Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Review

Queenswood
Consulting Group

Prepared for BC Housing

Table of Contents

BC Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Review
Executive Summary

This report presents consolidated findings and recommendations of a review of the BC Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program (WTHSP) for women and children fleeing violence.

About the Review

In 2009, administration of the Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program (WTHSP) was transferred from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development to BC Housing as part of a provincial initiative to strengthen links to the continuum of housing for women and children at risk of violence. These programs are part of the broader continuum of services to address violence against women, including those funded by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. Following the transfer, BC Housing and the BC Society of Transition Houses sponsored an independent review to evaluate current services, and to assess demand and unmet need for services, which resulted in 23 recommendations.

This review is a follow up to the 2010 review, with the goal of assessing current strengths and challenges in the WTHSP and making recommendations with respect to improvements to core service area, options for training to support staff to better support clients with complex needs, and the identification of capital housing priorities to support women fleeing and at risk of violence.

Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program

Through the WTHSP, BC Housing supports more than 100 transition houses, safe homes and second stage housing programs for women with or without children who are at risk of violence, or who have experienced violence. The programs provide women and children with a temporary safe place to stay, support services, referrals and assistance in planning next steps. Services are for adult women aged 19 years and older, with or without their female or male dependent children. Women younger than 19 who are living independently may also be eligible for services. In addition, the province supports 12 second-stage housing programs.

Methodology

This review was supported by the Steering Committee comprised of senior staff from BC Housing, BC Society of Transition Houses and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. The review is also based on consideration of information from five key data sources: a review of administrative data, a literature review, interviews with subject matter experts, regional sessions with management staff of WTHSP services across the province, and surveys of program staff and service recipients.

Key Findings: Core Service Areas

Initial Contact Services
- Safe homes and transition houses want more funding to raise awareness of their services
- Transportation to a safe home or transition house is often an issue
- Increased resources are needed for services for non-residents (women not residing at the programs)

Safe Shelter / Housing and Immediate Basic Needs
- Increased complexity of women seeking shelter
- Challenging to provide services that are welcoming to all
- Frustration when there is not enough space or capacity
- Women with children often need child minding to be able to start new lives
- Food, hygiene, and supply costs have increased, but not all budgets have increased consistently

Personal Supports for Women and Children
- Staff resourcing stretched
- Lack of ability to provide advocacy and accompaniment

Referrals, Advocacy and Supported Access to Services
- Availability of community programs/resources
- Improved supports needed to prepare women to transition from WTHSP
- Impact of lack of access to safe, affordable housing

Inter-Agency Service Linking
- Inter-agency linking is largely dependent on individual relationships
- Provincial and local level coordinated collaboration among government and community agencies is important, and could be strengthened

Key Findings: Meeting Diverse Needs

- Flexibility and variation are important in terms of the individual rooms offered to women.
- There is inconsistency in how transition housing and supports programs:
    - accept and support transgender women
    - include services or features based in a culturally safe, Indigenous-informed approach.
    - accept and work with young women under the age of 19, those with mental health and/or substance use issues, and those who have teenage male dependents.
    - can provide fully physically accessible bedrooms, bathrooms, and common spaces.
- Guidance is needed for providing appropriate services, including addressing needs for women who are at various stages of immigration, who are dealing with mental health and substance use issues, and who have experienced traumatic brain injuries.

2

Key Findings: Training Needs

The top training priorities reported by transition housing and supports program staff were:
- meeting the needs of women with mental health and complex needs including substance use
- trauma-informed practice
- crisis intervention

Key Findings: Policy and Administration Considerations

- Service provider staff reported a very high level of satisfaction with the management of the program as it has operated under BC Housing, specifically identifying the program manager as a strong point of the program. However, increases to WTHSP personnel support within BC Housing were strongly recommended.
- Changes to data collection tools were requested.
- Overall, increases to WTHSP service provider budgets were requested to better compensate staff, provide more staff hours, and provide increased services.

Key Findings: Housing Priorities

In addition to assessing the current state of the WTHSP and identifying areas where there is room for improvements to service delivery, another objective of this review was to provide some insight and context to support decision making about decisions for future capital investments in housing supports for women fleeing and at risk of violence.

Five central themes emerged:
1. More adaptable and flexible housing designs, both in housing models and in-house features.
2. More welcoming, home-like spaces that invite families in to share time, connect with each other and help women with daily tasks
3. Better and more consistent inclusion of accessibility in design, including features such as wider doors, ramps, and accessible bathrooms.
4. Design options that include consideration of the needs for women to have their pets on site or nearby.
5. Development of housing and shelter options that are safe and secure but also near to related and necessary services, such as schools, retail stores, and transportation routes.

Transition housing and supports program staff across B.C. ranked the most urgent new housing need for women and children in the following order:
1. Additional permanent, affordable housing
2. Additional Second Stage Housing
3. Additional Transition Houses
4. Additional Safe Homes

At a regional level, the responses were prioritized in the same way. However, when responses were considered community-by-community, some different priorities emerged.

Key Findings: Housing Supports

Across the province, transition housing programs and support staff most commonly reported room for improvement with:

- Availability of Subsidized Housing, Second Stage Housing, the Priority Placement Program, and the Homeless Prevention Program.

- Eligibility of the Rental Assistance Program and Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) programs.

- Ease of access of Subsidized Housing, the Rental Assistance Program, Second Stage Housing, and the Priority Placement Program.

Summary of Recommendations

Core Service Areas

1. Increase funding to WTHSP service providers, to account for greater staff time needed to address factors such as the necessity to work more intensively with women with complex needs and to provide ongoing support and accompaniment for women during and after their stay. Also, to work with women who cannot be housed within a WTHSP program because of space restrictions or being at capacity. Lastly, to address the challenge of recruiting and retaining appropriately skilled staff in a competitive market where similar sectors often offer better compensation.

2. Increase funding for transportation and to explore the development of a province-wide bus ticket subsidy program. A previous initiative as part of the Provincial Domestic Violence Action Plan was highly valued by the sector and particularly made a difference in WTHSP staff's ability to work with women in rural and remote areas. Current partnerships with Translink are valued by the WTHSP staff and service recipients in the Lower Mainland.

3. Work with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General to improve provincial level coordination among ministries and agencies that provide services and work with women fleeing or at risk of violence (including the ministries of Children and Family Development, Health, Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation). In addition to funding for coordination efforts at the local level, province wide direction will support regional and local relationship development and initiatives.

Policy and Administration

4. Review and update the data collection process. Key considerations include updates to ease the data collection process, the format by which data is collected, and the content of data collection requests. An important consideration should also be the provision of data back to the sector in a form that is useful and could aid in program and service development and delivery.

5. Consider additional BC Housing personnel to support the WTHSP program. The current program manager is highly valued by sector partners, but there is a shared recognition that the WTHSP's breadth and complexity requires additional support at the provincial coordination and program management level.

Meeting diverse needs

6. Develop a strategy to address the needs of women with complex needs, including trauma (including generational), mental health and substance use challenges. This includes specific training for WTHSP staff, the development of partnerships with groups such as Health Authorities, and the expansion of programs with specific mandates and expertise.

7. Develop a strategy to increase culturally safe programs and services for Indigenous women. The strategy should focus on partnerships with local Indigenous groups and programs and culturally safe, accessible and appropriate practices.

8. Develop a WTHSP sector training plan with BCSTH including training for leadership and management staff including executive directors and boards of directors. Resources should be dedicated to collect, develop, and disseminate relevant training throughout the province, with topics based on priorities identified by the sector. The plan could include options for online, regional, and provincial training, to ensure that it is as widely accessed as possible.

9. Work with the BCSTH to lead the coordination and sharing of best practices that address issues commonly identified by WTHSP's. Many service providers are doing creative work and BCSTH is also a leader in providing guidance on how best to address specific and diverse needs. This coordination could include engaging with service providers and service recipients to confirm emerging needs and the sharing of lessons learned.

Housing priorities

10. Consider prioritizing permanent Safe Homes in communities that are still using private homes and motels and review the length of stay for Safe Homes.

11. Explore expansion of the Homeless Prevention Program into new communities, to address identified needs for increased funding and staff support.

12. Consider regional supply and demand of related services when allocating new funding including reviewing the expressions of interests and consider exploring models that include co-location of safe home, transition house, second stage and affordable housing options.

