



**BC Housing**

Research and Corporate Planning

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# **Understanding Women's Second Stage Housing Programs in BC**

Prepared by Research and Corporate Planning Department

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## Executive Summary

In 2009, the administration of the Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program (WTHSP) was transferred from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development to the British Columbia Housing Management Commission (BC Housing). The WTHSP includes transition houses, safe homes and second stage housing for women with or without children who have experienced violence and/or are at risk of violence. In addition to the nine second stage housing projects that transferred to BC Housing from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development, BC Housing also funds seven additional second stage housing programs through other BC Housing funding programs. BC Housing provided funding to 16 second stage housing projects in 2011/12, with approximately 160 housing units.

Second stage housing programs provide housing and supports for women who have left abusive relationships as they make plans for independent living. Many women are referred to second stage housing programs from shorter-term transition houses and safe home programs. Second stage housing programs provide emotional support, safety planning, safe affordable transitional housing, and referrals to support services and long-term housing.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how the BC Housing funded second stage housing programs operate. This included looking at the services provided, housing form, and staffing models. The report can be used by second stage program providers to learn how other second stage housing programs operate. This report will also inform policy and program decisions. As well, this report can be used by housing providers considering or developing new second stage housing programs.

This study involved in-depth qualitative interviews with 16 second stage housing programs. Interviews were conducted with the program coordinators, but in some cases other colleagues from the agencies participated in the interviews, such as the supervisors of the program coordinators. The interviews were done over the phone and took approximately one hour to complete.

### Facilities

The second stage housing programs in BC use a range of facility types to shelter women and their children. Typically the units are self-contained suites but one program provides five private bedrooms in a detached house where single women live communally and share cooking facilities and other living space. Two thirds of the second stage housing units are located in apartment buildings and one third is row houses. Regarding the number of housing units in each program, nearly two thirds have between 6 and 12 units in each while less than one sixth have either less than 6 or more than 12 in each. Larger three and four bedroom units are more typically located in row houses (62%) than those located in apartment buildings (38%). About half of the second stage housing units were furnished while the other half were unfurnished. Those programs with furnished units indicated they usually provide everything including linens, towels, kitchen items, and furniture.

### Services

The second stage housing programs in BC provide more than shelter and a safe home. They also provide a broad range of services to the women. The second stage housing program coordinators were asked to identify the support services and referrals they offer women from a list of options. All programs offer on-site safety planning, emotional supports, referrals to counselling, assistance in accessing income assistance, money management, health care services, and food programs, as well as assistance in applying for educational opportunities.

Half of the second stage housing programs were 12 months in length. Only one program was shorter than 12 months, with a program length of 9 months. Over one third of the programs were between one and two years. One program allowed women to stay for three years.

### Clients

Most of the programs primarily serve women with children, with some programs prioritizing women with children over single women. Some of the programs mentioned that they take in a number of women who are pregnant or have

newborn babies. Two programs also mentioned that they take in several teen moms. Two other programs said that they are seeing an increasing number of senior women, more than expected.

All participants said that most women who leave the program move on to subsidized housing, including BC Housing sites and other non-market housing. Just under half of the interviewees said that women in their programs go to market housing, but many said this is not common. Interviewees from six programs said that women in their programs sometimes go back to their partners, but this was a rare situation. Some interviewees said women are less likely to go back to their partners the longer they have been in the program. They said that very few women return to their abusive partners if they complete the full second stage program.

### Staffing

The second stage housing programs typically had positions that fell into the following three categories:

- Coordinators or managers
  - o Responsible for program administration (including reporting, goal setting, fundraising, budgeting), tenancy management (including rent collection, paying bills for the facility), support work (referrals, advocacy, one-on-one or group support, crisis intervention, helping tenants find housing), and recreational activities
- Support workers
  - o Responsible for outreach work, one-on-one or group counselling, child and youth supports, recreational activities, help tenants find housing, accompaniment to appointments
- Tenancy management and building maintenance
  - o Responsible for building maintenance, rent collection

None of the second stage housing programs had staff on-site 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For emergencies, such as immediate need for emotional supports, three quarters of the second stage housing programs had an arrangement with a nearby transition house which has 24/7 staff coverage (11 were transition houses and one was an emergency shelter).

### General Successes and Challenges

The second stage housing program coordinators were asked to highlight some of the key successes and challenges of their programs.

Successes	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide access to safe and affordable housing with supports for women when they make the decision to leave their abusive partner</li> <li>- Help women connect with stable independent housing at the completion of the programs, including subsidized and market housing</li> <li>- Help women access and navigate the support services they need</li> <li>- Have formal one-on-one and/or group counseling meetings with women in the program on a regular basis</li> <li>- Recognize that women are their own experts and they know what they are ready to do and what they are not ready to do</li> <li>- Some programs are able to provide longer length of stays compared to other programs, which allows women more time to settle in and access the program services</li> <li>- Have well-qualified staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More staff hours are needed to support:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Providing referrals to appropriate services</li> <li>o Early intervention with safety issues</li> <li>o Activities for children</li> <li>o Transporting women to appointments</li> <li>o Families with more complex needs or families with specific cultural needs</li> <li>o Finding appropriate long-term housing for women and children</li> </ul> </li> <li>- More funding to cover:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Unit turnover costs and repairs</li> <li>o Renovations or green retrofits</li> <li>o Furnishing units</li> <li>o Decent staff wages</li> <li>o Food and meals for women and children</li> </ul> </li> <li>- There is more demand for second stage units than what is available</li> <li>- There are long waitlists for community services</li> <li>- Navigating community services can be a challenge</li> </ul>

## Introduction

In 2009, the administration of the Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program (WTHSP) was transferred from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development to the British Columbia Housing Management Commission (BC Housing). The WTHSP includes transition houses, safe homes and second stage housing for women with or without children who have experienced violence and/or are at risk of violence. In addition to the nine second stage housing projects that transferred to BC Housing from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development, BC Housing also funds seven additional second stage housing programs through other BC Housing funding programs.

Second stage housing programs provide housing and supports for women who have left abusive relationships as they make plans for independent living. Many women are referred to second stage housing programs from shorter-term transition house and safe home programs. Second stage housing programs provide emotional support, safety planning, safe affordable transitional housing, and referrals to support services and long-term housing.

BC Housing provided funding to 16 second stage housing projects in 2011/12, with approximately 160 housing units. Nine of the second stage housing programs provide quarterly statistics to BC Housing. The nine programs took in a total of 214 new tenants to their programs in 2011/12, including 88 women and 126 children. Almost one quarter of the new women accepted into the nine programs in 2011/12 were between the ages of 25 and 29 years of age, while almost half were between the ages of 30 and 39 years. Among the nine programs, staff dedicated a combined total of 850 hours to outreach services in 2011/12.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how the BC Housing funded second stage housing programs operate. This included looking at the services provided, housing form, and staffing models. The report can be used by second stage program providers to learn how other second stage housing programs operate. This report will also inform policy and program decisions. As well, this report can be used by housing providers considering or developing new second stage housing programs.

## Methodology

This study involved in-depth qualitative interviews with 16 second stage housing programs. Interviews were conducted with the program coordinators, but in some cases other colleagues from the agencies participated in the interviews, such as the supervisors of the program coordinators. The interviews were done over the phone and took approximately one hour to complete. Interviewees were asked open-ended and coded questions on the following topics<sup>1</sup>:

- Descriptions of the second stage housing facilities
- Services and outreach activities offered to women through the second stage housing program
- Program related questions
- Staffing structures
- General successes/challenges/lessons learned

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 2 for the interview guide.

## Facilities

The second stage housing programs in BC use a range of facility types to shelter women and their children. Typically the units are self-contained suites but one program provides five private bedrooms in a detached house where single women live communally sharing cooking facilities and other living space. Two thirds of the second stage housing units are located in apartment buildings and one third is row houses. Regarding the number of housing units in each program, nearly two thirds have between 6 and 12 units, while less than one fifth have either less than 6 or more than 12 in each. Nearly half of the second stage housing units are located in an apartment building dedicated exclusively to the program.

**Table 1: Second Stage Housing Programs by Number of Units, 2012**

Number of Housing Units in each Program	%
Less than 6	19%
6 to 12	62%
More than 12	19%

N=16

For BC Housing funded second stage housing programs only

**Table 2: Second Stage Housing Programs by Facility Type, 2012**

Facility Type	%
Whole apartment building	47%
Part of an apartment building	12%
Row houses	29%
Detached house	6%
Duplex house	6%

N=17

For BC Housing funded second stage housing programs only

Note: One second stage housing program has units in two separate locations.

Over one third of the second stage housing units are three bedrooms or larger. One third of the second stage housing units are two-bedroom units. Nearly one third of the second stage housing units would be suitable for a single woman only (single bedroom, studio and one-bedroom units) according to the National Occupancy Standards. Larger three and four bedroom units are more typically located in row houses (62%) than those located in apartment buildings (38%).

