

Questions and Answers from the Housing First Event – May 7, 2014

- 1. Q:** It was mentioned that ‘at least’ 65% of total HPS funding must be allocated to Housing First projects. What proportion of Hamilton’s HPS funding will be allocated to Housing First programming 2014-2019?

A: 65%. The rationale for keeping it at the 65% level for the full five years (as opposed to increasing it) is that this split already represents a reduction in funding for programs that are focused on prevention. We do not want to further destabilize the system by exacerbating those funding cuts.

- 2. Q:** In the presentation I heard you mention that the 16-21 age bracket may be regarded as ‘not ready for independent housing’ because they might not be ready developmentally; can’t the same be said for some adults who are developmentally delayed?

A: Potentially, but in this case I was referencing Stephen Gaetz’s most recent research on Housing First programming for youth. He explains that while the Housing First model can be successfully applied to youth, some youth (typically younger individuals) may need additional supports before they are suited for independent living. This doesn’t mean that youth cannot fit under the Housing First model; however, it is a good example of an equity consideration.

- 3. Q:** Who is eligible to apply for this iteration of HPS funding?

A: Not-for-profit organizations, Municipalities, Aboriginal organizations, Public health and educational/research institutions. For-profit organizations may be eligible if the nature and intent of their project will not generate a profit.

- 4. Q:** This session was very helpful in outlining expectations around Housing First, but that is really only 65% of the total funding. Where can we access more information about the Homelessness Prevention (35%) component?

A: The Housing Services Division has been undertaking a review of homelessness prevention and intends to release a research brief. The homelessness prevention stream will be less prescriptive than the Housing First requirements we’ve been speaking about today. After today’s session, Housing Services Division staff will consider releasing the findings of the research in advance of the CFA.

- 5. Q:** Does the eligibility for Housing First interventions only apply to chronic shelter stays or does it apply to persons who are homeless and access other emergency services (such as hospital emergency rooms).

A: No. Projects are encouraged to work with outreach teams, hospitals, corrections and other emergency services to target the whole population of

chronically and episodically homeless persons. Projects will need to determine a methodology for identifying persons outside of shelter who meet the definitions of episodic or chronically homeless.

6. **Q:** Does the Housing First funding allow for providing supports in connecting people to employment services?

A: Yes; however, it encourages partnerships with existing employment support services as to ensure services are not duplicated in a community.

7. **Q:** Are there penalties for communities that do not meet their targets?

A: The federal government is looking for results. We cannot be sure that the federal government will continue funding communities that do not show progress in eliminating chronic and episodic homelessness. We are certain that communities will be evaluated. Local projects will be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that targets are being achieved. Our local Community Plan must be updated annually for the federal government. It is important to note that we now have community-wide targets. We will be implementing a monitoring process – it is conceivable that projects that are not contributing to the community targets could lose funding.

8. **Q:** Will Council be willing to support the system in 2019 should HPS funding not continue?

A: We cannot comment on what City Council may or may not support in the future.

9. **Q:** Has there been any work done on estimating the impact on the emergency shelter system as a result of the Housing First focus? If 121 people are no longer going to be using the shelter system, shouldn't that reduce occupancy?

A: We have to understand that the 121 chronic and episodic individuals in the shelter system in 2013 may not be the same 121 chronic and episodic individuals in the shelter system in 2014. So that prediction would make sense, but more analysis is needed to track and monitor trends over time.

10. **Q:** Is the City of Hamilton looking into providing Rent Supplements or Housing Allowances directly to Housing First participants?

A: The Housing Services Division is looking into this. The Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) program, which we currently rely on to fund much of our Rent Supplement programming, is a provincial stream that does not currently have a long term commitment. We are looking forward to an ongoing commitment from the Province.

11. Q: How do we ensure that Hamilton does not end up with a cluster of Housing First units in one dwelling?

A: HPS's Housing First program speaks about the need for a strong Landlord Relations strategy. Providing participants with housing choice is a founding principle of Housing First programming so such a strategy should include exploring a number of different housing alternatives particularly options in the secondary housing market.

12. Q: Is there a prerequisite that units have to be legal... what if tenants are housed in an illegal unit and are evicted because the unit does not meeting zoning or some other regulation – what happens to the participant then?

A: As the City, we can't be party to housing participants in illegal units.