BC Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Review
Final Report

1.   Introduction

This report presents consolidated findings and recommendations of a review of the BC Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program (WTHSP) for women and children fleeing violence.

In 2009, administration of the WTHSP was transferred from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development to BC Housing as part of a provincial initiative to strengthen links to the continuum of housing for women and children at risk of violence. These programs are part of the broader continuum of services to address violence against women, including those funded by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General[1] Following the transfer, BC Housing and the BC Society of Transition Houses sponsored an independent review to evaluate current services, and to assess demand and unmet need for services, which resulted in 23 recommendations.

This review is a follow up to the 2010 review, with the goal of assessing current strengths and challenges in the WTHSP and making recommendations with respect to improvements to core service area, options for training to support staff to better support clients with complex needs, and the identification of capital housing priorities to support women fleeing and at risk of violence.

1.1   Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program

Through the WTHSP, BC Housing supports more than 100 transition houses, safe homes and second stage housing programs for women who are at risk of violence, or who have experienced violence. The programs provide women and children with a temporary safe place to stay, support services, referrals and assistance in planning next steps.

Services are for adult women aged 19 years and older, with or without their female or male dependent children. Women younger than 19 who are living independently may also be eligible for services. In addition, the province supports 12 second-stage houses.

- Safe home programs provide short-term shelter, emotional support, safety planning and referrals. Short-term safe shelter is provided in a variety of ways depending on the community, such as an apartment or townhouse unit, a hotel or motel room, or a secure room in a private home.

- Transition houses provide safe, temporary 24/7 staffed shelter, typically for 30 nights. Most transition houses are residential homes in confidential locations where women and families live communally. Support workers in these homes provide emotional support,

---

[1] Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General programs include: community-based victim services programs, police-based victim service programs, Stopping the Violence Counselling programs, PEACE (Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling and Empowerment), Outreach Services programs, Multicultural Outreach Services programs, Court Support Programs, Crime Victim Assistance Program, Victim Safety Unit and VictimLinkBC.

crisis intervention, safety planning and referrals and assistance in accessing financial, housing, medical and legal assistance.

- Second stage housing is usually a private, secure, low-cost apartment or townhouse unit where women and their children can live safely and independently typically for 6 to 18 months. Staff are available to provide emotional support, safety planning, referrals and assist women in moving on to live independently.

WTHSP-funded programs are located throughout B.C., as summarized on the following table:

Table 1: Location of WTHSP-funded programs

	Safe Homes[2]	Transition Houses	Second Stage Housing	Total
Interior	16	13	1	30
Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley	1	28	9	38
North and North Coast	5	16	0	21
Vancouver Island	4	10	2	16
Total	26	67	12	105

Though there are 12 second stage housing programs funded by the WTHSP, there are at least an additional 18 second stage housing programs funded through other BC Housing funding programs, the federal government or private funding sources.

2. Methodology

This review was based on consideration of information from five key data sources: a review of administrative data, a literature review, interviews with subject matter experts, regional sessions with management staff of WTHSP services across the province, and surveys of program staff and service recipients.

Although the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General funds several programs for women fleeing violence which are closely related to those funded through BC Housing, these programs were not included as part of the review.

---

[2] 16 Safe Homes use volunteer private homes or hotels; 10 have permanent locations in dedicated owned or rented units.

2.1 Administrative Data Review

A primary data source was a review of the administrative data provided by agencies funded through the WTHSP. Every service provider submits aggregated quarterly administrative reports to the program coordinator at BC Housing, providing information on the number of women and children that the agency has referred to other service providers, who have been sheltered or provided with housing services, and who have departed services and are no longer considered a service recipient.[3]

Reports are submitted through an online survey and include both mandatory and optional questions. This form of administrative data collection, (inherited from the previous funder of the program with some changes in 2015/16) has some limitations and challenges which are discussed further in this report.

Administrative data from 2015/16 and 2016/17 fiscal years was reviewed, taking into consideration that, at the start of the 2016/17 fiscal year, BC Housing made several small changes to the questions that are asked.

Key limitations to the administrative data include:
- Multiple referrals are possible for women.

- A stay includes consecutive nights in the program (a minimum of one night).

- A woman (and children accompanied by women) may have more than one stay in the same reporting period and at more than one WTHSP site within the reporting period; therefore, stays do not represent unique individuals.

- Departures do not represent distinct individuals, as a woman and children accompanied by women may have stayed more than once during the fiscal year (a stay is 1+ consecutive nights) or across reported fiscal years at one site or at multiple sites/programs.

2.2 Literature Review

Secondly, a review of the relevant literature was conducted, sources for which are included as the bibliography to this report. The literature review built upon a similar review conducted as part of the 2010 program review, focusing on updates in the literature since that time. It considered publicly-available analyses of women's shelter and housing practices generally, with particular attention on practices as they relate to women fleeing or at risk of violence. The review sought information on the spectrum of housing services, from initial shelter through second stage housing and on to supported and independent housing. Information was also sought with respect to effective and/or innovative practices regarding housing models, in terms of both construction and operational models that might be illustrative for British Columbia.

---

[3] Individual level data is not submitted to BC Housing, only aggregate level data per site per quarter.

The review was not a comprehensive consideration of the topic and focused on the Canadian context, although best practices around the world were also sought and considered where available. In this respect, the literature review was challenged by an overarching characteristic: this sector has not yet been the subject of a great deal of academic consideration. Where rigorous, peer-reviewed studies published in recognized academic sources were available, they were included.

Overall, it must be noted that there has been very limited longitudinal study of the impacts and outcomes of transition housing services for women fleeing or at risk of violence, such as consideration of longer-term maintenance of supported or independent housing for women in this sector. Instead, most of the information that was identified relates to the description of unmet or insufficiently addressed needs, and the identification of potential options (based in best practices where possible) to address those needs.

Although relevant findings are included as part of the discussion in the body of this report, the literature review also suggested a number of overarching themes.

In Canada, one in three women will experience violence in her lifetime, and the stress and fear from these experiences can lead to chronic health problems and affect levels of mental wellness and substance use. Transition housing and supports programs report that women who seek shelter services have increasingly complex challenges, including mental health and substance use. Given the large proportion of women coming into transitional housing who require mental health and addiction support services, and the known post-traumatic stress conditions for women and children fleeing violence, many programs are refocusing their efforts based on harm-reduction and trauma-informed practices.

Women fleeing violence are often hidden from view as they more often stay with friends or family or become involved in a relationship to secure housing. These hidden homeless are very challenging to serve and are usually not formally recognized as homeless or included within statistical counts. This invisibility is exacerbated where women are fearful of seeking help because there is a risk of child welfare involvement or apprehension of their children.

Many of the procedures and rules that have traditionally shaped the delivery and provision of shelter services may no longer be appropriate or effective in supporting women to successfully transition to living independently. For example, stay limits coupled with a shortage of affordable housing work can result in a difficult choice: returning to a violent partner, or homelessness. Similarly, shelter guidelines around curfews, chores, child minding or rearing, and substance use can run counter to the development of independence and empowerment within women who are transitioning out of violent situations that very often included a significant amount of control by abusive partners. Services are increasingly being provided in a more supportive model that fosters confidence and self-determination.

In addition, the demographic profile of Canada's overall homeless population is rapidly changing and is increasingly comprised of women, families and children (almost 50% of people using emergency shelters and temporary housing today are women). The specific challenges faced by women are different than those of men, around whom most historic services to address homelessness have been based.

The current supply of appropriate low-income housing in Canada is low, and there is a high demand for what is available. The lack of affordable housing is further complicated for women fleeing violence by their need for housing that includes factors such as easy access to transport, reasonable distances to their children's schools, access to childcare, and appropriate safety measures.

In addition, there is a need for greater coordination, cooperation, cross-training and partnerships between domestic violence and housing service providers to minimize the disconnect between services and reduce barriers to services access. This interconnection should be focused on building supports around the needs of individual service recipients.

Finally, a common theme in the literature is the need for coordination and interconnection at a higher level, amongst housing services, community support programs, and governments and government agencies, particularly as this relates to the continuum of support needed once a woman is ready to move on to independent living. A shared objective for service recipients is a stable, safe and successful transition to permanent independence, and periodic touch points and access to resourcing is critical to that success. It also requires government funding that would better align to understanding unique challenges that women and children leaving violence face in becoming empowered and independent members of society.