**Table 3: Second Stage Housing Units by Unit Type, 2012**

Housing Units by Unit Type	%
Bedroom only	3%
Studio unit	1%
One-bedroom unit	27%
Two-bedroom unit	33%
Three-bedroom unit	29%
Four-bedroom unit	7%

N=175

For BC Housing funded second stage housing programs only

Almost half of the second stage housing units were furnished while the other half were unfurnished. Those programs with furnished units indicated they usually provide everything including linens, towels, kitchen items, and furniture.

For some programs, the furnishings were initially purchased with funding when the housing opened. In other programs, the furnishings were donated, for example, by church members, the community, or local thrift store. One program coordinator said, “As many as 80% of the women arrive with nothing. It is hard for her to focus on her needs and supports when she arrives. How can she do that if she doesn’t have a bed?”

For those programs with unfurnished units, most indicated that the women have access to donations. For example, the Women In Need store in Victoria will provide women with a full set of furniture once in a lifetime for women fleeing violence. Several program coordinators indicated that women prefer to choose their own furnishings, to have control over what they want and have. Others felt that if the women cannot take the furnishings with them when they leave the second stage housing program, then it is not helpful in the long term to provide them with a furnished unit. Another program coordinator said they decided that the fully furnished units created unrealistic expectations that affected the woman when she moved on to long term housing. They have chosen instead to do more work early on with her, discussing how to access resources, such as getting a free bed, and informing her of resources to help meet her basic needs.

**Table 4: Second Stage Housing Programs with Furnished Units, 2012**

Housing Units	%
Furnished	44%
Unfurnished	56%

N=16

For BC Housing funded second stage housing programs only

**Occupancy Standards**

Most of the program coordinators indicated they strive to neither over-house nor under-house the women and their children. Several indicated they do have to be flexible. One coordinator said if she over-houses the family, she finds the mother cannot cope. Two coordinators said they have had mothers share a bedroom with her children temporarily, especially if the child is an infant. Several coordinators said they may under-house temporarily until an appropriate unit is available. One coordinator said they had a mother with seven children whom they housed in their largest unit (four bedrooms) until they could find something else for her. Another coordinator said they once had a mother with nine children and they moved in extra beds to accommodate them all.

## Co-located

There are three second stage housing programs which share the facilities with another client group. In one program, the building has the emergency shelter exclusively for women and their children on the lower two floors and the second stage housing units are on the upper floors. In another program, the second stage housing units are rented from another non-profit housing provider and form part of a larger complex which serves as general family housing. In one program, the second stage housing units are part of a larger site on which the non-profit provider also manages separate buildings for other client groups.

## Other Facility Spaces

### On-site office space

Thirteen of the second stage housing programs have on-site office space for coordinators. Of the three programs without on-site office space, one coordinator indicated that there is space in one of the suites but it is not suitable and would cost too much money to convert it so they either meet the woman in her unit or at the off-site office.

### Common amenities areas

All except for one of the second stage housing programs had some type of common in-door amenities areas incorporated into their facility. Over half of the programs have a kitchen, which is generally used for special events such as tea socials, birthdays, holiday meals, celebrations, or to hold community kitchen programs to build the women's cooking skills. The kitchens range from small ones with only two appliances, fridge and microwave oven, to larger ones that are well-equipped. Half of the programs have a common room or lounge that is used for recreation and social activities usually as a part of the support services programming for the women and children such as group meetings or workshops. Half of the facilities have shared laundry rooms. Two of the programs have a locked room dedicated for computer and Internet access. None of the programs has a formal and licensed daycare within their buildings; however, one program is co-located on the same site as a licensed daycare facility. Plus there are two facilities with space that is dedicated for children and youth. Another program has a playroom where supervision is provided when staff is working and the mothers do not have to be there. At other facilities, the common areas may be used for children's activities.

**Table 5: Types of Common Amenities Areas at Second Stage Housing Program Facilities, 2012**

Common Amenities Areas	%
Shared, common or community kitchen	63%
Recreation and activities room	50%
Daycare	0%
Other:	n/a
Laundry	50%
Meeting room	38%
Children's playroom	12%
Computer room	12%
Resources room	6%
None	6%

N=16

For BC Housing funded second stage housing programs only



### Outdoor common space

Over half of the second stage housing programs have a patio or sitting area incorporated into their outdoor common space. In some facilities, it is a small area or it may be part of the individual townhouse unit. For others it is a courtyard or backyard with benches and seating and the area may be fenced and secure. One apartment building has a large common deck. At seven of the facilities, there is a designated smoking area outdoors. As for community gardening, three facilities have small common spaces that are actively used by the women. At three other facilities, the program coordinators said the women are welcome to use the community garden on-site or close by, or are welcome to garden on the property, but they rarely do. At one facility, they rely on volunteers to mow the lawn and keep the garden tidy. At five of the second stage housing programs, there is a recreational area with a basketball net for the children and youth to use. Fourteen of the facilities have a play area or formal playground for children on the property, although, it is not usually a large space. Typically it is the backyard (sometimes with a front yard too). At the two facilities with no area for children at all, the program coordinators said there is either a park next door or a playground close by. One of the second stage housing programs is located on a property with a large Garry Oak meadow which provides lots of green space and is seen as a real asset by the residents.

**Table 6: Types of Common Outdoor Space at Second Stage Housing Program Facilities, 2012**

<b>Common Outdoor Space</b>	<b>%</b>
Patio or sitting area	56%
Smoking area	44%
Community garden	19%
Recreational area (e.g. basketball court)	31%
Children's playground/play area	88%
Other	6%
None	6%

N=16

For BC Housing funded second stage housing programs only

## Service Provision

### *Types of Services and Referrals Offered*

The second stage housing programs in BC provide more than shelter and a safe home. They also provide a broad range of services to the women. The second stage housing program coordinators were asked to identify the support services and referrals they offer women from a list of options. All programs offer on-site safety planning, emotional supports, referrals to counselling, assistance in accessing income assistance, money management, health care services, and food programs, as well as assistance in applying for educational opportunities.

**Table 7: Types of Support Services and Outreach Activities Offered to Women at Second Stage Housing Programs, 2012**

Type of Support Service and Outreach Activity	%
Safety planning	100%
Emotional supports	100%
Referrals to counseling	100%
Assistance applying for educational opportunities	100%
Assistance with money management	100%
Assistance in accessing income assistance <sup>1</sup>	100%
Assistance in accessing health care	100%
MCFD advocacy	100%
Referrals to food programs	100%
Transportation	94%
Referrals to other services	94%
Assistance with completing subsidized housing applications	94%
Assistance with locating market housing	94%
Assistance with accessing/navigating legal aid	94%
Referrals to employment counseling/programs	88%
Referrals to immigration and/or multicultural services	88%
Recreational activities	88%
Other	50%

N=16

For BC Housing funded second stage housing programs only

<sup>1</sup> For some second stage housing programs, this assistance is not limited to income assistance, but includes help with accessing disability benefits.

The second stage housing program coordinators were asked to elaborate on the range of activities involved with providing certain support services in order to better understand them.

#### Transportation

The second stage housing program coordinators help the women with their transportation needs in diverse ways. More than half of the coordinators reported that staff transport and accompany women to any appointment where she needs advocacy and/or emotional support. A few indicated their ability to do so is dependent on the availability of staff time and resources. For one program this uses up a lot of the allotted staff time because it is a two hour drive for the return trip for the women to access a lawyer. Nearly half of the coordinators reported they regularly transport women to the local food bank, to a community kitchen or to access free food. Three program coordinators reported that they would transport a woman to the doctor or hospital if she was very ill or it was an emergency. Three programs would transport children to an appointment, to school, or on outings with the child and youth workers.

Nine of the programs reported that staff use their appropriately insured personal vehicles to provide transportation and are reimbursed for mileage. Two programs pay for a taxi to take the women to an appointment. Two second

stage housing programs have access to a vehicle that is owned by the society and used by other programs (e.g. nearby transition house). Nearly half of the second stage housing programs can provide bus tickets, some of which are given free to the program, or at a reduced cost. One program provides monthly transit passes that are purchased through the society's fundraising efforts. Some second stage housing programs are conveniently located near public transportation. One program coordinator explained that their program only provides transportation if she accompanies the woman because she is developing skills such as grocery shopping and it is one of her personal goals.

### Referrals to Food Programs

All of the second stage housing programs assist the women in accessing food. Over half of the programs ensure the women are able to easily access the local food bank. Six programs transport the women to the local food bank on a regular basis. One program has the food bank deliver directly to the second stage housing. One program is co-located with the food bank in the same building.

