



Hamilton

**The Homelessness Partnering Strategy**

**Homelessness Prevention:**

**What is it & what does it mean for Hamilton?**

**June 18, 2014**

# Objectives for Today

- To ensure service providers have a good understanding of Homelessness Prevention
- To help Hamilton service providers better understand the requirements under HPS and CHPI as they relate to Homelessness Prevention
- Help potential applicants ensure their proposed program fits within the realm of Homelessness Prevention to achieve results for people and the broader community
- Minimize competition for the limited funds



# Overview of Presentation

The presentation will be based on the three expectations you will find in the Call for Applications – Homelessness Prevention Stream:

- 1) Lessening the Risk of Homelessness
- 2) Aligned with the Promising Principles
- 3) Focused on Housing Outcomes



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# What is Homelessness Prevention?

“Stopping people from becoming homeless in the first place.”

- Homelessness Prevention is a series of activities that reduce the risk factors that cause homelessness
- Referred to as an “upstream” approach vs. a “downstream” (reactive) response
- Represents a coordinated/strategic systems approach
- There are many elements that impact homelessness that are outside the purview of our funding mandate, service system and municipal control



# Why Homelessness Prevention?

- The most successful and strategic approaches to homelessness invest heavily in prevention
- A more responsive system that better meets the needs of the people before a personal crisis is experienced
- Outcomes experienced at both the individual (personal) and community (population) levels:
  - Increased economic security
  - Improved health, well-being and quality of life
  - Enhanced social and personal stability



# Hamilton's Readiness for Homelessness Prevention

- Literature describes characteristics of homelessness prevention readiness



Motivation, working across organizations



Targeting and good use of data



Assessment



# Expectations in the Call for Applications

- The literature did not tell us which interventions are most effective at preventing homelessness
- Therefore, our Call for Applications will be based on the following three elements:
  - Lessening the risk of homelessness
  - Aligned with promising principles
  - Focused on housing outcomes
- It is not about being ‘good or bad’ but about alignment with the housing focus of the funding

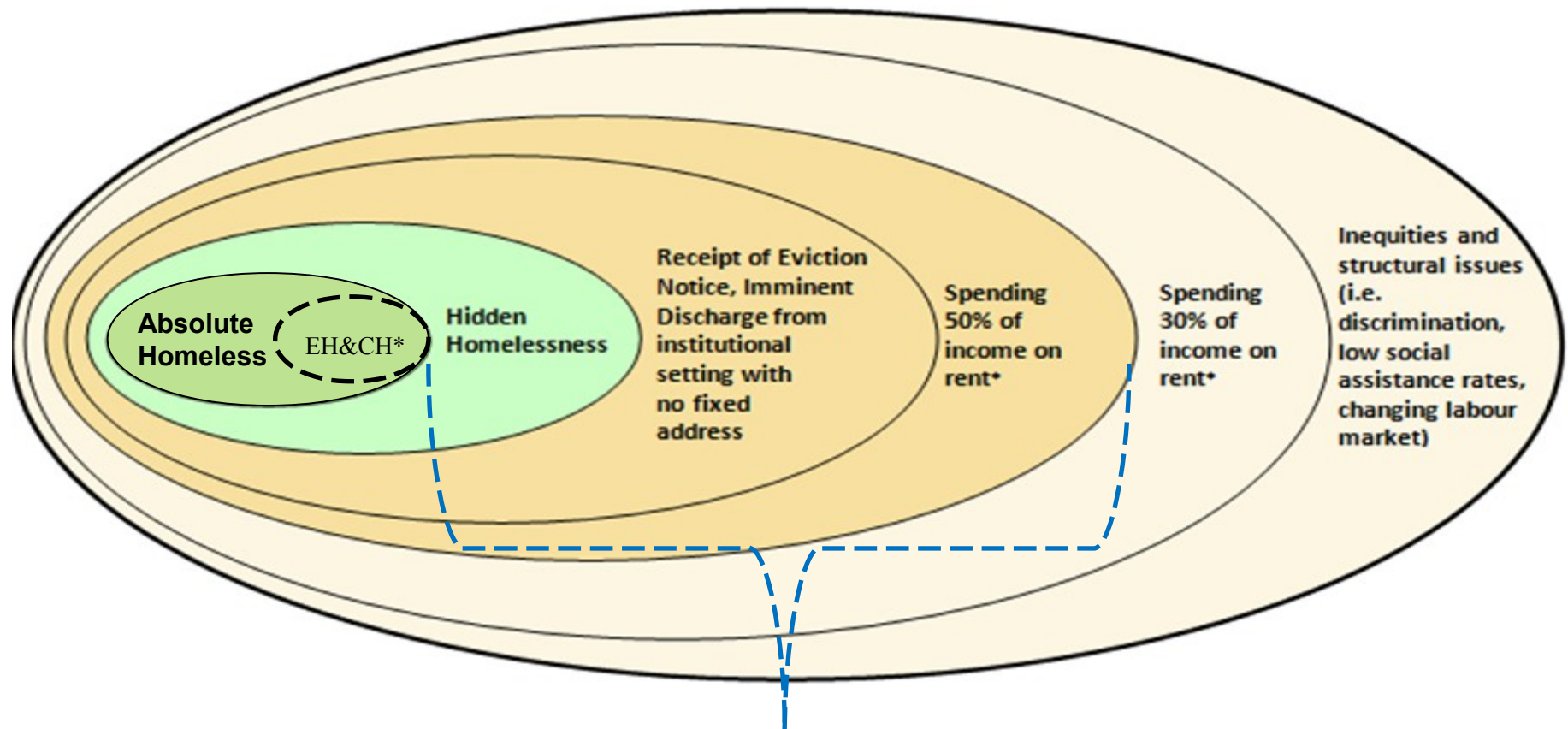
# Expectation #1: Lessening Homelessness Risk