2.3   Subject Matter Expert Interviews

A third source of information for this review was a series of individual interviews with subject matter experts. Fifteen participants were identified by the steering committee for this review, and included representation from the following organizations:
- Aboriginal Housing Management Association
- BC Housing
- BC Non-Profit Housing Association
- BC Society of Transition Houses
- Ending Violence Association of BC
- FREDA Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children
- Homelessness Services Association (formerly ShelterNet)
- RCMP Victim Services
- Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women
- Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
- Vancouver/Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services

Interviews sought participants' input and perspectives with respect to the five core service areas of the WTHSP; the governance and funding models of the program; systems and community coordination; the program's ability to serve clientele with diverse needs; and perceptions about priorities for future funding decisions related to the spectrum of housing needs for women fleeing or at risk of violence. Relevant results are discussed in the body of this report. The questionnaire that guided subject matter interviews is included as Appendix A.

2.4   Regional sessions

A series of regional focus group sessions were also conducted as part of this review, with the goal of gathering broader input into issues of interest to the sector such as barriers to access, demographics of usage, staff capacity and potential training gaps, as well as promising practices and potential solutions to meet areas of demand for services.

A total of seven all-day sessions were held in locations noted below. A total of 126 service providers (along with a number of BC Housing staff and representatives from the BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH)) participated in the regional sessions, representing 66 organizations and 82 programs from 65 communities across the province.

Northern BC:	Terrace and Prince George
Interior:	Kelowna and Cranbrook
Lower Mainland:	Surrey and Vancouver
Vancouver Island:	Nanaimo

Regional sessions consisted of facilitated large and small-group discussions, focusing on identifying strengths and challenges with the five core service areas, sharing best practices particularly as they relate to serving women with diverse needs, and discussing regional and community-specific priorities for future investments in shelter and housing. A sample agenda is included as Appendix B.

2.5   Surveys

Finally, this review also included two surveys, designed with consideration of the information and data arising in the earlier administrative data and literature review, interviews, and regional focus sessions.

The first survey was distributed to all management staff of BC Housing funded WTHSP service providers, with the request that the survey be shared with all staff to ensure responses from front-line staff as well as senior management are captured. A copy of the survey is included as Appendix C.

The survey was open for just over two weeks, and 236 responses were received: 166 from front-line staff, 34 from management, and 36 from individuals who identified themselves as being both management and front-line staff. The distribution of survey responses is summarized below:

Table 2: Online survey responses received

	Safe Home	Transition House	Second Stage Housing
Interior	16	42	10
Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley	7	58	12
North and North Coast	10	51	3
Vancouver Island	4	54	12

A second survey was distributed to service providers with the request that they share the survey with women who currently or recently accessed their services. A copy of the survey is included as Appendix C. Staff were asked to use their judgement as to whether a woman was in a place where being asked to answer these questions was reasonable.

Responses were primarily collected online, although agencies were also provided with paper copies and paid, self-addressed envelopes for service recipients who could not access the online version. Forty women who had accessed services from the WTHSP answered the survey, and while most of these responses were from women who had accessed transition houses (89%), 20% had also accessed a safe home, and 14% had accessed second stage housing (respondents may have accessed multiple types of services).

It is recognized that, given the small number of respondents, responses to the service recipient survey should be interpreted with caution. However, it is important to include the voices of women who access these services as part of the review.

3.   Core Service Areas

The Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Framework sets out five core service areas common to all three program streams (transition houses, safe houses and second stage housing):
1. Initial Contact Services
2. Safe Shelter/Housing and Immediate Basic Needs
3. Personal Supports for Women and Children
4. Referrals, Advocacy and Supported Access to Services
5. Inter-Agency Service Linking

Information about these core service areas was gathered through the subject matter expert interviews, regional focus groups, staff survey, and, in some cases the service recipient survey. Key findings with respect to the strengths and challenges of these core service areas are set out in the sections that follow.

3.1   Initial Contact Services

Initial contact services include factors such as initial information gathering and relationship building, referrals to shelters or other resources, and facilitating access to transportation. Three central themes about initial contact services emerged through individual interviews and regional session discussions:
1. Safe homes and transition houses want more funding to raise awareness of their services
2. Transportation to a safe home or transition house is often an issue
3. Increased resources are needed for services for non-residents

Safe homes and transition houses want more funding to raise awareness of their services

A consistent message that was heard through all regional sessions was that more funding is needed to raise awareness about WTHSP services in their community. Participants highlighted that increased resourcing would help raise awareness about WTHSP services, which is particularly needed for immigrant and refugee women, and this outreach needs to be made available in different languages.

Participants noted that the way women initially make contact with WTHSP services is changing: where women used to call the 24/7 staffed transition house line they now increasingly text or send messages through applications like Facebook. This has both advantages and disadvantages: in some communities, cell service is often unavailable, and methods of communication using wifi (like Facebook messages) are more accessible. However, this presents new safety challenges, as these communication methods do not allow for easy confirmation of identity. Managing these messages, along with phone lines, is adding unanticipated work requirements and proving more time consuming for staff.

Referrals are a fundamental component of WTHSP success, but some service providers report that other community agencies do not refer women to their services or do so inconsistently. Others noted that referrals sometimes come with high pressure to accept women, even if housing them is beyond the capacity of the house, typically because they are the only housing service in the community for women, or the only one which might have the capacity to provide a private or semi-private room. These high-pressure referrals were most commonly reported as coming from health care providers.

In addition, service provider staff noted the need for funding to enhance staff efforts to support women who are not staying at the Safe Home or Transition House. This support is different, though similar, to the outreach services funded through the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, which provide women with supportive counselling, information and referrals, and accompaniment and transportation to other services, and include multicultural outreach programs in some communities. Service provider staff are particularly seeking funding for outreach delivered through their WTHSP programs and connected to their services, including a focus on housing supports.

Transportation to a safe home or transition house is often an issue

A common theme that arose during regional sessions was the challenge that is presented in transporting women from unsafe situations into the safety offered by a transition house or safe home. This is particularly challenging after regular working hours and was reported by service providers from across the province due to the lack of accessible private and public transportation options, although it is especially acute in rural and remote areas.

Several participants in this review noted that one-time only grants for transportation made available in primarily rural/remote areas as a part of the Provincial Domestic Violence Action Plan helped a great deal to alleviate transportation challenges and helped to address the related safety issues. This funding was made available to BC Housing as a part of the 3-year Domestic Violence Action Plan, which has now come to an end, and staff commonly requested that these funds be renewed.

Review participants noted that partner agencies who sometimes provide additional transportation support do so inconsistently community to community, or house to house. Some WTHSP service providers have partnerships with taxi services or receive discounted or free bus tickets. Others reported working with MCFD to access after-hours transportation support but noted that this support is inconsistent.

Service providers also reported that it is very common for staff to step in and volunteer their time and resources to provide transportation, often driving very far out of their way and on their own time to ensure a woman is brought to a safe space. Staff noted that inter-city travel is often required, especially in Northern B.C., and there are often limited, if any, public transportation options available. This presents challenges not only in terms of demands on staff time and energy, but also in terms of safety and potential liability.

Even with the benefit of the transportation funding program, many service providers reported that the inconsistent ability for a transition house to transport a woman or to cover their transportation costs was confusing both to the partner agencies, and women seeking services

Staff survey findings reinforced the issues raised around transportation: the service that staff reported least often being able to provide was facilitating access to transportation out of the community where required for safety. Only 50% reported usually or always being able to provide this service.

Increased resources needed for services for non-residents

Another consistent theme from review participants was the need for increased funding for services to not only women and children staying in the programs, but also those who are not. Many staff noted that providing support to women who are not staying in the program is essential, especially considering the short stays that are provided in most safe homes.

The WTHSP administrative data shows that all three service streams provide services to women who are not staying in their programs. To provide context, service providers reported a wide variation in the overall number of calls for assistance that they respond to on a quarterly basis.

Of these, there was also a wide variation in the number of responses that were provided to non-residents, whether for general information/support, safety information, or counselling. It was most common for non-residents to be provided with information, followed by counselling, and then safety information.

The survey also asked staff how BC Housing could better support Initial Contact Services, and 118 respondents made suggestions. The most common responses included:
- Increased funding for staffing (25%)
- Increased funding for more transition house spaces (24%)
- More housing for women after first stage (e.g. more second stage and more permanent, affordable housing) (24%)
- Designated funding for transportation, both to the safe home or transition house and out of community (20%)

There was a notable consistency in responses, with the top four being identified throughout the province. There were a few regional variations worth noting, however: staff in Northern B.C. most commonly identified the need for more second-stage housing and transportation funding; while staff in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley most commonly suggested more transition house spaces, followed by transportation funding.