Some programs have established relationships with local businesses who donate food which the programs often share with former residents of the program as well as current ones:

- Two programs receive bread from Cobs Bakery once a week
- One program receives meat donations that fill their freezer twice a month
- One program picks up two day old food from Capers twice a week
- One program receives donations to stock their "food cupboard" on-site

Other ways the programs assist with women in accessing food include:

- Have in house community kitchen and program
- Provide snacks during child and youth programming
- Provide food for celebratory meals (e.g. birthdays, holidays or other social events)
- Have gift certificates for Safeway to be "borrowed" in an emergency (value of food vouchers has to be repaid)
- Provide 2 x \$100 food gift certificates when women first move-in
- Provide \$10 food voucher every month

### Recreational Activities

Most of the second stage housing programs provide some recreational activities for the women and their children. Often they are social events involving food and meals that bring the women in the program together. For these activities the women may have access to a community kitchen in the program. (In one program the community kitchen is used weekly to prepare nutritious and healthy meals using seasonal ingredients.) If the program does not provide the food directly or use food donations, they will give money to the women to shop for the food. Often the women are involved with preparing the meals. Examples include:

- Social teas once a month
- Monthly parties
- "Souper" night once a month (make a big pot of soup and have it with bread at the time of month when the women have little money left over)
- Special meals at holidays, such as Thanksgiving or Christmas
- Multi-cultural dinners
- Barbeques

Some programs link the women and their children to recreational programs in their neighbourhood that are subsidized or free to those with low income. For example the City of Vancouver provides leisure access passes. One program has flex passes to their community centre. One program works closely with their local community centre to

connect the women and her children to what they have to offer. In one program, the women and her children have full and free access to the gym, swimming pool and recreational programs operated by the society at another location.

Some programs organize other recreational activities that are focussed on the women only such as card games, movie nights, spa day, craft day, camping. One program arranges twice a year to take the women to a movie and provides child care (a staff person babysits). Some programs arrange recreational activities that are for the families, such as outings to Stanley Park to ride the train at Christmas, trips to the swimming pool. One program has received tickets through Kids Up Front Canada and given them to the families for an arts, sports or entertainment event. Some programs offer recreational activities for the women's children and youth only through summer camps, special outings, and drop in hours.

#### Other

Half of the programs indicated they offer other types of support services. Those directed to the women only included:

- Tax clinic held once a year for a week to 10 days by a volunteer to complete tax returns (service available to current and former residents)
- Art therapy offered by volunteer or college students
- Group sessions on conflict resolution and healthy relationships
- 16 step group support program
- Rediscover Parenting Program
- Financial literacy workshops (10 weeks) in partnership with Canadian Centre for Financial Literacy
- BC Smoking Cessation Program
- Gather and Give Home Essentials Kit
- Clothing Donation Program

Those directed to the women with children included:

- Mother Goose program for children through the Vancouver Public Library
- Child care and child care subsidies
- Music lessons for children
- Gifts ("Peace at Christmas")

#### **Most/Least Used Services**

The second stage housing program coordinators were asked, from their perspective, what are the most and least used services and referrals from among the range that they offer. The support services and referrals that are most accessed by women in second stage housing programs include:

- Emotional supports
- Referrals to counseling
- Assistance with completing subsidized housing applications or with locating market housing
- Assistance in accessing/navigating legal aid
- MCFD advocacy
- Referrals to food programs

The support services and outreach activities that are least accessed by women in second stage housing programs include:

- Assistance with accessing health care
- Optional recreational activities
- Assistance applying for educational opportunities

### *Additional Services Needed*

Most second stage housing program coordinators indicated a need for additional services and activities in their communities. At least half of the coordinators would like to develop more group sessions, workshops and learning opportunities that work for the women, and to offer them on a more regular basis. Examples of additional opportunities include:

- Life skills workshops
- Workshops on budgeting and managing finances
- Parenting courses
- Family support programs with in-home supports
- Staff person to be on-call and available to talk to when needed. (“Some clients have never rented before. To go from two-parent to single parent family can be hard on the mother as she has to stay strong for her children, and there are emotional barriers.”)
- Legal Support Worker who is available full-time to support the women one-on-one in her navigation of the legal, child protection, and income assistance systems
- Interpreters for women with no or limited English language skills to make group sessions more accessible

Over half of the coordinators indicated there were not enough staff hours for support services and activities such as:

- Move-in and move-out which is a difficult time for the women when they need extra help and support
- Evenings and weekends when a lot goes on which compromises the safety of all residents
- Relief staff to fill in for regular staff when they are away
- Staff person to be on-site for those who do not have on-site office space

It was suggested that improved access to support services is needed because:

- Wait time for STV counseling in some communities may be 6 months
- Women suffer from trauma and post traumatic stress and need in depth counseling with a therapist in the community

At least three of the program coordinators mentioned there is a demand for second stage housing units in their community. They turn women away because of a lack of second stage housing or appropriate housing. For example there is a lack of bachelor/studio units for single women.

In some communities there is a need for more permanent subsidized housing to help the women to move on. Some women are at risk of having poor living conditions. One program would like a full time Transitional Housing Worker who would work with each woman on a one-to-one basis to secure long-term safe and affordable housing from beginning to end. This worker would meet with the women, identify with them what their housing needs are, what housing options are such as cooperative, not-for-profits, do mock interviews with the women.

A few program coordinators indicated they would like to offer more social and recreational activities for the women including yoga classes, group retreats.

The main barrier preventing the second stage housing programs from offering more services and activities is lack of funding.

## *Proximity of Services*

When asked to comment on the proximity of the second stage housing to the types of services and supports that the women need, 11 of the 16 program coordinators reported that most of the services are within a 30 minute walking distance. While three program coordinators reported issues with the location of the housing to services:

- Women get connected to the surrounding neighbourhood, but there may be no subsidized or affordable market housing nearby, so they have to move out of the area upon completing the program
- In winter, it may be too cold or there is too much snow to walk to services
- Hills and lack of sidewalks can make it difficult to access nearby services, especially for mothers with children

In addition to the support services such as Stopping the Violence (STV) and Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) counseling that the women and their children would typically access, there is a wide range of services available close by some of the second stage housing programs including:

- Community centers, which offer recreational opportunities and programs such as Best Babies, Strong Start, Single Parent, Ready-to-Rent
- Community organizations such as Salvation Army, Big Brothers, Boys and Girls Club offer family services and addiction based programs
- Community-based health services
- Church serves hot lunch as well as drug and alcohol counseling
- Women's drop-in centers
- Social enterprises that offer free credit, provides furniture, and volunteer opportunities for women to learn new skills

## *Partnerships in Service Provision*

While all second stage housing programs make referrals to other services, program coordinators were asked if they provide any programs or services in partnership with other organizations that provide violence against women services. Some programs said they are too small to have partnerships. One program indicated their community was too small to have any other organization providing violence against women services. In those programs which have partnerships, they indicated they are generally informal ones. Examples of other organizations with which they may collaborate or have collaborated with in the past include:

- RCMP Victim Services
- Friendship centers
- Women's Sexual Assault Centre
- Spousal Assault program
- Family Services/Single Parent Resource Centre
- Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Elizabeth Fry Society
- Urban Women's Strategy
- Child Protection
- Battered Women Services
- Jane Doe group

Second stage housing program coordinators reported that partnerships they may have with other service organizations such as community centres, employment programs, mental health organizations are informal too. Examples of service organizations and their representatives with whom they may collaborate included:

- Public health dietician who gave workshops on preparing healthy meals on a budget
- Bounce Back program provided telephone support to the women who are referred by their family doctor
- Job Options employment program provided by Canadian Mental Health Association
- Big Brothers program
- Family Resource Centre coordinated free programming on parenting and life skills supports
- Mental health counselor provided a 12 week program for women in abusive relationships

### **Challenges in Service Provision**

Second stage housing program coordinators identified a number of challenges in the delivery of support services or referrals for women:

- Long waitlists for programs in a community
- Limited specific support services in a community
  - o May require culturally specific support services
  - o Women who are landed immigrants with language barriers may require on-going assistance which is not funded
- Poverty of families
  - o Women need a lot of help getting food for themselves and their children
  - o Women with low incomes find it difficult to manage their money
  - o Access to disability assistance is a long process
- Access to lawyers
  - o Transportation and staff time required to accompany women to a lawyer can be high
  - o Cuts to legal aid and availability of lawyers is some communities
- Stable, appropriate and affordable housing is difficult or impossible to find in many communities
  - o Long waitlists for subsidized housing
  - o Market housing is expensive and may not be the right type for women and their children
- Women who do not qualify for child care subsidy
  - o There is no flexibility if the woman only needs part-time child care

### **Lessons Learned for Service Provision**

Second stage housing program coordinators identified a number of lessons learned in the delivery of support services or referrals for women:

