

Questions and Answers from the Homelessness Prevention Information Session – June 18, 2014

1. Q: In terms of the housing/income risks – what about people who are staying in transitional housing and therefore are spending only 30% of their income on housing – does that mean transitional housing is not eligible? (see top slide on page 5 of presentation)

A: The Focus is on imminent risk of homeless (the person would likely be homeless within the next 30 days if not for the intervention).

2. Q: Could you please clarify what is meant by 'positive unintended consequences'? (see bottom slide on page 15 of presentation)

A: The program you are proposing must be *intentionally* addressing the participants' insecure housing. Given our community's limited funding – we want to support interventions that are housing focused and leave other interventions to be funded through more appropriate or aligned channels.

3. Q: What would constitute proper housing? Is there a definition? There is a lot of substandard housing out there.

A: Housing quality as it relates to property standards, building code and meeting zoning requirements is under the jurisdiction of the Planning and Economic Development Department of the City of Hamilton. However, we do care about the quality of the housing participants are connected with. The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan has an entire section dedicated to housing quality and that would be a helpful reference. Also, as the City of Hamilton, we do not encourage housing placement in apartments that are illegal or dangerous.

4. Q: In terms of the data focus – are you asking for common data systems to be in place? And is there any method to verify that data?

A: There are a number of databases and data management systems in place. Many organizations use the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) – it is available for free from the Federal Government. There are other data systems that local organizations use – The Housing Services Division would be happy to talk about these with anyone who is interested.

A Program Analyst has developed a consolidated data tool. Our funded organizations use this to verify data and report on the indicators our funders are interested in. He is also tasked with monitoring, analyzing and reporting the data. The Contract Analysts, through their contract monitoring, are tasked with keeping apprised of the day-to-day data collection work that organizations are doing.

5. Q: You mentioned that current Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) and Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) recipients will not be 'grandfathered' into this new funding – that they must reapply. Could you clarify that?

A: That is correct. It is important to note, however, that when we talk about the CHPI recipients, we are only talking about people receiving funding under the former Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program. Organizations in receipt of funding to deliver emergency shelter or domiciliary hostel programs will not be expected to apply.

6. Q: On the list of risk factors, culture and language are not present when we know those are issues in terms of homelessness. Can you comment on that? (see bottom slide on page 5 of presentation).

A: We reviewed a lot of literature on homelessness risk and there are many potential causes of homelessness. This list is based on a few sources that tried to determine what it was that actually might predict homelessness for people. In terms of equity, it is important to lend that perspective to this list. A couple of examples:

- Family breakdown can have a clear gender lens particularly given the vastly disproportionate experience of violence among women in families
- The reality is that Aboriginal people and racialized people are overrepresented in the criminal justice system
- Newcomers from conflict-ridden places will have unique histories of trauma

Those equity considerations must be taken into account in terms of the program design.

7. Q: Are you aware of the Aboriginal-specific indicators being developed in Edmonton?

A: Yes, we've spoken with Homeward Trust in Edmonton to try and get a better understanding. Cindy Sue Montana McCormick has offered to share a document that Homeward Trust is co-developing with Bent Arrow.

8. Q: I think it is important to embed the work of the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan into this work. What is happening with the Action Plan implementation?

A: The Action Plan informs the foundation of all of the work that we do in the Housing Services Division of the City of Hamilton. It was endorsed by City Council in December 2013, the implementation is underway and a coordinator is in the process of being hired.

9. Q: Will the Call for Applications stipulate what data should be collected?

A: Yes, the outcomes and indicators will be clearly identified in the Call for Applications.

10. Q: Do you know when the Action Plan coordinator will be hired? It would be helpful to be able to connect with them to make sure we are on the right track.

A: The Housing Services Division is in the process of hiring a temporary position to co-ordinate the implementation of the Action Plan. The position should be filled by the end of August 2014.

11. Have you decided on the length of time for the funding? Will it be provided to agencies for 2 or 4 years?

A: We have not decided yet. We recognize the importance of stability in the system but also need to have the flexibility as the Service Manager to make changes if the outcomes are not being met.