3.2   Safe Shelter / Housing and Immediate Basic Needs

Safe shelter/housing and immediate basic needs includes services such as temporary shelter or short-term housing, laundry, support in accessing child care, food and hygiene supplies.

As set out on the table below, in the staff survey completed as part of the WTHSP review, the safe shelter and immediate basic needs services that WTHSP staff most often reported being unable to provide were access to child minding and the provision of second-stage housing. Only 51% of all respondents reported usually or always being able to provide support in accessing child minding, and only 51% of second stage housing providers reported being always or usually able to provide short-term housing when women or children needed it. In addition, only 65% of

safe homes and 71% of transition houses reported being able to usually or always provide temporary shelter.

Table 3: Frequency of ability to provide requested services[4]

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't know
Transition house temporary shelter in a communal setting, typically no more than 30 nights	28%	42%	24%	6%	0%	0%
Transition house 24/7 on-site staffing	84%	12%	3%	1%	0%	0%
Temporary shelter in a safe home unit with stays typically no more than 10 nights	30%	35%	16%	11%	5%	3%
Second stage short-term housing in independent units, with typica stays between 6 and 18 months	16%	35%	32%	14%	3%	0%
Use of on-site laundry facilities	84%	11%	1%	0%	3%	1%
Support in accessing child minding	24%	27%	31%	12%	6%	0%
Access to nutritious food for at least 3 meals per day, including access to snacks and beverages throughout the day	84%	13%	2%	1%	0%	0%
Personal hygiene supplies (including feminine hygiene supplies & diapers for children)	74%	22%	3%	1%	0%	0%

Five central themes emerged as part of the interview and regional session discussions around this core service area.

1. Increased complexity of women seeking shelter
2. It can be challenging to provide services that are welcoming to all
3. Frustration when there is not enough space or capacity
4. Women with children often need child minding to be able to start new lives
5. Food, hygiene, and supply costs have increased, but not all budgets have increased consistently

Increased complexity of women seeking shelter

An increasingly common theme in the literature is the growing complexity of challenges faced by women who seek the services of the transition housing sector. This was also reflected from review participants, as agencies consistently identified increasingly complex mental health, substance use, and trauma-related challenges among the women who seek their services.

Some participants linked this increasing complexity to an expansion of the sector's mandate to include women at risk of violence as well as those directly fleeing violence. Others linked the increasing complexity to the sector's focus on reducing barriers, noting that funding has not

---

[4] Staff survey responses, n=234. Percentages for services specific to safe homes, transition houses, or second-stage housing only reflect responses from organizations who provide the relevant service, reported in WTHSP review survey.

increased alongside this change, despite the increased staff time and skills that are required to properly address the challenges.

Transition houses are particularly challenged in smaller communities, where there are fewer resources for women with complex needs, and the transition house is often seen as the place that will inevitably accept every woman that needs help. This results in resources being stretched far further than they were designed for, as women with complex mental health and substance use issues often need significant support and advocacy to access the services they need and the funding to pay for them.

Some service providers are finding it increasingly difficult to cope with increased demands on resources, and some report that the typical stay time limit is sometimes used to move women with complex needs from the program.

It can be challenging to provide services that are welcoming to all

Although WTHSP-funded safe homes and transition houses seek to be welcoming to all women who need their services, this can be challenging due to both structural and policy-related reasons.

As noted above, women with increasingly complex needs and challenges are looking to transition houses and safe homes for services and supports. These women often have behavioural issues related to mental health and/or substance use, which can come into conflict with house guidelines. Although houses use these guidelines to enhance site security and operations, there is a recognition that this can be disempowering and alienating for some women who are struggling to find or regain agency over their own lives.

Another area where policy can create barriers is with respect to women with dependent children, especially older male children. There is a widespread impression that some houses do not permit entry to teenage boys, although all WTHSP programs have contracts with BC Housing which include male children amongst those eligible for service.

Children can also pose a structural challenge as well, as some transition houses do not have rooms that are appropriate for larger families. This may dissuade some women – particularly those from immigrant, refugee and Indigenous communities – from accessing accommodation supports and services.

Structural challenges can also present barriers in serving women with disabilities. Many houses, particularly older ones, do not include physical modifications such as ramps, wider doorways or accessible bathrooms, and a number of participants in this review identified a need for funding to address these basic accessibility needs.

Indigenous women were almost three times more likely than non-Indigenous women to report having been victim of a violent crime or experience spousal violence.[5] It is therefore particularly important for WTHSP services to be culturally safe and accessible for Indigenous women.

---

[5] Statistics Canada, Graduate Social Survey, 2014

Finally, language barriers can pose a significant challenge for some agencies, particularly those in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley, where larger communities of immigrant and refugee women tend to be located. Some agencies are addressing this by partnering with immigrant-serving organizations and/or making concerted efforts to hire staff with relevant language skills, but this is a continuing barrier made more challenging by a lack of funding for adequate staff coverage.

Frustration when there is not enough space or capacity

Another issue that was identified by service providers throughout the province was a demand for services that regularly exceeds transition houses' capacity. Some programs report regularly running over capacity – for example, a house may be funded for 10 beds, but is always officially "full" and regularly provides shelter to many more than 10 people.

The inability to always house women who need assistance does not mean that staff resources aren't required with respect to that individual. Instead, many agencies reported that women who cannot be housed due to capacity issues often require more active assistance to find shelter when there is not room at the first location they call, and that existing staff levels do not take this need into account.

It is worth noting, however, that while many transition houses or safe homes are often full, others regularly operate below capacity.

Administrative data from the WTHSP provides further insight into the issue of the rates of women who are not immediately sheltered at a safe home or transition house. The chart below summarizes how commonly no or insufficient space was the primary reason women were not immediately sheltered. Other reasons why women could not be sheltered immediately could include ineligibility due to non-compliance with rules around substance use, having pets, or concerns related to the safety of other service recipients.

Table 4: Percent of women not able to be sheltered, not sheltered due to space, 2015-16 to 2016-17[6]
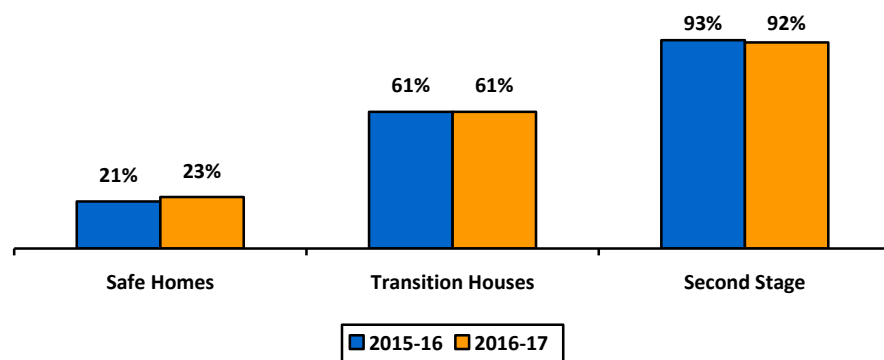
The chart above illustrates that that lack of space or inadequate space for the family size is most commonly an issue in second-stage housing. It is also notable that almost two-thirds of non-sheltered requests for transition housing services were unable to be met due to lack of space. The following sections consider each of the three service areas more specifically.

Safe Homes

WTHSP administrative data indicates that safe homes were unable to shelter an average of 257 referrals each year between 2015-16 and 2016-17. An additional 243 referrals did not follow through with accessing housing after a spot was offered, on average. The relatively low numbers of women not-sheltered immediately or at all due to space for safe homes may reflect the lower referral rate to these services. The most common reasons reported by safe homes to not be able to shelter women are listed in the table below.

Table 5: Primary reasons reported by WTHSP safe homes for not being able to shelter women, 2015-16 and 2016-17 combined[7]

	Dedicated space	Private home or hotel	Total
No or insufficient space	28%	13%	22%
Mental health and/or substance use	21%	29%	25%
Safety concerns	20%	12%	16%
Pets	3%	6%	5%
Other reasons (including outside of program mandate)	28%	40%	32%

---

[6] BC Housing WTHSP administrative data. Note: Women reported here may not be unique women, as they may have come to the same site more than once during the reporting period or to another site during the reporting period.