- One program adjusted their staffing hours to better meet the needs of women. Staffing originally started at 10am and missed out on office hours of referral services, and continued too late in the evening when mothers were getting their children ready for bed. The coordinator adjusted the staffing hours to start at 9am and continue to 7pm
- The woman is the author of her own life but she still needs structure. Regularly scheduled one-on-ones and group sessions help create structure
- Several coordinators advised, "Don't try to do more than you have the resources and funding to do"
  - o One program takes in women who are higher functioning because their program does not have on-site or full-time staff to support women with more needs, such as issues with hoarding. The program does not have the funding to cover damage to the units beyond regular wear and tear

- Empower women to do things for themselves
  - o They should not become dependent on the staff
  - o They need to make decisions for themselves as to which support services they choose to access. For example, staff can provide phone numbers for the services, but the women need to make the calls for themselves
- Ensure an appropriate match between women and the case managers
  - o Know when it is the best time to refer the client to STV counseling to get her onto the list
- Protect the safety and confidentiality of the women
- Be careful, selective and realistic in supporting women with mental health issues or addictions
  - o Women with significant mental health issues may become isolated in second stage housing. This could compromise the program and other clients
  - o One program has a written agreement with the client that ensures she continues with the supports that she receives prior to entering the program. They have learned that if the woman moved in and dropped those, she would not do as well in the second stage housing program
- Women should apply for subsidized housing as soon as they enter the second stage housing program
- It is very important that the women become connected to the community through the support services they use while living in second stage housing because when they move to permanent housing, they have to rely on the supports available to them. It will help them to transition successfully from second stage to permanent housing

### Services for Children

All of the second stage housing programs indicated they provide some type of service or activity specifically for children with the level of services ranging from referrals to on-site programming. Several programs have access to child support workers; several programs use volunteers; one program has a dedicated child and youth coordinator; one program has summer students; two programs collaborate with their nearby transition house and their workers. The number of children living on-site in any given second stage housing program ranges from about six to 60 children, from newborns to young adults. There is a wide range of on-site and off-site services and activities provided for the children living in second stage housing:

- At least half of the programs provide access to counselors from the Children Who Witness Abuse program by having one-on-one counseling or group sessions on-site
  - o One program coordinator said they will take the children to their appointment with the counselor who is located off-site
- At least half of the programs offer some level of child care, “babysitting” service. For some, it is only available in an emergency or when the mother is attending her own counseling sessions
  - o One program offers a regular drop-in for children five days a week, from 1 to 4pm. When funding is available, they will extend the drop-in hours during the summer months
- At least half of the programs plan, organize or arrange social or recreational activities for children. These vary from programs with regularly scheduled activities e.g. Mother Goose reading program, games, crafts, movie nights, to those which happen spontaneously e.g. barbeque or Easter egg hunt, to those held on special days only e.g. Mother’s Day
  - o One program has a support worker who does activities with the children throughout the year. They have gone swimming, taken them to Playland or to the movies
  - o One program provides the children with music lessons (piano, violin, voice), and art therapy for families
  - o At least three programs indicated they have held in the past or hold regular summer programs and camps, or provide opportunities to the children to attend summer camps



- At four of the second stage housing programs, there is either a formal homework club or tutoring services to assist the children with their school work
  - o One program has a retired teacher who volunteers once a week and tutors the children. The focus is on literacy and school readiness for younger children. She also helps the mothers with their literacy. They have found that many children have an interrupted school history

Challenges in providing services and activities for children included:

- One program coordinator who reported the long waitlists for child related services in her community
- For school age children, it can be difficult to schedule services such as counseling
- Types of activities offered depend on the age of the children in the second stage housing at a given time
- Without child care subsidies, the women may not be able to look for work or go back to school
- In general, the focus of the second stage housing program is on the women, it is not on their children

The program coordinators shared the lessons learned in providing services and activities to the children:

- “We want to create a sense of community and to keep them busy”
- Be open to having practicum students because it frees up program staff to handle the more difficult situations
- Children who have witnessed abuse require a wide range of age appropriate services to help them understand the impacts of violence on their family
- Build strong connections with the nearby transition house and collaborate on services provided to the children.
- Know how to access funding to support the cost of counseling
- In a larger community there are lots of services available off-site for children

For those programs that do not provide on-site services for children, the main reason is lack of funding as well as uncertainty of funding through donations, fundraising efforts or grant applications. Few programs have access to a child care worker or counselor in the second stage housing program. One program uses donations to pay for special activities like music lessons. It is difficult to plan when funding for summer programs and students is uncertain and approvals are received at the last minute. At least one program indicated they do not have common space in their housing project to hold on-site activities for the children. One program reported there are a lot of after school programs available in the community, so there is no demand for activities on-site.

Most of second stage housing programs indicated they would like to offer more on-site services or activities for the children. One program said they prefer to refer children to other services rather than offer them directly.

- At least half of the program coordinators said that funding for on-site child care services is needed, particularly during those times when the woman is in a one-on-one or group session so she can focus on the topic, learning or skills development. However, one program coordinator recommended that off-site day care services would be better so the mother gets used to taking her children to day care, which would be her typical experience when she moves into permanent housing
  - o One program has donated games and an activity table for the children to play at while the mother is in group session, but the mom has to split her attention between the children and her own session
  - o One program would like funding for child care so that the mother can have a respite
- At least four program coordinators indicated they would like to offer after-school programs because there is a need for those children whose mothers work or where nearby child care programs are popular and have a long waitlist because there is a possibility that children are alone at home for some periods during the day
- At least four program coordinators said they would like funding for on-site counseling services to help the children with anger management, to listen to them, to assist with skills development
  - o In one community, the CWWA counselor has such a heavy caseload that a child cannot be seen by the counselor unless it is an extreme case

- One program coordinator said they would like a “me time” program for children with crafts, etc. to help them move through their own experience
- One program coordinator said they want to offer art therapy

## Funding Sources

All 16 second stage housing programs interviewed receive funding through BC Housing. The funding from BC Housing is used in different ways depending on their contract and/or agreement with BC Housing, such as supporting staff time for outreach and support services, subsidizing rent, and covering building costs.

Tenant rent contributions also help the second stage housing programs cover their costs. Typically rent contributions are used to pay for operating expenses, but some programs use the rent for other costs, such as outreach and support services.

Almost every program mentioned that they also rely on agency fundraising to supplement their revenues. Agencies fundraise by applying for grants, approaching private donors and hosting fundraising events. Some programs receive donations in the form of items, such as furniture, clothing or food, rather than cash donations. Some programs said they get additional funding through BC Gaming and United Way grants. One agency operates a thrift shop as a social enterprise to provide additional revenue for the program.

Two agencies said that they received grants to purchase their site through the federal government many years ago. This means that these programs are no longer paying mortgages for their sites.

Some programs also work with other agencies to help women and children in the program access community activities. Some programs work with their municipalities to get reduced or free passes to recreational activities, such as pools or community centre classes. One program partnered with another agency in the community that receives funding to support recreational activities and guest speaker events.

## Rent Guidelines

In almost all cases, women in the second stage housing programs pay the shelter portion of their income assistance, but if the women are working, they pay 30% of their income. Two programs said that if the women are working, the programs do not charge more than the income assistance shelter portion, even if their incomes could cover more at a 30% tenant rent contribution. There was one program that has three rent free units, which are fully subsidized. Another program said that they charge an additional \$50 per month to tenants because it is a green building.

Some programs added that they do not charge late fees if tenants are late with rent payments, as long as the women let staff know if they think their payments will be late. If staff is given notice of late payments, they will work out a payment plan. One program mentioned that they do charge an administration fee if a cheque is returned because of insufficient funds.

All but one program said that they charge a damage deposit. There are some exceptions, for example, if the women do not have status in Canada. For women on income assistance, they can usually get the damage deposit covered through income assistance. Many programs work out a payment plan for women who are not on income assistance to help them pay their damage deposit over time. There is one program that has a relationship with a church, where the parishioners will come up with the damage deposit on a moment's notice for women in the program if needed.

The damage deposits are typically half of one month's rent. Three programs specified that they charge half of the market rent of the unit, not half of the women's rent contributions. Two programs said that they charge a flat damage deposit rate, depending on the size of the unit.

Two programs said they meet with women prior to move-out to ensure that units are in good shape and to determine what needs to be done to get their damage deposits back. One interviewee said that it is important to charge damage deposits as it helps prepare women for permanent housing.

One program said they do not charge damage deposits. The representative said that for women who do not have income assistance, it is difficult to come up with the money for the damage deposit. For women who are on income assistance, if they do not get their damage deposit back when they leave the program, the women will not get damage deposits in the future from income assistance, which could create barriers for women when they try to access permanent housing options.

