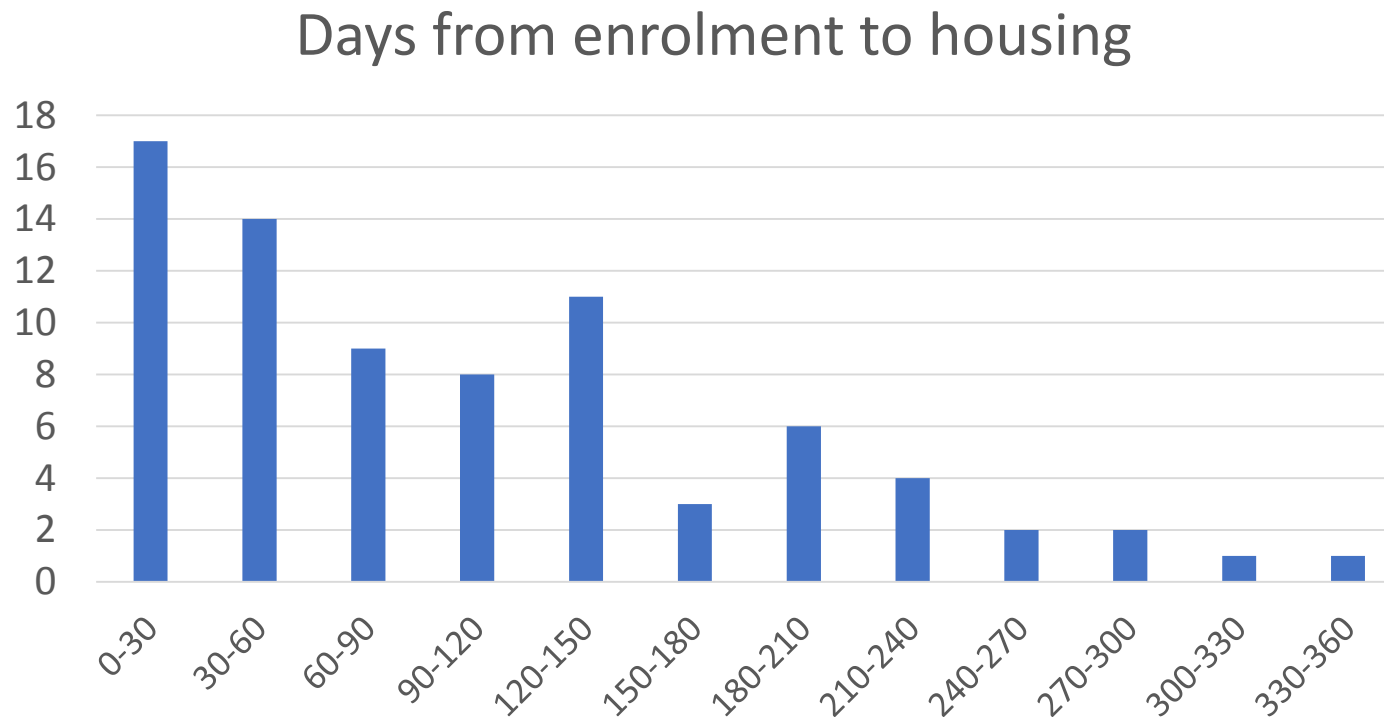
- Average 4 years continuously in shelter



I'm too old to wander outside for hours waiting for the shelter to open.

Housing Access

- 78 people housed, avg 2-3 months from enrollment to housing



Never thought anyone would help me so fast to find a place so I can stop pretending and be who I really am.

Housing Stabilization



- 90%+ housing retention (average 8 months housed to date)
- 80% clients interviewed reported positive impact of housing on their life

I feel so safe and comfortable in my new house. When I drank and returned to the shelter I was always worried that someone would rob me or beat me up. Funny that now I feel safe but drink less.



Challenges, Lessons & Insights

Engagement challenges & lessons



- Balancing engagement and housing search
- Assumption that long-term = high acuity not always correct
- Assertive engagement by mobile team was effective, but takes time

I was afraid to leave my [shelter] family. Now I see that [the shelter] was a substitute for my real family. I'm connecting with them now [that I'm housed].

Housing access challenges & lessons

- Different cultures, attitudes and resourcing for housing work across shelter sites
- High rents, tight market, landlord discrimination
- Lots of time spent on ID, taxes, securing social assistance (all necessary to access housing allowance)

...Some landlords even they will not take people in Ontario Works. They will not accept them...



Sometimes shelter workers would push back and hinder the housing plan saying the client isn't ready.
~housing worker

Housing stabilization challenges & lessons



- Transition from housing access worker to follow-up support worker
- Geographic challenges related to transportation
- Underlying issues and other support needs emerged after housing

Coming from environments where there are constantly people around, the loneliness can be overwhelming.
~Follow-up worker

Pilot planning & administration lessons

Because of your help I have a safe place when I return from chemotherapy.

- Evolution vs. consistency in pilot design & implementation
- Staff turnover
- Importance of streamlined, shared data management systems
- Setting realistic timelines and expectations of both housing outcomes and resulting impact on shelter availability

Reflecting on impact

- 78 housed clients, 275 years combined shelter nights (100,602)
- Challenging assumptions that people can't be housed
- Better understanding experience of people in shelters long-term
- Reframing: Housing First in Shelter, not Housing First OR shelter

I missed cooking Vietnamese food. Having my own place helps me remember who I am.

I thought I would die in the shelter.

I'm happy to have my own place but kind of scared I will now have to do things myself.

H2H lessons are informing future directions:

- Coordinated Access to Housing Supports pilot
- Future Housing First case management service models & tools
- Integration of standardized screening and assessment tools

I have been clean four months. Seeing my sister tomorrow after 5 years. Leaving shelter is the best thing that has happened to me.

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