[7] BC Housing WTHSP administrative data. Note: Includes women whose situation was not appropriate for program and who were placed on a waitlist even if they came off the waitlist (i.e. were offered services) later in the month. Women are counted once even if referred by multiple sources. The reason the woman could not be sheltered immediately or at all is unknown in some cases.

The typical stay in a safe home is 10 nights, although BC Housing permits safe homes to maintain a longer period of shelter at their discretion. Some communities reported that it was very common for them to keep women in safe homes for longer than 10 nights while waiting for a space in a transition house, rental unit, or for a rental subsidy. More than one-in-four stays for women exceed the 10-nights typical limit, when looking at the two reporting years combined, while over half are for six nights or less.

Table 6: Two-year average length of stay based on departures for women in safe homes, 2015-16 and 2016-17[8]

1 night	2-6 nights	7-10 nights	10+ nights
16%	42%	16%	26%

According to admin data from 2015-16 and 2016-17 combined, longer stays were more typically experienced in safe homes with dedicated space, while shorter stays are more common in programs using volunteer private homes or motels. In addition, safe home staff participating in regional sessions reported that many women do not self-refer to safe homes due to the short stay limitation, and limited housing options afterwards.

Transition Houses

The most common reasons reported by transition houses for being unable to shelter women are listed in the following table. Among women who could not be sheltered, approximately 60% were not sheltered due to lack of space.

Table 7: Primary reasons reported by transition houses for not being able to shelter women, 2015-16 and 2016-17[9]

	Interior	Lower Mainland/ Fraser	North and North Coast	Vancouver Island	Total
No or insufficient space	42%	71%	18%	40%	61%
Mental health and/or substance use	14%	6%	18%	15%	8%
Safety concerns	1%	3%	2%	1%	3%
House Dynamics	5%	2%	4%	1%	3%
Pets	2%	2%	0%	1%	2%
Other reasons (including outside program mandate)	36%	16%	57%	42%	23%

---

[8] BC Housing WTHSP administrative data. Note: In the survey there was a category error with overlap in responses between 7-10 and 10+ nights. This has been changed for 2017-18. Departures do not represent individuals, as women and children accompanied by women may have stayed more than once during the fiscal year (a stay is 1+ consecutive nights) or across reported fiscal years at one site or at multiple sites/programs.

[9] BC Housing WTHSP administrative data. Note: Includes women whose situation was not appropriate for program and who were placed on a waitlist even if they came off the waitlist (i.e. were offered services) later in the month. Women are counted once even if referred by multiple sources. The reason the woman could not be sheltered immediately or at all is unknown in some cases.

As illustrated above, lack of transition house space is most likely to be an issue in the Lower Mainland/Fraser region, where 69% of non-sheltered referrals were declined because of lack of space.

During the regional sessions, many participants reported frequently allowing women to stay in transition houses for periods exceeding one month. However, administrative data shows that this has occurred in only 15% of departures for women on average between 2015-16 and 2016-17, and that 60% of departures for women were stays of two weeks or less.

Table 8: Length of stay at time of departures for women in transition houses, 2015-16 and 2016-17[10]

1 night	2-7 nights	8-14 nights	15-21 nights	22-30 nights	Over 1 month
10%	33%	17%	11%	13%	15%

Table 9: Transition house stays at time of departures for women over one month by region, 2015-16 and 2016-17[11]

Interior	Lower Mainland / Fraser	North and North Coast	Vancouver Island
20%	21%	7%	19%

During regional sessions, many participants noted longer stays are partly attributable to a lack of affordable housing for service recipients to move on to, with the alternative often being relying on friends and family, returning to an abusive situation, or considering various forms of homelessness including couch surfing.

These longer stays are also a contributing factor to houses being full or over capacity. As illustrated on the table below, transition houses were full an average of 30 nights per quarter across 2015-16 and 2016-17 (or 120 nights per year), and above capacity an average 14 nights per quarter (or 56 nights per year).[12] The Lower Mainland/ Fraser region was most likely to be full, followed by Vancouver Island.

---

[10] BC Housing WTHSP administrative data. Note: Departures do not represent distinct individuals, as a woman and children accompanied by women may have stayed more than once during the fiscal year (a stay is 1+ consecutive nights) or across reported fiscal years at one site or at multiple sites/programs.

[11] BC Housing WTHSP administrative data

[12] The survey is ambiguous about whether nights full and nights above capacity overlap. It is assumed that nights full and nights were indicated separately in the two spaces provided.

Table 10: Two-year average nights per quarter transition houses are full or over capacity by region, 2015-16 and 2016-17[13]

	Interior	Lower Mainland/ Fraser	North and North Coast	Vancouver Island	Total
Average nights full	27	39	17	29	30
Average nights above capacity	15	15	15	9	14

Second Stage Housing

Lack of space is by far the most common reason that WTHSP-funded second stage houses reported being unable to shelter between women who are referred to them. There are only 12 WTHSP-funded second stage programs in B.C., and the majority in the Lower Mainland/Fraser region, though there are at least an additional 18 second stage programs funded through other programs, or not government funded[14.] None of the WTHSP funded second-stage programs are located in Northern B.C.

Unlike safe homes and transition houses, second stage programs have individual policies on maximum lengths of stay, which typically range between 6 and 18 months. Vancouver Island second stage programs were most likely to report stays over 24 months, although these do have policies that allow for longer stays.

Table 11: Length of stay based on departures for women in second stage houses, 2015-16 and 2016-17[15]

6 months or less	7-12 months	13-18 months	19-24 months	25+ months
34%	32%	14%	13%	6%

Women with children often need child minding to be able to start new lives

Although it is widely recognized throughout the sector that the availability of child care is important for women to be able to move on from abusive situations and regain independence, no transition house or safe home in British Columbia is funded to provide structured child minding. Some service providers can offer temporary, part-time help on an ad hoc basis, but this is inconsistently available and offered only when the provider can creatively carve out resourcing from other sources.

The lack of child-minding services within WTHSP-funded programs is exacerbated by the general lack of childcare spaces in most communities across the province. This lack of consistent, funded, structured child minding has a number of implications. Most immediately, women with children often report challenges with childcare or a lack of childcare services. If the woman is in the workforce, it is usually her partner who provides childcare. If she is the primary caregiver and not working, the availability of childcare is crucial to the woman's ability to enter or re-enter the

---

[13] BC Housing WTHSP administrative data
[14] These 18 programs are not included in the admin data in this report nor this WTHSP review.
[15] BC Housing WTHSP administrative data

workforce. Either way, without child care women are not able to find or maintain employment while trying to leave an abusive situation.

Several participants also noted that without child minding services, staff are often left to step in to tend to children while their mothers are attending appointments, support services, job interviews, or even employment. This leaves services providers focused on the immediate needs of children and unable to provide more specialized supports and services that women need.

A related issue is the lack of parenting programs, which was cited by many review participants as an important service gap. It was suggested by many participants that the best-case scenario would be if providers could offer parenting programs along with childminding services.

Food, hygiene, and supply costs have increased, but not all budgets have increased consistently

Finally, many service providers expressed frustration that costs for basic needs such as food, hygiene and cleaning supplies have increased but their budgets have not changed sufficiently to address these increases. Transition housing and support program staff also reported an increase in women with specific and specialized dietary requirements. It is up to the program to submit their annual budget and to request increases. This is largely within the purview of service providers to address through budget negotiations, but there are inconsistent practices across the province, and levels of support vary from provider to provider. While some providers have developed community partnerships and donations programs, these are often limited due to lack of appropriate or sufficient storage spaces.

Finally, the WTHSP review asked participants about what they felt should be priorities for BC Housing to better support the core service area of safe shelter and immediate basic needs. Of the 143 respondents, the most common responses included are listed below:

- More second stage housing (37%)
- More funding for staff (hours and wages) (32%)
- More funding to enable child minding in-house (26%)
- More transition houses, or more funded beds (21%)
- More permanent, affordable housing (16%)

3.3   Personal Supports for Women and Children

The core service area of personal supports for women and children includes crisis and emotional support, education around the dynamics and impact of violence, assistance obtaining identification, safety planning, and accompaniment to appointments and skills support where resources are available.