## Staffing

### Staffing Structures

The second stage housing programs reported staff positions fell into the following three categories:

- Coordinators or managers
  - o Responsible for program administration (including reporting, goal setting, fundraising, budgeting), tenancy management (including rent collection, paying bills for the facility), support work (referrals, advocacy, one-on-one or group support, crisis intervention, helping tenants find housing), and recreational activities
  - o 4 programs had full-time positions
  - o 9 programs had part-time positions
- Support workers
  - o Responsible for outreach work, one-on-one or group counselling, child and youth supports, recreational activities, help tenants find housing, accompaniment to appointments
  - o 3 programs had full-time positions
  - o 11 programs had part-time positions
- Tenancy management and building maintenance
  - o Responsible for building maintenance, rent collection
  - o 2 programs had full-time positions
  - o 6 programs had part-time positions

Staff at some programs provided both tenancy and support services, while other programs had clear separations between the staff providing tenancy management and those providing support services. At the programs where the responsibility for tenancy management was separated from support services, various techniques were used to achieve this separation. Some programs had staff responsible only for support services, while another staff member handled tenancy management related issues (such as gathering rent) exclusively. Other programs had the on-site staff responsible for support services while all tenancy management related issues were handled through the agency's office staff. Two programs contracted out the tenancy management to larger housing providers in their communities to keep a clear separation between support services and tenancy management.

Very few programs had casual staff to fill in for regular program staff on vacation or sick leave. In some cases, coverage was provided by ensuring that programs with multiple staff stagger their vacations. In other cases, other agency staff would fill in or the services provided by the regular program staff would be put on hold.

**Table 8: Type of Staff Positions, 2012**

Type of Staff Position	Coordinator / Managers	Tenancy Management/ Maintenance	Support Workers
Full-time	4	2	3
Part-time	9	6	11
Casual	1	1	3

N=16

For BC Housing funded second stage housing programs only

Staff at second stage housing programs tended to be mostly part-time, with 70% of the staff at the 16 programs being part-time. Most of the part-time positions were support workers and those responsible for building maintenance. Many of the part-time staff members had full-time work or close to full-time work within the agency as they also supported other programs or housing projects within their agency's portfolio. Over half of the 16 programs had at least three full or part-time staff, but two programs had only one staff person to support the second stage housing program. Over two thirds of the staff was based primarily on-site at the second stage housing programs.

**Table 9: Number of Full-time vs. Part-time Staff Positions, 2012**

Type of Staff Position	# of Staff
Full-time	15
Part-time	35

N=50

For BC Housing funded second stage housing programs only

**Table 10: Number of Staff in Each Second Stage Housing Program, 2012**

Number of Staff	%
1 person	13%
2 people	31%
3 people	13%
4+ people	44%

N=16

For BC Housing funded second stage housing programs only

### **Recruitment and Retention of Staff**

Almost two thirds of the second stage housing programs reported having no difficulty recruiting and retaining staff. Several reported very little turnover, with some staff being with the programs for more than 10, 20 or 30 years. Some programs offered that they were successful in recruiting and retaining staff for the following reasons:

- They offer a supportive work environment
- They are able to create full-time positions within the agency even if the second stage housing programs are part-time positions
- They offer benefits as part of their employment packages
- Their programs work well with other agencies in the community
- There are several training programs, so there is a pool of well-qualified candidates

For those programs experiencing difficulties with recruitment and retention, they mentioned the following challenges:

- Wages are not competitive, especially when trying to recruit and retain well-qualified candidates
- Some programs are not able to provide full-time work
- There tends to be higher turnover among new staff who are younger, as they are at a more transitional point in their careers

### *Use of Volunteers*

Three quarters of the second stage housing programs reported that they use volunteers to support their programs. Some volunteers support the programs on a regular basis, while others were involved on an occasional basis for special events. None of the programs rely on volunteers to support their programs but they feel the women and their children benefit from the additional services the volunteers provide. Volunteers supported the programs in the following ways:

- Child minding and tutoring
- Assisting with social events, such as Christmas parties and other celebrations
- Cleaning and maintenance
- Offering recreational activities, such as yoga, musical lessons and dance lessons
- Picking up and distributing donations
- Providing supports to women, such as ESL training, budgeting, help with tax returns, assistance with accessing food (either picking up food or taking women to the food bank or grocery store)

Four programs said that they take on students. The students typically come from educational programs, such as social work programs. Students volunteer in exchange for course credit. In some cases they provide supports to clients, but in many cases students are there to learn by job shadowing staff.

Some respondents did identify some challenges with taking on volunteers, which included:

- Conducting background checks
- Balancing how volunteers are used in a unionized work environment
- Having enough space to accommodate volunteers
- Having enough staff time to supervise volunteers

### *After-hours Services*

None of the second stage housing programs had staff on-site 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition to not having sufficient funding, some participants said the reason for not having 24/7 services was that second stage housing is preparing women for independent housing so they do not want to create dependencies on staff. Women in second stage housing should also be out of immediate crisis.

Though half of the participants said that either program staff or executive directors are always on-call after-hours, very few programs allow women to contact on-call staff directly. In the case of a health or safety related emergency, women are to call 911.

For emergencies, such as immediate need for emotional supports, three quarters of the second stage housing programs have an arrangement with a nearby program with 24/7 staff coverage (11 programs had arrangements with transition houses and one had an arrangement with an emergency shelter). Women are instructed to call the transition house. Transition house workers would provide supports or contact the second stage housing program staff person on-call only if needed. Most of the transition houses (and the emergency shelter) are part of the same agency as the second stage housing program.

For the second stage housing programs without an arrangement with a program that offers 24/7 staff coverage, the programs deal with after-hours issues in the following ways:

- Answering service to take calls about emergencies
- Alarm connected to a crisis line to screen calls and contact on-call staff if necessary
- Program coordinator carries a cell phone at all times (she gets paid when she takes calls after-hours)

Three programs mention that they have maintenance staff on-call after-hours.

## Client Groups Served

The second stage housing programs serve primarily women with children, with some programs prioritizing women with children over single women. Some of the programs mentioned that they take in a number of women who are pregnant or have newborn babies. Two programs also mentioned that they take in several teen moms. Two other programs said that they are seeing an increasing number of senior women, more than expected.

Almost half of the program representatives mentioned that they serve a large number of Aboriginal women and children. There is one program that serves primarily Aboriginal women, while three other programs said Aboriginal households represent about half of the program participants at any one time.

Five program representatives said that they serve a significant number of immigrant and refugee women and their children. Program representatives said that many of these women have no status in Canada and limited English language skills, which makes accessing support services and housing a challenge.

### *Mental Health and Substance Use Issues among Women in the Programs*

Many of the programs take in women with mental health and addictions issues. Program representatives were asked if there has been an increase prevalence of these issues among the women they serve, but the majority felt that these issues have been constant. Some representatives said that mental health and substance use issues are sometimes connected to domestic violence. One interviewee said that substance use can be a coping mechanism for women who have experienced domestic violence.

Some of the programs said they want to limit barriers for women trying to access second stage housing programs, so they allow women who are active in their addictions to be part of the program; although, illegal drug use is not permitted on-site. Some programs do not even ask about mental health or substance use issues in the interview, during the in-take process or on the application form, as they do not want to set women up to lie if they fear being screened out of the program. Three programs said that they do not accept women with active substance use issues into their programs.

Interviewees identified some of the challenges associated with accepting women with mental health and substance use issues in their programs. One interviewee said that women who use substances to deal with their experiences of domestic violence may not yet be able to face their problems in the counseling associated with second stage housing programs. Another interviewee said it can be difficult to get through to women with mental health issues through counseling. They said that the challenges associated with addressing the needs of women with mental health and substance use issues can lead to staff burnout and it can be difficult to balance the support level needs among women in the program at any one time.

Interviewees provided some advice for accommodating women with mental health and/or substance use issues in second stage housing programs:

- Having staff on-site and extended coverage allows programs to take in women with more complex issues as there is more time for relationship building and conflict resolution
- Persist with counseling
- Connect women to appropriate support services and medical professionals
- Check in more often with women with mental health and/or substance use issues
- Focus on behaviours
- Ensure staff receive appropriate training
- If there is someone currently in the program who is in recovery, try not to house women with active addictions
- If possible, hold units for women if they had to go into recovery for a short period (e.g. month)

## In-take Process

Most second stage housing programs said that the majority of women in their programs come from in town or surrounding areas, including nearby First Nations reserves. Some programs said that from time to time women come from other parts of BC. Very few programs take women from out of province. Only one program said that they primarily take women from out of town.

