
CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST: Mental Health, Housing, and Homelessness Organizations

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) has established a successful Housing First Training and Technical Assistance Program (T&TA) to build Housing First capacity in Canada and support communities to implement Housing First as a best practice model. This is a call for mental health, housing, and homelessness organizations across Canada to express interest in taking over leadership of the T&TA program from the MHCC.

Issue Date: May 22, 2015

Deadline for Expressions of Interest: June 5, 2015

ARE YOU?

1. An organization working in mental health, housing, or homelessness in Canada?
2. Interested in supporting communities to implement the Housing First approach to address homelessness in their communities?
3. Interested in taking up leadership for a highly successful training and technical assistance program established by the Mental Health Commission of Canada following on the findings of At Home/Chez Soi?

BACKGROUND

Across Canada, many people do not have access to the housing and supports they need. They live in poor quality, unstable, and unsafe housing, or in shelters, hospitals, or on the street. Recent estimates suggest that up to 200,000 Canadians experience homelessness in a given year; that 30,000 people in Canada are homeless on any given night; and many more may be among the hidden homeless.¹ Homelessness negatively impacts quality of life, health, and mental health, increasing reliance on costly emergency services (e.g. hospitals). Current responses to homelessness are costly, despite evidence that investments in affordable and supportive housing are more effective for people's health and quality of life and are less costly.¹

Homelessness is the result of a complex set of factors, such as system failures, individual circumstances, decreasing government investments in affordable housing options, poverty, and stigma and discrimination.¹ Reducing homelessness in Canada requires a system approach and broad community participation. Housing First (HF) offers an effective, evidence-based approach proven to increase housing stability and quality of life for individuals who were chronically homeless and living with mental health issues. It is grounded in principles of choice and self-determination and provides individualized support services, no housing readiness requirements, harm reduction, and social and community integration.

MHCC TAKES ACTION

In 2014, the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) completed the five-year At Home/Chez Soi project which looked at the effectiveness of HF. The results showed that HF can rapidly end homelessness; is a sound investment; and can be effectively implemented in a variety of Canadian cities. It also found that having fidelity to the HF model optimizes outcomes.

Since the completion of At Home/Chez Soi, there has been a shift in federal and provincial policies towards HF and many communities are supporting a HF approach. This shift represents a new way

of working and requires communities to understand the model, navigate and lead community and systems change, and develop new skills to implement and sustain the program. MHCC recognized the need to build HF capacity in communities and, in 2014, developed the Housing First Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) program. This program supports communities in developing and implementing HF and provides opportunities for communities to learn, share, and problem-solve.

The current T&TA program draws on the knowledge and experience acquired through At Home/Chez Soi, other Canadian HF experiences and the expertise of Pathways to Housing National. It offers an interactive web-based toolkit and provides hands-on training to foster learning. Communities can access initial and follow-up training, monthly calls with trainers as well as local communities of practice to help them track progress and identify key challenges or achievements. Communities also have the opportunity to undergo a fidelity assessment; access ongoing technical assistance; and participate in quarterly webinars and regional events. The current T&TA program is well underway in 18 communities and is scheduled to conclude in March 2016.

...AND NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

The T&TA program has been extremely well received and demand for the program is growing. A number of communities are requesting training and it is expected that the need for HF training will continue to grow as communities move through planning, implementation, and sustaining phases.

The MHCC recognizes the need to continue the program beyond its two-year commitment and is seeking Expressions of Interest from mental health, housing, and homelessness organizations to take over the HF T&TA program and ensure the program continues.

Interested organizations will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with MHCC regarding the transition and continuance of the HF T&TA program. Organizations would take over leadership for the established T&TA program, its roster of national HF trainers, and the relationships that have been established in communities and with funders. The T&TA program does not come with any financial support.

This is a valuable opportunity for your organization to take the lead in promoting best practices associated with Housing First and to support communities across Canada with ending homelessness.

REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMISSION OF AN EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

- **5 Pages Maximum** per submission
- Expressions of Interest may be submitted in either English or French

As a mental health, housing, or homelessness organization, please submit a brief description of the following to express your interest:

- **Description of your organization and mandate**
- **Description of your leadership in Housing First/experience with Housing First**
- **Summarize your vision for the Housing First Training and Technical Assistance program under your leadership. Please incorporate a description of the following elements:**
 - i. What the program would look like, including how you would maintain/expand the current program (e.g. program elements, trainers, community selection)
 - ii. How you would incorporate the At Home/Chez Soi evidence and ensure fidelity to the HF model as demonstrated in At Home/Chez Soi
 - iii. Identify possible funding sources and describe the funding viability of the program under your leadership
 - iv. Identify partners/who you would work with to deliver the T&TA program

*For questions and to submit your responses by June 5, 2015, please contact Aimee Watson,
Senior Policy Analyst, Prevention and Promotion Initiatives at
awatson@mentalhealthcommission.ca*

*We will communicate with qualified firms by June 19, 2015 to request additional information,
if necessary, and inform them of next steps.
All expressions of interest will be treated confidentially.*

¹ Stephen Gaetz, Jesse Donaldson, Tim Richter, & Tanya Gulliver (2013): The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press. <http://www.homelesshub.ca/ResourceFiles/SOHC2103.pdf>