In the survey, the services that staff reported as least often being able to provide were accompaniment, skills support, and transportation. Fourteen per cent of all respondents reported that they are rarely or never able to provide accompaniment to appointments, where 9% of respondents reported rarely or never being able to provide skills support, and 5% reported rarely or never being able to provide transportation.

Table 12: Frequency staff reported being able to provide services for women or children who needed them[16]

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't know
Crisis and emotional support for women and children	68%	28%	4%	0%	0%	0%
Access to information and education regarding the dynamics and impact of violence against women and children	69%	26%	4%	1%	0%	0%
Assistance obtaining key identification and documentation	33%	44%	19%	2%	0%	1%
Transportation	15%	43%	37%	4%	1%	0%
Safety Planning	70%	27%	3%	0%	0%	0%
Accompaniment to appointments where needed/desired	18%	37%	32%	11%	3%	0%
Skills support (e.g. parenting support, tenancy skills, budgeting, etc.)	26%	36%	29%	9%	0%	0%

The survey also asked staff how BC Housing could better support the provision of personal supports for women and children, and 104 respondents made suggestions. The most common responses included:
- More funding for staff (hours and wages) (64%)
- More funding for transportation (23%)

Two central themes emerged around this core service area as part of interviews and regional session discussions.
1. Staff resourcing stretched
2. Lack of ability to provide advocacy and accompaniment

Staff resourcing stretched

Review participants consistently identified heavy workloads, growing waitlists, and limited staff hours as significant factors that limit the ability of women to access the personal supports that they and their children need.

In general, participants reported that caseloads for front line workers are heavy and can delay the provision of timely support, much of which needs to be available on a 24/7 basis. This heavy workload, combined with limited training and relatively low pay compared to similar workers in

---

[16] Staff survey responses, n=234

similar sectors, means that many agencies are experiencing high turnover rates. This in turn impacts the quality of the services that they can provide, as a large proportion of their time and effort is spent recruiting, training, and bringing new staff up to speed.

Many review participants also noted that, given the context in which they work, staff increasingly need their own emotional support and counselling to process and work with clients who have come from traumatic experiences. This has become more acute as service recipients present with more complex challenges including mental health and substance use issues.

Lack of ability to provide advocacy and accompaniment

An important factor in women's ability to access the services they need is having advocacy support and accompaniment to appointments involving things like financial assistance, legal aid, housing and medical matters. Often, women who access WTHSP services are at vulnerable points in their lives and are less likely to access the services they need if they do not have support to do so. This is especially true with respect to legal services, where the difficulty to access legal aid has resulted in many women self-representing.

However, staffing levels at WTHSP funded programs often preclude the ability to provide this support, and agencies have limited options for providing the one-on-one support that is necessary to assist with attending appointments. In rural and remote communities, this is further complicated by the sometimes-significant distances that must be travelled between the house and the other services that a woman may need.

Participants also noted that advocacy and accompaniment can be challenging in communities where there are simply few places to refer for more specialized or intensive therapies that a woman may need, both in terms of having to do significant work to locate potential services, and in the management of the woman's challenges that is necessary in the meantime. Overall, many staff identified a need for better information about other services that are available in their community and nearby communities. Violence Against Women in Relationships (VAWIR) and Interagency Case Assessment Teams (ICAT) Coordination Tables are supported by EVA BC through funding by the Ministry of Public Safety and the Solicitor General to make these linkages among key programs in local communities.

3.4   Referrals, Advocacy and Supported Access to Services

The core service area of referrals, advocacy and supported access to services includes referrals to external services and resources, and support and advocacy to assist women in accessing services. Three central themes emerged through interviews and regional session discussions around this core service area.
   1. Availability of community programs/resources
   2. Improved supports needed to prepare women to transition from WTHSP
   3. Impact of lack of access to affordable housing

Availability of community programs/resources

A common concern raised by review participants was the long waitlists that many programs and services have, or the simple lack of availability of programs and services in many communities throughout the province. As many noted, long waitlists can make referrals ineffective or even counterproductive, and there is a general scarcity of available, appropriate and robust referral points.

With respect to specific services, several participants highlighted very long waitlists for programs aimed at children who have experienced violence as being particularly problematic. In 2017-18, the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General provided additional grant funding and increased base funding to address waitlist pressures for all victim's services and violence against women programs. Others noted that there are very few services that focus on helping men, including fathers, address issues that lead to violence.

Participants suggested that it would be helpful to have clearer and more consistent referral protocols. Many felt that WTHSP staff generally need a stronger knowledge of, and connection to, other community services, particularly those in the legal aid and justice systems. A number also suggested that co-location of services would be helpful and help reduce the gaps that can occur between referral and service provision. These programs are often co-located, but not in all cases. For example, in over one-third of communities (36%) which have both a WTHSP and Stopping the Violence program, the Stopping the Violence program is in a different agency.

Improved supports needed to prepare women to transition from WTHSP

Although the WTHSP has the basic goal of helping women move from violent situations to more independent lives, participants in this review often identified the lack of supports to help with this transition as an important challenge to their work. Transition supports including things like access to appropriate clothing, help with gaining training and employment, and assistance with finding accommodation after a woman leaves the transition house. The supports that are needed can be very specific as well: for example, women who have experienced violence may need assistance with moving and storage of belongings, items that are not generally contemplated as being within WTHSP program budgets.

A common concern was that the lack of counselling and supports for women, which is endemic throughout the province, means that former service recipients tend to come back to the transition house for support on an ongoing basis. This ongoing relationship can be of critical importance to the individual and is widely recognized as being important in helping women move towards more independent living. However, it also means that transition houses are becoming women's centers or hubs, providing drop-in services in ways that were not originally contemplated, and for which they are not appropriately funded.

Although these concerns were commonly expressed during interviews and regional sessions, survey responses indicated that there is a high level of service provision in this core service area.

Most providers reported usually or always able to provide support and advocacy (94%) or referrals to external services (88%).

Table 13: Frequency staff reported being able to provide services for women or children who needed them[17]

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't know
Referrals to external services and resources	56%	38%	7%	0%	0%	0%
Support and advocacy where appropriate	46%	42%	10%	2%	0%	0%

Impact of lack of access to affordable housing

Though not explicitly listed as part of this service area, regional session discussions raised the issue of transition from WTHSP programs and the challenges faced due to extremely limited access to second stage and affordable housing.

A fundamental challenge with the core service area of referral, advocacy and supported access is the lack of a core necessity for many women: the availability of safe, affordable housing. Many review participants noted that this is an essential element in most women's ability to move on to create or regain independent lives, and without access to affordable housing many will return to abusive situations for lack of other options.

The desire for more second stage and permanent affordable housing was consistently identified as a very pressing need throughout the province. The housing crisis that has received so much attention in the Lower Mainland and southern Vancouver Island is being felt all over B.C., whether due to rising prices, lack of rental options, or lack of affordable, supported housing options.

This is particularly acute when one considers the level of financial assistance that is available to a woman receiving Income Assistance: the rate of $610 per month for a single woman and just more than $870 per month for a woman with a child makes it extremely challenging to be able to move on to independence. The threat of poverty, in combination with a lack of affordable housing, continues to compromise women's ability to leave her abuser.

This is exacerbated by the general lack of an overarching way to connect people to appropriate housing, leaving many already-stretched WTHSP agencies to step in and effectively act as rental agents. Several participants suggested it would be helpful to have a more centralized or collective model of housing referral, to make the process more efficient and responsive to the needs of the women they serve.

Administrative data provides further insight into where women go when they leave WTHSP funded services. As illustrated below, the most common departures[18] from safe homes and

---

[17] Staff survey responses, n=234

transition houses are to friends and family, followed by private market rentals without subsidy, and then safe return to home. Only a small proportion left for affordable housing.

However, just over one third of second stage housing departures left for affordable housing, a further 19% went to a private market rental with a rental subsidy and 16% went to private market housing. The additional time in the second stage housing, along with the stability and supports provided, makes it more possible for women to access these housing situations.

Table 14: Frequency WTHSP departures for women to various situations (where known), by type of house, 2015-16 and 2016-17[19]

	Safe homes	Transition houses	Second stage houses
Friends / Family	22%	22%	16%
Private Market without rental subsidy	17%	16%	16%
Safe Return to home	11%	13%	1%
Another safe home or transition house	12%	8%	6%
Private Market with rental subsidy	6%	9%	19%
Return to abusive situation	11%	6%	5%
Second stage housing	2%	5%	1%
Affordable housing	4%	4%	34%
Emergency Shelter	1%	4%	1%
Alcohol or Drug Recovery	0%	3%	0%
Homeless	4%	3%	0%
Mental Health Services	3%	1%	0%
Other	5%	7%	2%

It is noteworthy that 89% of departures are reported as not returning to abusive situations when departing from safe homes, 94% from transition houses, and 95% from second stage housing.