For all programs interviewed, women are primarily referred to the second stage housing programs through local transition houses (and safe homes if there are no transition houses nearby). Some programs mentioned that they also receive referrals from other programs within their own agencies, as well as local shelters or government offices, such as the Ministry of Child and Family Development and the Ministry of Social Development. A small number of programs reported that women self-refer to their programs. Almost every program mentioned that they work closely with local service agencies and receive referrals through those connections. Some of the service agencies who refer women to the second stage housing programs include:

- Women's drop in centers
- Housing outreach workers
- Native friendship centers
- Immigrant services agencies
- Native bands
- Police-based victim services

When there is a vacancy coming up, programs fax a notice of vacancy to the nearby transition houses and request referrals. Some programs also fax out the notice of vacancy to local service agencies. Typically the programs begin the in-take process as soon as they know there will be a vacancy. Two of the programs require that women stay at their agencies' transition houses first to determine if the women will be a good fit for the programs and vice versa.

Most of the programs mentioned that they have an application form that women are to complete when applying for the program. The programs also interview potential candidates. The interviews are typically a two-way interview, in that they help the program staff assess if the candidate is a fit for the program and the woman assesses if the program is a fit for her needs. The programs use the interviews as an opportunity to ensure that candidates are fully aware of the guidelines and rules, so that women understand what is involved and expected. One interviewee said the interview is not about screening candidates, but more about understanding how to support the woman if she accepts an offer to enter the program.

Several programs only interview more than one candidate for a vacancy if the first candidate is not a fit. However, some programs keep a waiting list or receive multiple applications to a notice of vacancy, in which case they might bring in two or three candidates for an interview. Program representatives said that candidates are selected based on

the priority of their needs, especially around safety concerns. Other factors come into consideration, including whether the family composition is a good match for the unit available, balancing levels of need among the families in the program at one time, and meeting certain program criteria, such as ensuring that a proportion of the units serve immigrant and refugee families.

Program representatives were asked what information they gather about women in their programs. Information varied by program, but some of the themes included:

- The woman's story
- Financial information
- Immigration status
- Marital status
- Family composition
- Health issues that staff need to know about, including mental health and addiction issues
- Supports and resources already in place
- Supports and resources required
- Goals
- Custody arrangements
- Information about the abuser, including where he is, criminal history, restraining orders
- Emergency contacts

## Program Guidelines

Every program required that women sign a contract at in-take. There are two types of contracts that women in the programs must sign. One is a tenancy agreement, which typically includes roles and responsibilities for the landlord and the tenant. The second contract type is around program guidelines, often including:

- Guest policies
- Harassment policies
- Rules around alcohol and drug use on-site (e.g. do not share prescription drugs, stay out of common areas if under the influence of drugs or alcohol)
- Expectations around participation in programming related to supports and working towards goals
- Crime free addenda
- Confidentiality
- Supervision of children
- Keeping the suite and common property clean
- Rules around pets
- Smoking policies

Most programs mentioned that they require women to sign both types of agreements.

According to interview participants, the program guidelines are typically set by their agencies. One agency said that they used the guidelines from a nearby transition house as a reference when developing their own guidelines. Some programs said that if tenants find that some guidelines are not working or unforeseen circumstances arise, the program and/or agency will revise or add rules as appropriate. One agency said they regularly review guidelines with program participants. Some programs said they try to keep guidelines to a minimum to meet women where they are at and to reduce barriers for women in terms of accessing the programs.



All programs said that guidelines, as well as consequences of not following guidelines, are communicated during the assessment interview and/or during in-take and orientation. Program representatives reported additional ways of communicating or reinforcing guidelines:

- Guidelines may be listed on the application form
- Guidelines may be included in the vacancy notice
- Women typically get to keep a copy of the guidelines
- Regular tenant meetings can be opportunities to discuss and remind tenants of guidelines
- One-on-one meetings can be used to discuss guidelines and develop strategies to address violations

Programs were asked how they address violations of guidelines. Typically, the consequences are relative to the type of guidelines violated. They said that if the violation is minor and the first violation, a verbal warning is given. Ongoing violations or more serious violations that do not endanger other tenants are documented in the tenant’s file and/or the tenant is provided with a written warning. Several programs said that they will give up to three written warnings before moving on to eviction. With both verbal and written warnings, the program representatives said that staff usually tries to work with the tenant to prevent future violations. They said they work very hard to prevent evictions; however, evictions may be necessary for persistent and/or serious violations. Examples of violations that may lead to immediate evictions are bringing male visitors on-site if there is a strict no male visitors policy or if someone breaks a rule that endangers other women and children in the program. If it comes to an eviction, some programs may arrange a transfer to more appropriate housing. One program said that violations of guidelines may lead to the woman’s lease not being renewed in multi-year programs. Two programs said that they create an incentive for women to follow the guidelines by reminding the women that they will likely need a reference from the program to move onto permanent housing. Three programs said that they may do room checks to ensure guidelines are followed.

## Length of Stay

Half of the second stage housing programs were 12 months in length. Only one program was shorter than 12 months, with a program length of 9 months. Over one third of the programs were between one and two years. One program allowed women to stay for three years. The programs with longer stays tended to be larger, with all having but one having at least 10 units. Two thirds of the programs with shorter stays had less than 10 units.

**Table 11: Second Stage Housing Programs by Maximum Length of Stay, 2012**

Length of Stay in Program	%
Less than 12 months	6%
12 months <sup>2</sup>	50%
13-24 months	38%
25+ months	6%

N=16

For BC Housing funded second stage housing programs only

All but two of the programs allowed women to stay longer if needed. Usually the decision about whether women can stay longer was assessed by staff or the board on a case-by-case basis. The most common reason why women may be granted extended stays was if they are waiting for housing, but other reasons included safety concerns, ongoing supports needs, pending court hearings, or the women were experiencing a severe health crisis. Stays may also be extended for the children to finish a school year.

<sup>2</sup> One program is extending the maximum length of stay to 18 months.

Three quarters of the programs reported that women typically stay the full length of the program. For those women who do not stay the full length of the program, the most common reason was they were able to access subsidized housing earlier than expected. Some women were evicted or went back to their partners, but program staff said that both of these situations are rare. In one case, there were safety concerns for a woman so she was transferred to another location.

## Safety

Many of the second stage housing programs have incorporated the following features to ensure that the women and children in the programs are safe:

- Safety planning with women before they move in and upon arrival
  - o Some programs hold regular safety meetings
  - o Some programs will advise RCMP if there is a high risk woman in the program
  - o Some programs require that women inform staff if they will be away
- Guest restrictions
  - o Ex-partners are not allowed on-site
  - o Some programs do not allow any male visitors, including family, while one program requires advance notice if male family members are coming for a visit (some mentioned that males under age 16 years are permitted on-site)
  - o Some programs do not allow overnight visitors
  - o In one program, guests are not allowed to access the common yard to ensure confidentiality for other women in the program
- Women must commit to keeping the location confidential
  - o Ex-partners in particular are not to know where the women and children in the program are staying
  - o In many cases, programs require that women sign a contract that they will keep the location confidential
  - o Program sites do not advertise their purpose
  - o People assisting with move-in and move-out must keep the location confidential
- In-suite safety features
  - o Some units have panic buttons installed or women are given panic buttons to carry around with them while on-site
  - o Several programs have alarms installed in the units
  - o Some programs equip units with a phone and phone service to ensure women have access to a line in case of emergency
  - o Many units have metal doors, deadbolt, and/or self-closing doors
- Safety features of the site
  - o Many programs have security cameras at the exits, as well as in parking areas, yards, and laundry areas
  - o Electronic key fobs or coded key pads are used instead of keys at several sites, so that keys cannot be copied and codes/fobs can be deactivated as necessary
  - o Women and children are asked not to answer the door for anyone they do not know
  - o Intercom system at the front door does not list tenant names
  - o Some intercom systems do not allow women to buzz in visitors from their suite; the women must go to the main door to greet visitors
  - o Many programs said they have lighting around the site exterior, which in some cases includes motion activated lighting to sense if someone is outside
  - o Many programs have fences around the backyards and, in some cases, the front yards as well
  - o Gates are locked at all times
  - o Outside landscaping is maintained, so that people cannot hide behind bushes and shrubs
  - o One program said they have bars on the windows
  - o Some programs share the site with programs that have 24/hour staff coverage, which provides after-hours support if needed

- Strategic location of program sites
  - o One program said it is near a police station
  - o One program said it is in area with lots of pedestrians, so women blend in with the other people coming and going in the area (although some programs mentioned that they are in high traffic areas, and therefore quite exposed)
  - o One program said it is near transit so women can easily get around and they do not have to walk far to transit at night

All of the programs have policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety of staff and volunteers. Examples of policies and procedures at some of the programs include:

- Restricting staff from going to the homes that women formerly shared with their ex-partners
  - o For those programs that do allow staff to go to the home that the woman shared with her ex-partner for assessments or to pick up belongings, staff are required to inform staff at the agency where they are going and/or to go in pairs
- Lock down procedures if there is a threat to tenants and/or staff on-site
- Safety assessment procedures
- Emergency preparedness procedures
- Having panic buttons in the office
- Restricting staff from providing third party evidence in legal processes to limit their exposure to risk
- Staff carry cell phones while on-site or working with women
- Handling non-violent, as well as potentially aggressive situations
- Requiring volunteers to undergo criminal record checks
- Requiring maintenance staff to wear identification badges and give notice to tenants before entering their units

## Sense of Community

Almost every program representative said that typically a sense of community develops among the women in their programs. They said that having women live together for several months allows the time needed for a sense of community to grow. Several interviewees qualified this by saying that it often depends on the group of women in the program at any one time. They also pointed out that in some cases most women might get along, but there is often at least one woman who keeps to herself or some women who do not get along.