- *Predicting* homelessness is challenging
- Homelessness is complex – some people will experience many risk factors but never become homeless
- Many factors related to housing and homelessness – best to focus on both risk and protective factors





# Target Population – Economic/Housing Risk



- In scope – all projects funded through this CFA will work with these risk factors
- Does not preclude working with other issues (trauma, mental health, disability but must fall into one of these income/housing risk factors as well)

# Risk Factors for Homelessness

- Some of the risk factors that are clearer in terms of predicting homelessness include:
  - Poverty plus...
    - Previous experiences of homelessness
    - Family breakdown (divorce, abuse, kicking out a youth)
    - Leaving institutional care (jail, child welfare, long term hospitalization)
    - Trauma history
    - Social isolation (weak natural network of supports)
  - The CFA will look for activities that focus on and lessen risk



# Why Focus on Risk?

- Gives an accurate picture of what people need
- A population lens only tells part of the story and potentially does not help people receive the right service
- However, an equity lens should be overlaid on the risk analysis



# Why Focus on Risk?

## An Example: Suzanne & Beth

**Suzanne** is at risk of homelessness. Her boss cut her hours at work and she can't make rent this month.

**Beth** is at risk of homelessness. She experienced a lot of trauma growing up in foster care. She copes with that trauma by drinking. The drinking has become problematic and she is finding it hard to remain stable in her housing (not paying rent, fighting with her landlord)



# Why Focus on Risk?

## An Example: Suzanne & Beth

### Commonalities:

1. Both are at risk of homelessness
2. Both require some kind of intervention to remain stably housed

### Some Added Considerations:

1. How does the nature or degree of the risk apply to the application of certain interventions over others?
2. While the intervention is risk-focused, how can we ensure we apply an equity perspective?



# Why Focus on Risk?

## An Example: Suzanne & Beth

### **Suzanne:**

She may benefit from a temporary financial subsidy, some support around her rights at work and a broader advocacy effort that looks at gender and underemployment.

### **Beth:**

She may benefit from a trusteeship program, a harm-reduction program and gender-based, trauma-informed counselling.



- ✓ To prevent homelessness, both need prevention-based interventions but they need different types of programs and supports.

# Prevention Activities Research

- The Project Team reviewed a series of program-types that might be considered prevention
  - Street Outreach
  - Shelter Diversion and Early Intervention
  - Tenant Education
  - Landlord/Tenant Relations
  - Housing Search Assistance
  - Food Security
  - Day Programs
  - Financial Management Supports
  - Referrals
  - Family Mediation
  - Direct Client Benefits
- This list is not exhaustive
- No evaluative research to help us prioritize
- But whatever the intervention – it must be clearly linked to housing outcomes

# Expectation #2: Aligning with Promising Principles in Homelessness Prevention

Through the review of the literature, six promising practices in homelessness prevention have emerged:

- Literature did not identify which intervention-types resulted in better homelessness prevention outcomes
- City of Hamilton's approach will be to fund interventions that best align with the following six principles



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# Promising Principles in Homelessness Prevention

The six principles are:

1. Assessment and targeting
2. Supporting people to move from crisis to stability
3. Data gathering and evaluation
4. Participating in a system of care approach
5. Executing effective referrals
6. Flexibility and person-centred service



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# Promising Principles in Homelessness Prevention

## #1 - Assessment and Targeting:

Interventions should have mechanisms to assess the risks and strengths of people who access services and target the right services to meet those needs



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# Promising Principles in Homelessness Prevention

## #1 - Assessment and Targeting

Effective assessment and targeting relies on:

- Evidence-informed assessment tools
- Strong participation in a system of care (to really understand the full complement of potential services)
- Willingness to refer someone to a more appropriate service as needed



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# Promising Principles in Homelessness Prevention

## #2 - Supporting people from Crisis to Stability:

Crisis resolution is an important component of prevention programming, but it is not enough. A prevention program's primary focus is not to simply address the crisis; it is to focus on supporting people from a state of crisis to a state of stability.