This is an area that showed regional differences, which may indicate relative levels of availability of supported or affordable housing, or other options for women to move to from transition houses.

---

[18] Departures do not represent distinct individuals, as a woman and children accompanied by women may have stayed more than once during the fiscal year or across reported fiscal years at one site or at multiple sites/programs.

[19] BC Housing WTHSP administrative data. Note: Departures do not represent distinct individuals, as a woman and children accompanied by women may have stayed more than once during the fiscal year (a stay is 1+ consecutive nights) or across reported fiscal years at one site or at multiple sites/programs.

Table 15: Frequency WTHSP departures from transition houses to various situations (where known), by region, 2015-16 and 2016-17[20]

	Interior	Lower Mainland / Fraser	North and North Coast	Vancouver Island
Friends / Family	24%	21%	22%	23%
Private Market without rental subsidy	24%	15%	12%	17%
Safe Return to home	14%	8%	17%	12%
Another safe home or transition house	7%	11%	5%	8%
Private Market with rental subsidy	5%	9%	10%	12%
Return to abusive situation	6%	6%	7%	5%
Second stage housing	4%	9%	1%	4%
Affordable housing	3%	4%	3%	5%
Emergency Shelter	3%	5%	3%	3%
Alcohol or Drug Recovery	3%	3%	4%	3%
Homeless	1%	3%	4%	1%
Mental Health	1%	1%	1%	0%
Other	5%	4%	12%	7%

These numbers appear to be relatively stable, as the administrative data shows no significant changes at a regional level in post-WTHSP service pathways over the two years.

In the Service Provider Survey, when asked what would be most useful in improving their ability to deliver the core service area of referrals, advocacy and supported access to services, staff most commonly requested additional staffing. A total of 73 respondents made suggestions, the most common of which were the following:
- More funding for staff (hours and wages) (53%)
- Increased resources for community programs (counselling, mental health) (14%)
- More funding for staff training (12%)

3.5   Inter-Agency Service Linking

The fifth and final core service area is inter-agency service linking, which goes beyond referral and advocacy to include activities like promoting community awareness of the program, and continuous development and maintenance of relationships with the provincial and community agencies that are involved in services and advocacy regarding the diverse needs of women and children at risk of violence. Two central themes emerged through interviews and regional session discussions around this core service area.
1. Inter-agency linking is largely dependent on individual relationships
2. Provincial and local level coordinated collaboration among government and community agencies is important and could be strengthened.

---

[20] BC Housing WTHSP administrative data

Inter-agency linking is largely dependent on individual relationships

Feedback from interviews and regional sessions suggests that while service providers recognize the value in inter-agency linking, their ability to act on this varies from community to community and is largely dependent on individual relationships. In some areas, executive directors have built strong and long-standing relationships that serve them well for inter-agency work. Others are not as comfortable or have not been able to make these critical relationships. Many cited the lack of funding to support coordination activities and developmental work as a challenge, and that this has become one more activity that they must do "off the side of their desk" without funding from BC Housing, in addition to the pressures of provision and management of direct services and supports. Though there are ICAT and VAWIR grants in many communities to support inter-agency linking, where these resources do not exist, this work is particularly challenging.

Provincial and local level coordinated collaboration among government and community agencies is important, and could be strengthened.

In general, review participants suggested that the lack of coordinated collaboration among government agencies and community agencies can be a barrier in supporting women and children fleeing violence around their various needs, and that there is a need for coordinated provincial and local action among groups such as the RCMP, Crown Counsel, and the Ministries of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Children and Family Development; Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and Health, as well as local housing agencies. There have been a number of initiatives looking to address these issues, though more work is needed. For example, the BC Society of Transition Houses and BC Housing has been working with the RCMP to improve collaboration, and MCFD provided transportation grants through the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence.

Participants recognized that partners can find connecting with WTHSP services challenging because of the autonomy of agencies and the variety of form, services, and supports that they provide. However, they also felt that a common *de facto* response has been to leave coordination and convening of inter-agency meetings to local WTHSP service providers, which puts an inequitable onus on these agencies. This is made more challenging by frequent personnel changes in organizations like MCFD and the RCMP, which requires re-building of relationships and re-education about the scope, mandate and merits of WTHSP programs and services.

Where available, Interagency Case Assessment Teams (ICAT) are highly valued. ICAT is a partnership of local agencies, including police, child welfare, health, social service, victim support, and other organizations. which responds to referrals of suspected highest risk domestic violence cases with an aim to increase safety.

Participants identified several areas where more work is necessary to create effective linkages and partnerships. These notably include connections with First Nations and Indigenous-serving agencies, as well as organizations that work with immigrant and refugee women. A number of people also suggested that funding decisions related to WTHSP and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General's Violence Against Women programs could be made in a more coordinated fashion.

The provision of coordinated navigation is recognized in the literature as a best practice to support the transition from crisis intervention, through supportive housing, and into independent living. It suggests that supported navigation is critical in providing housing outreach and helping to liaise with the private housing market. Service coordination and navigation can help lower barriers to accessing shelter by minimizing restrictions and hurdles through centralized intake and providing a single point of contact.

Respondents to the service provider survey suggested that there are areas where improvements could be made in terms of inter-agency linkages and collaboration. For example, promoting community awareness of the WTHSP for individual women to self-refer and for potential referral sources in the community was usually or always provided by only 57% of the agencies of survey respondents.

Similarly, continuous development and maintenance of relationships with provincial and community agencies involved in the delivery of services, and advocacy regarding the diverse needs of women and children at risk of violence was usually or always provided by 59% of the agencies of survey respondents.

Table 16: Frequency staff reported being able to provide services[21]

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't know
Continuous development/maintenance of relationships with provincial and community agencies and advocacy regarding the diverse needs of women and children at risk of violence	20%	41%	28%	5%	0%	5%
Promoting community awareness of WTHSP to encourage self-referral and for potential community referral sources	21%	36%	32%	6%	0%	4%

The survey also illustrated a wide range in the frequency with which various partner agencies and organizations work with WTHSP agencies at the community level. The table below illustrates the ways WTHSP funded agency staff reported coordinating or collaborating with other agencies in their community. Other agencies are generally mostly likely to "link" by referring women to WTHSP agencies for service, with participation rates varying from a high of 44% (from the health sector) to a low of 28% (victim's services and regional anti-violence service providers).

Table 17: Frequency staff reported potential partner agencies work with their agency[22]

	Refers women to us	Participates in community forums about violence against women	Identified contact person for our agency	Collaborates with us to meet individual women's needs
Hospital / Health Authority	44%	19%	13%	21%
Homeless services	36%	20%	15%	24%
Ministry of Social Development	33%	14%	17%	22%

---

[21] Staff survey, n=234
[22] Staff survey, n=234

	Refers women to us	Participates in community forums about violence against women	Identified contact person for our agency	Collaborates with us to meet individual women's needs
and Poverty Reduction				
Other Transition Housing Program Service Providers	36%	15%	15%	28%
Ministry of Children and Family Development	35%	21%	17%	26%
Local First Nation(s)	32%	24%	13%	24%
Local RCMP / Police	32%	26%	20%	21%
Victim Services	28%	26%	20%	26%
Regional Anti-Violence Program Service Providers	28%	25%	19%	27%

Other agencies listed included community housing outreach or health centres programs, services for people with substance use and/or mental health challenges, or municipal government.

The survey also asked for feedback from WTHSP management and staff about how BC Housing could better support the core service area of referrals, advocacy and supported access to services, and 69 respondents made suggestions. The most common responses included:

- More funding for staff (hours and wages) (33%)
- More funding for local and regional staff training and meetings (29%)
- More funding for outreach staff (17%)
- More funding for social and community services (15%)
- Provincial coordination with MCFD, MSDPR, MOH and other housing providers (9%)
- More funding for promotion of services (7%)

4. Meeting Diverse Needs

Subject matter expert interviews and regional forums provided detailed information about WTHSP-funded agencies' strategies and capacities to meet the diverse needs of women fleeing or at risk of violence. Discussions included identifying the range of needs and characteristics that women may face, service gaps that agencies have experienced, and strategies that have been developed and implemented to address those gaps.