Interviewees said that some of the benefits of having a sense of community in the program are:

- Women look out for each other
- Women build support networks while they are in the program
  - o They help each other out with child care
  - o They provide rides to appointments if they have a car
- Women build support networks and social circles that can continue when they move into permanent housing
  - o Some women have become roommates or neighbours when they move on to permanent housing in the private housing market or in subsidized housing

Though activities vary by program, interviewees said that staff may do the following to help build the sense of community among women in their programs:

- Host group meals or BBQs
- Organize potluck dinners
- Organize events to watch televised sporting events together
- Host Christmas parties for both current and former residents
- Bring in guest speakers (e.g. financial literacy, how to make a great meal with food from the food bank)
- Offer dance classes on-site
- Organize on-site spa days
- Organize group outings, such as picnics or going to the beach
- Get passes to community events and attractions donated to attend as a group
- Mediate arguments between tenants
- Encourage women to help each other during move-in and move-out
- Allow women the choice about whether they want to come to recreational activities – they can come as they feel comfortable and as relationships develop naturally
- Encourage women to using backyard or other common space for informal socializing

## Where Women Move Upon Completing the Second Stage Housing Program

All participants said that most women who leave the program move on to subsidized housing, including BC Housing sites and other non-market housing. In some cases, the agency that runs the second stage housing program also manages subsidized housing projects, so women in the program will transition into housing operated by the same agency. Two of the programs have arrangements with large non-market housing providers in their communities to manage the second stage housing program facility; women build relationships with these providers and may eventually move into their permanent housing at the end of the program.

Just under half of the interviewees said that women in their programs go to market housing, but many said this is not common. They said the women who typically are able to go to market housing are those who have employment and can afford rents in the private market.

Interviewees from six programs said that the women in their programs sometimes go back to their partners, but this was a very rare situation. Some interviewees said women are less likely to go back to their partners the longer they have been in the program. They said that very few women return to their abusive partners if they complete the full second stage program.

Some women move to other communities or provinces, according to six interviewees. Some women came from out of town and want to return home. While some women want to move to be closer to family and friends, other women want to move to get away from family and friends.

## General Successes, Challenges and Lessons Learned

### Successes

The second stage housing providers were asked to highlight some of the key successes of their programs. Some themes emerged around common successes:

- Provide access to safe and affordable housing with supports for women when they make the decision to leave their partner
- Help women connect with stable independent housing at the completion of the programs, including subsidized and market housing
- Help women access and navigate the support services they need
  - o Many of the programs are part of larger agencies, which provide priority access to additional support services
  - o Many agencies have good relationships with community partners to provide referrals
  - o Some programs have dedicated volunteers who provide added supports and activities for the women and children
- Provide on-site services including:
  - o On-site office space allows for more informal interaction with women as needed
  - o Common kitchen to hold community kitchen activities to help women develop cooking and budgeting skills
  - o Activities such as art therapy
  - o Supports for children
- Have formal one-on-one and/or group counseling meetings with women in the program on a regular basis
- Recognize that women are their own experts and they know what they are ready to do and what they are not ready to do
  - o Encourage self-empowerment to help women prepare to live independently
  - o Most clients do not return to their abusive partners after completing the program
  - o Provide supportive environment to stabilize, heal from the emotional trauma, build self-esteem, and develop life-skills
- Some of the programs are able to provide supports to particular sub-groups, such as:
  - o Women with “no status” in Canada
  - o Women with addictions and mental health issues
- Some programs are able to provide longer length of stays compared to other programs, which allows women more time to settle in and access the program services
- Have well-qualified staff
  - o Offer a staff complement which reflects the population they serve in terms of culture and experience
  - o Staff bring extensive experience and compassion
- Housing project is located near support services
  - o Some second stage housing projects are attached to or close to emergency shelter programs (transition homes and shelters) that provide 24/7 on-site services that women in the second stage programs can access as needed after-hours
  - o One housing project is part of a larger subsidized housing project, which provides a sense of normalcy and added security for women, as well as access to additional supports on-site
- Encourage feedback through program evaluations
- Some programs have created clear separations between the supports and the housing aspects of the program, so that staff are not doing activities such as both collecting rent and providing counseling to women
- One program is accredited, which they feel gives the program a lot of credibility when accessing funding
- Some programs have expanded to:
  - o Take more women into the program
  - o Offer a more structured program

## Challenges

Clear themes also emerged around common challenges experienced among the second stage housing programs:

- More staff hours are needed to support:
  - o Providing referrals to appropriate support services
  - o Early intervention with safety issues
  - o Activities for children
  - o Transporting women to support services and appointments
  - o Families with more complex needs or families with specific cultural needs
- More funding to cover:
  - o Support services for agencies that only receive funding for property management
  - o Unit turnover costs and repairs
  - o Renovations or green retrofits
  - o Furnishing units
  - o Increased staff wages
  - o Computers and other technology
  - o Food and meals for women and children in the programs
- There is more demand for second stage units than what is available
  - o Many programs cannot take women with multiple barriers and complex needs
  - o Some programs and many of the units only take women with children, but for women whose children are in care, they need appropriate housing to regain custody
- Accessing support services:
  - o There are long waitlists for support services, such as Children Who Witness Abuse programs and addictions counseling
  - o Navigating services can be a challenge (e.g. family court, supervised access services, income assistance)
- Costs of move-in and move-out of units and upkeep of units can be high and are typically unpredictable, especially with high turn-over as a result of the housing being transitional
- Managing relationships with the women in terms of:
  - o Balancing landlord responsibilities with providing support services
  - o Balancing provision of supports with encouraging independence
  - o Ensuring boundaries between staff and women are respected, while creating genuine relationships
  - o Substance use issues
- Lack of affordable housing for women to transition to when ready:
  - o Requires a lot of staff time to look for housing, rather than providing counseling and referral to supports
  - o Housing that is affordable is not always appropriate unit type for woman and her children
  - o Lack of affordable housing can lead to extended stays in the program
  - o Lack of appropriate housing for single women
- Building community among women in the second stage housing programs can be a challenge because:
  - o There can be conflicts among the residents
  - o Women do not always have the skills to support positive community
  - o Some women have needs beyond what the community in the second stage housing program can handle
- Women are vulnerable to systemic challenges such as:
  - o Family poverty
  - o Restricted access to legal aid
  - o Custody and access challenges
  - o Accessing health care
- It is difficult to serve women without immigrant status in Canada:
  - o Women without immigrant status cannot access income assistance, which makes it difficult to find permanent housing
  - o Some women may have language barriers, which mean legal documents need to be translated

## Lessons Learned

Interview participants were asked to share lessons learned on what has worked well in their experience and if they have advice to share with other second stage housing programs. Participants shared the following:

- Many of the second stage housing programs are part of larger agencies, which provides women with easier access to support services
- Many of the second stage housing programs have close relationships with nearby transition houses to provide after-hours coverage
- Know the community resources well and maintain good relationships with other support service agencies
- Do not push women to do things they are not ready to do:
  - o Cannot make assumptions about what women need
  - o Maintain communication with women to understand her choices around where she wants to go next
  - o Be realistic and non-judgmental about drug use
  - o Remember that every woman is unique
  - o Find a balance when referring women to support services and allowing the women to develop independence
- Design and location of second stage housing buildings need to be carefully considered in the development stage
  - o Consider safety implications associated with the location of the housing project (e.g. one project is located on a corner so it is highly visible)
  - o Not all housing projects are physically accessible (e.g. no elevator to the second floor)
  - o Consider traffic flow within the building
  - o Larger sites may be more cost efficient
  - o On-site office space allows for more effective supervision and more informal interactions with women
  - o Ensure unit mix will allow flexibility to serve different household sizes
- Policies and procedures are important to the program
  - o Be clear about policies and stick to them
  - o Having an occupant manual can help clearly lay out expectations and ensure consistency in rules
  - o Policies and procedures need to be regularly reviewed
- Some programs prefer to operate from a theoretical perspective including:
  - o Feminist perspective
  - o Building block model
- Longer stays can allow women to stabilize, access support services, and find appropriate housing
- Ensure in-take process adequately assesses:
  - o Whether women are serious about committing to the program or if they are just looking for housing
  - o Behaviours or issues that may lead to conflicts or evictions once the women are accepted into the second stage housing program
- Recognize that second stage housing programs cannot help everyone
- Good co-workers are important to get support and debrief
- Clear separation between staff responsible for landlord duties and staff responsible for supports can help manage relationships with women
- Find time to have social interactions, laugh, and celebrate

