

What will it take to end chronic homelessness?

Homelessness is a complex but solvable problem. One of the biggest hurdles to ending homelessness in communities is the way in which services are organized and delivered.

There are two important shifts in the way community partners will work together to implement homelessness policy and programs in Hamilton:

1. The first shift is the adoption of a systems approach to addressing homelessness that allows us to consider each program as part of a coordinated system of care for the housing and homelessness serving sector.
2. The second shift changes our focus from *managing* homelessness to *ending* chronic homelessness in Hamilton.



A systems focus is not a challenge to do more; it challenges us to work differently. Foundational community documents such as the Blueprint for Emergency Shelter Services and the Housing & Homelessness Action Plan highlight the need for systems-level coordination. We cannot end homelessness without building an efficient local system that directs resources to the most vulnerable individuals and families quickly and predictably.

Source: Florida Housing Corporation



We are not starting from scratch. Our community has experienced many successes and gained expertise in addressing homelessness upon which we will continue to build. Hamilton has been at the forefront nationally of developing emergency shelter standards and adopting a Housing First approach. Through the 20,000 Homes Registry Week and Federal Point-in-Time Count, our community came together to test ways of identifying the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and linking them to housing. For the 2016-2017 program year, our commitment was to house 138 of the highest need individuals experiencing homelessness. We surpassed our target and housed 216 individuals, exceeding our target by 57%. From 2015 to 2016, chronic homelessness has been reduced by 35% in Hamilton.

While we have made significant gains, continued system improvements are essential to ending chronic homelessness. We have begun the work of developing a coordinated access system and adopting a best practice to track progress in real time, known as a *By Name List*. We are learning directly from more than 40 communities across Canada and internationally who are also undertaking this work. With a constantly updated By Name List, we can know exactly how many people are experiencing chronic homelessness at any given time, along with their demographic information, immediate needs and circumstances. This information will allow us to make resource allocation decisions more efficiently and in real time.

As a community, we are asking partners to commit to innovation. With input from community partners from across the homelessness serving sector, we will set goals and short term action strategies throughout the year to implement a coordinated access system. In collaboration with the Community Ambassadors, Housing Services will provide regular updates and opportunities to provide input and influence our community's progress throughout implementation.

While there are many things we know how to fix, there are also many areas where innovation is required to do things better. Progress is rooted in the constant improvement of systems and practices. This progress, driven by learning and improvement, will help push us forward in our efforts to end chronic homelessness, as well as other experiences of homelessness in Hamilton.

To find out more, please contact HomelessPolicyPrograms@Hamilton.ca

May 9th 2017