



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada

AT HOME/CHEZ SOI PROJECT: VANCOUVER AT A GLANCE

What are we investigating?

We are looking for the best combination of housing and supports to help homeless people living with mental illness in Vancouver. We specifically want to know what works and does not work for people with substance use issues. We are also investigating the outcomes of people living in a single residential building called the Bosman – about half of the project participants receiving housing are living here.

We are using a Housing First approach. This means first providing housing, then the individualized supports needed.

What we learn in Vancouver will help policy makers better understand what needs to be done to solve chronic homelessness for people who experience mental illness in Vancouver and in other parts of Canada. Some of the questions we are hoping to answer include:

- Does Housing First work, and for whom?
- Does Housing First work in this particular Vancouver context?
- What are the necessary ingredients for Housing First success?
- What are the outcomes for people receiving Housing First supports through the project?
- How much does it cost to provide Housing First and how does it compare to the cost for the kinds of community services that exist now?

Who is participating in Vancouver?

- People with moderate to severe mental health problems
- People who have been living on the streets and in shelters
- Over 230 participants are currently receiving housing and supports and over 200 participants are receiving the usual supports available in their communities

How does it work?

- People are given a choice of apartments in which to live.
- Participants pay 30% of their income towards their rent. The rest is subsidized by the project.
- People receive regular visits from Housing First Teams at least once a week. They receive support with their mental and physical health issues and help with life skills such as developing connections in their communities and maintaining their housing.

What are we finding in Vancouver?

- 7% of participants are less than 25 years of age
- 73% of participants are male and 27% are female
- 15% of participants identify as Aboriginal
- 25% have one or more children under the age of 18
- Median lifetime duration of homelessness is 3 years
- More than 75% of participants have 2 or more mental disorders
- Substance use is strongly associated with longer periods of homelessness among adults with mental disorders
- Substance use is also strongly associated with early experience of first becoming homeless
- Many participants have experienced cumulative trauma and loss, extending back to childhood
- Many people are still living in their first homes provided through the project

Read more detailed early findings at www.mentalhealthcommission.ca, *At Home/Chez Soi Project*

What makes the Vancouver project unique?

- We have a unique housing situation to study: a residential setting called the Bosman where close to half of the project participants who are being provided housing, are living
- Extensive community partnerships

Quick Facts about the national At Home/Chez Soi project

- Over 1030 participants are currently receiving housing and supports and 980 participants are receiving the usual supports available in their communities.
- In 2008, the Government of Canada provided the MHCC with \$110 million dollars for this research project.
- The project was officially launched in Moncton, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver, in November 2009.
- This is a 5-year project and each participant is being followed for 2 years.
- The project will end in the spring of 2013.
- Work is underway to ensure that people participating in the project will have a place to live once the research is over.

What are we finding nationally?

- 70% of the study participants are men and 30% are women
- Most of participants are middle aged although approximately 10% are under the age of 25 and 10% are over the age of 55
- More than 90% of participants have at least one chronic physical health problem
- 82% of the participants were living on the street, 18% were staying in shelters when they entered the project
- Over 90% were unemployed when they entered the project and the average income in the month prior was only \$691 with over half earning less than \$400 in that month
- 72% of people housed have remained in the original housing provided through the project
- Participants identify the project as an opportunity to move forward in their lives
- Participants also identify the project as an opportunity to get involved in their community and with some participants pursuing educational and vocational opportunities

For more information: www.mentalhealthcommission.ca

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