## Appendix 1. Second Stage Housing Providers

Organization	Location
Act II Child and Family Services Society	Vancouver
Atira Women's Resource Society	Surrey
Canadian Mental Health Association for the Kootenays	Cranbrook
Cridge Centre for the Family	Victoria
Dixon Transition Society	Burnaby
Fort St. John Women's Resource Society	Fort St. John
Greater Victoria Women's Shelter Society	Victoria
Helping Spirit Lodge Society	Vancouver
North Shore Crisis Services Society	North Vancouver
Omineca Safe Home Society	Vanderhoof
Prince George and District Elizabeth Fry Society	Prince George
St. James Community Service Society	Vancouver
Sunshine Coast Community Services Society	Sechelt
Trail Family and Individual Resource Centre Society, The	Trail
W.I.N.G.S. Fellowship Ministries (Women in Need Gaining Strength)	New Westminster
Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)	Vancouver



## Appendix 2. Interview Guide

### Successes

1. What would you say are the top strengths or successes of your second stage housing program?

### Facilities

2. How many second stage housing units do you offer at this program?
3. How long has your second stage housing program been operating?
4. How would you describe the facility of your second stage housing program?
  - Whole apartment building (if yes, describe)
  - Part of an apartment building (if yes, describe)
  - Detached house (if yes, describe)
  - Row houses (if yes, describe)
  - Other (if yes, describe)
5. Do you share the facility with units targeted for another client group? If yes, list the client group(s) and describe the set up.
6. Do you have on-site office space?
7. Do you have common amenities areas?
  - Shared kitchen
  - Recreation room
  - Daycare
  - Other (please elaborate)
8. Do you have any outdoor common space? If yes, please describe:
  - Patio or sitting area
  - Smoking area
  - Community garden
  - Recreational area (e.g. basketball court)
  - Children's playground/play area
  - Other (please elaborate)

### Client Support Needs

9. Please identify the services that the women in your second stage housing program typically require for support and to move on or meet their goals:
  - Safety planning
  - Emotional support
  - Transportation (If yes, please elaborate on the types of transportation services you provide)
  - Referrals to counseling (e.g. Stopping the Violence (STV) counselling, mental health, addictions, etc.)
  - Referrals to employment counseling/programs
  - Referrals to immigration and/or multicultural services
  - Assistance applying for educational opportunities
  - Assistance with money management
  - Referrals to other services
  - Assistance with completing subsidized housing applications
  - Assistance with locating market housing
  - Assistance in accessing/navigating legal aid
  - Assistance with family law matters (divorce, child custody and access, child support)

- Assistance with immigration or accessing culturally specific supports (language services)
- Assistance in accessing income assistance
- Assistance with accessing health care
- MCFD advocacy
- Food for meals
- Referrals to child and youth services
- Other (please describe)

### **On-Site Services**

10. Do you offer any of the following types of support services and referrals to the women at your second stage housing program?

- Safety planning
- Emotional supports
- Transportation (If yes, please elaborate on the types of transportation services you provide)
- Referrals to counseling (e.g. STV counselling, mental health, addictions, etc.)
- Referrals to employment counseling/programs
- Referrals to immigration and/or multicultural services
- Assistance applying for educational opportunities
- Assistance with money management
- Referrals to other services
- Assistance with completing subsidized housing applications
- Assistance with locating market housing
- Assistance in accessing/navigating legal aid
- Assistance in accessing income assistance
- Assistance with accessing health care
- MCFD advocacy
- Referrals to food programs
- Recreational activities (please describe)
- Other (please describe)

11. Which services and referrals are most often accessed by women at your program?

12. Have there been any challenges or lessons learned in providing particular support services or referrals we just discussed for women at your program? If yes, please elaborate.

13. Do you provide any on-site services or activities specifically for children?

- a. If yes, what types of services or activities do you offer for the children of the women in your second stage housing program?
- b. If yes, what have been some of the challenges or lessons learned of providing services for children?
- c. If no, why do you not provide services or activities for children?
- d. If no, would you like to offer services or activities for children?

14. Are there additional services or outreach activities that you would like to offer to the women and children at your second stage housing project?

- a. If yes, please describe the additional services and activities.
- b. If yes, why are you not currently offering these services or activities?

15. Are there support services near your second stage housing program that the women access as needed? Please list the types of services and supports that the women at your second stage housing program access within walking distance (up to 30 minutes) from your program.

## Program

16. How is your program funded?
17. How would you describe the client group you serve at your second stage housing program? Are there any specific sub-populations that you serve (e.g. pregnant women or women who use substances)?
18. What is the maximum length of stay?
19. Can women in your second stage housing program stay longer if needed? Why might the women need to stay longer?
20. Do women usually stay the full-term allowed? If not, why?
21. Where do women typically go when they move on from your second stage housing program?
22. How do women typically get referred to your second stage housing program?
23. Are the women in the second stage housing program typically from your community or out of town?
24. What does your second stage housing program have in place to protect the safety of your clients?
25. Do you have policies and procedures in place to protect the safety of staff and volunteers? If yes, please describe.
26. Is there a contract that must be signed by women staying in your second stage housing program? If yes, what are some of the key components of the contract?
27. How are site guidelines established for tenants at your second stage housing program?
28. What are some of the key guidelines for your second stage housing program (e.g. curfews, guests, pets, crime free housing, etc)?
29. How are guidelines communicated to the women in your second stage housing program?
30. What are the consequences for not following guidelines?
31. Is there a sense of community at your second stage housing program among the women? Why or why not?
32. What are the rent guidelines for your second stage housing program?
33. Does your second stage housing program ask women to pay damage deposits when they move-in?
34. Are the units in your second stage housing program furnished or unfurnished?
  - a. If furnished, how is the furniture funded?
  - b. If furnished, what furniture items are included?
35. What occupancy standards do you have in place for units in your second stage housing program?
36. Has there been an increased prevalence of women with mental health and substance use issues at your second stage housing program?
  - a. If yes, does the increased prevalence pose any additional challenges? (If yes, explain)
  - b. If yes, how do you address these additional challenges?
37. Do you feel that the reporting you are asked to do for BC Housing accurately reflects what you do?
  - a. If no, do you have any suggestions to improve the quarterly reporting process?

## Staffing Structure

38. How many paid staff members are involved with your second stage housing project?
  - Full-time \_\_\_\_\_
  - Part-time \_\_\_\_\_
  - Casual basis \_\_\_\_\_
  - Primarily on-site \_\_\_\_\_
  - Primarily off-site \_\_\_\_\_
39. What are some of the key duties for on-site staff?
40. Does your second stage housing program experience any challenges when recruiting paid staff? If yes, please provide some examples.
41. Does your second stage housing program experience any challenges with retaining paid staff? If yes, please provide some examples.

42. Does your second stage housing program rely on volunteers?
- If yes, how many volunteers?
  - If yes, what kinds of activities do your volunteers do?
  - If yes, what kind of time commitment do they have to make to the program?

### **After-hours Services**

43. Does your second stage housing program have staff on-site 24 hours/7 days a week?
- If yes, how many staff people are on-site after-hours?
  - If yes, what kinds of services are offered after-hours?
  - If yes, what are some of the challenges or lessons learned in operating 24 hours/7 days a week?
  - If no, why not?
  - If no, how are after-hours issues handled?

### **Referrals and Partnerships**

44. Do you provide any programs or services in partnership with other organizations that provide violence against women services?
- If yes, which organizations do you partner with on a regular basis?
  - If yes, which types of programs/services/activities do you provide in partnership with other violence against women organizations?
  - If yes, what have been some of the successes in partnering with other organizations?
  - If yes, what have been some of the challenges or lessons learned in partnering with other organizations?
  - If no, why does your program not partner with other organizations?
  - If no, would you like to partner with other organizations?
45. Do you provide any programs or services in partnership with other service organizations (e.g. community centers, employment programs, mental health organizations)?
- If yes, which organizations do you partner with on a regular basis?
  - If yes, which types of programs/services/activities do you provide in partnership with other service organizations?
  - If yes, what have been some of the successes in partnering with other organizations?
  - If yes, what have been some of the challenges or lessons learned in partnering with other organizations?
  - If no, why does your program not partner with other organizations?
  - If no, would you like to partner with other organizations?

### **General Challenges and Lessons Learned**

46. What are the top three challenges with your second stage housing program?
47. Do you have anything you would like to share with other second stage housing programs based on lessons learned in your program?