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# Promising Principles in Homelessness Prevention

## #2 - Supporting people from Crisis to Stability

Effective supports that move from crisis to stability should include:

- A strong crisis response
- Process to understand what stability means for the participant and to assess their capacity to achieve it
- Mechanisms that move beyond the crisis often in a staged way (like a graduated program) to help people become self-reliant



# Promising Principles in Homelessness Prevention

## #3 - Data Gathering and Evaluation:

Interventions should be able to isolate what is working, what is not working and then be able to make changes throughout the duration of the program to better serve the people accessing its services. Sharing data and evaluation results also helps add to local system understanding about best practices.



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# Promising Principles in Homelessness Prevention

## #3 - Data Gathering and Evaluation

Effective data gathering and evaluation requires:

- The right data collection tools (forms, databases)
- People who are trained and skilled at data collection
- Commitment
- Informative and action-oriented use of the data/evaluation results



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# Promising Principles in Homelessness Prevention

## #4 - Participation in a System of Care:

Each intervention is but one component of a comprehensive system of supports. Prevention programs must be well connected to the system of supports related to housing and homelessness. Agencies should know their area(s) of strength and only serve those people whose needs align.



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# Promising Principles in Homelessness Prevention

## #4 - Participation in a System of Care

Effective participation in a system of care requires:

- Membership on collaboratives
- Engaging in formal and informal community partnerships
- Ability to share outcomes
- Asking participants what works for them



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# Promising Principles in Homelessness Prevention

## #5 - Execute Effective Referrals:

Not every person who enters the front door of a program is well-suited for the intervention that particular prevention program provides. Should their own programming not align with the risk factors demonstrated during assessment, staff should have established mechanisms in place to effectively refer people to the appropriate intervention.



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# Promising Principles in Homelessness Prevention

## #5 - Execute Effective Referrals

Effective referrals require:

- Establish consistent system-wide referral practices through Referral Management Systems
- Formalized referral practices and measurement of their successes/challenges to maximize client outcomes and best utilize community resources
- Information is exchanged from Referee to Service Provider
- Alignment between Outreach, Case Management and Housing Services



# Promising Principles in Homelessness Prevention

## #6 - Flexibility & Person-Centered Service:

One size fits all service delivery does not work. The participant must be central to the service provision since they are the experts in their lives. In addition to being responsible for meeting housing outcomes, service must be balanced with managing the preferences and timelines of people



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# Promising Principles in Homelessness Prevention

## #6 - Flexibility & Person-Centered Service

Commitment to flexibility and person-centred service means:

- Listening to what the participant needs
- Inviting participants into service design and evaluation
- Acknowledging the program rules and parameters are meant to support people, not create additional barriers



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# Expectation #3 - Focus on Housing Outcomes

A focus on housing outcomes:

- Means that housing must be the focus - the housing outcome cannot be a positive unintended consequence
- Refers to both obtaining housing and maintaining housing
- Focuses on outcomes vs. outputs



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# Homelessness Prevention Outcomes

Examples of Homelessness Prevention outcomes that will be tracked:

- Housing Placement Outcomes at time of service and 3/6 months
- Housing Stability Outcomes:  
Employment/Income/Education/Housing
- # households that moved from Transitional Housing into Long-Term Housing
- # of households at risk of homelessness that are stabilized



# Homelessness Prevention Target

- Hamilton will work to prevent 1,760 households from losing their housing in 2015



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# Combined Funding for Call for Applications

Two Call for Applications:

1. Housing First

2. Homelessness Prevention

– Combined annualized funding totals \$3,793,639

	Housing First	Homelessness Prevention	<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>
<i>HPS Stream</i>	\$1,868,887	\$1,006,325	\$2,875,212
<i>CHPI Stream</i>	N/A	\$918,480	\$918,480
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	\$1,868,887	\$1,924,752	\$3,793,639



# Allocations by Activity

Activity	Allocation	Project Activity Examples	Rationale
Direct Services	80%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing placement and housing loss prevention</li> <li>Responding to risk factors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Person-centred</li> <li>Will ultimately support outcomes</li> </ul>
Facilities	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No significant projects on the horizon</li> <li>Not enough \$ to justify taking it away from services for people</li> </ul>
Coordination of Resources	15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting the 'system of care' approach</li> <li>Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps with system shifts that reduce barriers</li> <li>Promotes 'system' focus</li> </ul>
Data	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying target pop'n</li> <li>Tracking HF/Non-HF participant outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on outcomes necessitates</li> </ul>
	100%		

# The Call for Applications – what to expect

- The CFA for Homelessness Prevention will be set up to have proponents describe their program in terms of:
  - Lessening Risk
  - Aligning with Prevention Principles
  - Meeting Housing Outcomes
- The CFA will ask proponents to provide evidence to support their project



# Next Steps

- A Council report with Hamilton's Community Priorities went to Council on June 9, 2014 and was endorsed
- A Call for Applications will be released in July
  - The Call for Applications will have two funding streams – Housing First and Homelessness Prevention
- The applications will be evaluated in the early fall
- Agencies will be notified of the decisions in December
- New projects will begin April 1, 2015



\* Information about the Housing First expectations/stream can be found at: [www.hamilton.ca/homelessness](http://www.hamilton.ca/homelessness) under 'Documents'



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