Themes that commonly emerged from these sessions included the following:

- Women with physical disabilities may experience barriers for fully accessing service in many houses across the province, as there are often challenges with providing fully accessible bedrooms, bathrooms, and common spaces.

- Flexibility and variation are important in terms of the individual rooms that are offered to women. Ideally, houses would like to be able to offer a mix of individual rooms –

particularly for youth, single women, transgender and older women – and larger shared rooms for families.

- Many agencies have done significant work to offer services and options for women with specific needs – for example, by incorporating options for women to keep their pets with them or nearby while they are receiving services. This work has also been assisted by the efforts of the BC Society of Transition Houses, but agencies across the province would benefit from more consistent and comprehensive sharing of these best practices.

- More consideration is needed for services to better meet the needs of LGBTQ2S women. In particular, there is inconsistency in how houses accept and support transgender women, who are often in significantly vulnerable situations. Houses also need guidance on offering support to and considering the needs of women in same-sex relationships.

- Although there may or may not be policy guidance at a provincial level, at an operational level there is inconsistency in how agencies are addressing some specific needs. These include accepting and working with young women under the age of 19, those with mental health and/or substance use issues, and those who have male dependents (especially when teenagers).

- Throughout the province, Indigenous women are overrepresented among people at risk of violence, and this includes women who come to WTHSP programs for assistance. Despite this overrepresentation, there is great inconsistency in how programs include services or features that are based in a culturally safe, Indigenous-informed approach.

- Areas where guidance is needed for providing appropriate services includes addressing needs for women who are at various stages of immigration, who are dealing with mental health and substance use issues, and who have experienced traumatic brain injuries.

- Women fleeing human trafficking need higher security shelters and specialized programming, but few agencies are appropriately equipped to provide this support.

- Some participants also identified a need to consider the perspectives of men fleeing violence, and to develop opportunities to engage men in helping to make behavioural changes to address violent behaviour at its source. PSSG recently funded pilot projects providing perpetrator abuse training.

4.1 Training Needs

To better serve women in addressing the diverse needs noted above, survey participants were asked to identify their main priorities for enhanced training and skills development. The table below summarizes the responses from 236 participants.

Table 18: Staff training priorities[23]

	Top 5 Priority	Other Priority	Not a Training Priority
Supporting women with complex issues	81%	19%	0%
Mental Health	79%	21%	0%
Trauma informed practice	78%	20%	2%
Crisis intervention	66%	31%	3%
Introductory modules for support workers	48%	40%	17%
Reducing barriers	42%	49%	9%
Harm reduction	42%	51%	7%
Cultural safety	38%	56%	6%
Serving LGBQT2S women	25%	62%	13%
Immigration processes	28%	53%	20%
Serving older women	21%	59%	20%
Serving women with pets	18%	42%	40%

As noted above, meeting the needs of women with mental health and complex needs including substance use is the most pressing area of need identified by survey participants, with less than 1% saying this was not a priority for them. Training on trauma-informed practice and crisis intervention also received consistently high levels of support.

The item "introductory modules for support workers" refers in large part to a training program offered in partnership with the BC Society of Transition Houses over ten years ago. Many participants expressed keen interest in reviving this or a similar training approach, which included online, module-based, progressive training for new workers in transition houses.

5.   Policy and Administration Considerations

Another topic that was included in this review was consideration of the general administration of the WTHSP, and the overall policies that govern the program. Participants in subject matter expert interviews and regional discussion forums were asked to provide feedback on what they felt was working well with the program, and where there are areas for potential improvements. Participants in the WTHSP staff survey were also asked for their input in these areas.

In general, participants reported a very high level of satisfaction with the management of the program, as it has operated under BC Housing since its transfer from the former Ministry of Housing and Social Development. A number of longer-term staff and partners said they originally had reservations about the program being transferred to BC Housing, but have since grown to support its location within this agency. The program manager was specifically identified as a strong point of the program.

---

[23] Staff survey, n=234

The WTHSP is funded by BC Housing, accountable to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, while the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General funds public safety and victim services programs related to domestic violence. This separate funding and accountability model was not generally viewed as problematic by participants, although some expressed a concern that BC Housing, as an agency rather than a Ministry, may sometimes be overlooked when funding discussions and decisions are made, and that it would be helpful to be more consistently a part of these discussions. BC Housing and PSSG are part of the Community Coordination for Women's Safety Provincial Coordinating Committee chaired by Ending Violence BC that meets twice a year to ensure all services work together as effectively as possible with the common goal of keeping women safe.

Changes to data collection tools

There is a widely shared desire for the program to revise and simplify the way it collects program data. Few participants questioned the value of collecting data, but many expressed frustrations at the format in which it is collected, and the amount of information that is requested. Currently, data collection occurs through a quarterly survey of aggregated statistics per site, hosted by the web-based Survey Monkey. This process has been cumbersome as a data collection tool, but has assisted in informing WTHSP decisions.

Participants suggested that a different tool be used or developed to solicit and collect data, one that would allow for simpler daily recording and monthly reporting, but with no more specifics. A tool that also provides information back to the sector in terms of progress tracking or dashboard reporting would also be welcomed.

Increases to WTHSP personnel support within BC Housing

Another area of general consensus is the need for more personnel to support the WTHSP program at BC Housing. As noted above, the current manager is very highly regarded, but the nature of the program and the detailed, agency-specific knowledge that is required for good management results is a heavy workload for a single resource. Many participants noted the difference between the WTHSP and PSSG's Violence Against Women program, which has a significant advantage in terms of the number of personnel and the level of support that the program experiences. Increased personnel could also allow more staff time for engaging in cross-ministry work.

Increases to WTHSP budgets

Participants were very consistent in expressing a desire to be able to compensate service provider staff at a more competitive level. As noted elsewhere, agencies throughout the province experience a significant challenge in attracting and retaining sufficiently skilled workers, and this is largely attributed to the lower level of wages and benefits that agencies can offer compared to similar organizations such as shelters or supported housing.

This discrepancy has increased in severity: while the skills and experience required to work with increasingly challenging service recipients has steadily increased, compensation levels have not commensurately grown. Where agencies are able to attract new staff, many described being only the first, brief step in a career before the worker secures a better-compensated position – often at an organization funded by a health authority.

Current staffing levels do not allow for the development of staff with specialized training or skills, as they are much more likely to find employment elsewhere. This is particularly problematic as service providers work with clients with increasingly specialized needs.

Taken as a whole, participants expressed a desire to be able to offer a more varied and appropriately compensated career path, rather than merely a stepping stone to a better position. As part of revised compensation, many participants identified a need for enhanced and varied forms of care for staff themselves, to address the challenges that come from working in an environment that is informed by significant trauma on a daily basis.

Similar concerns and suggestions were identified in the online survey of service provider staff and managers. When asked what BC Housing is doing well through the WTHSP, respondents identified supportive, accessible and knowledgeable staff; consistent (if not growing) operational funding, and capital grants that are very helpful.

The survey also identified the following areas as priorities for changes to policy or administration.

The most common areas repeated themes listed earlier:

- More funding for staff hours (32%)

- More second stage housing (25%)

- More funding for staff wages and benefits (18%)

- More funding (14%)

- More specialized transition houses (13%)

- More funding for staff training (12%)

- More funding for transportation (11%)

- More funding for childcare in-house (11%)

However, some newer themes arose:

- Extend transition house stay beyond 30 nights (11%)

- Continue to support reducing barriers (10%)

- Facilitate sheltering pets (10%)

- Clarify WTHSP service guidelines, including serving homeless women, women under 19 living as adults, teenage boys, women in same-sex relationships, and transgendered people (6%)

- More funding for local and regional meetings (6%)

- Support more efficient referrals when women turned away or move on to the next stage (5%)

- Simplify and shorten data collection forms and processes (4%)

- Facilitate the sharing of best practices between agencies (4%)

- Increase funding consistency between comparable services (4%)

- Support staff self-care and access to clinical counselling (4%)

6.   Housing Priorities

In addition to assessing the current state of the WTHSP and identifying areas where there is room for improvements to service delivery, another objective of this review was to provide some insight and context to support decision making for future capital investments in housing for women fleeing and at risk of violence.

Accordingly, regional sessions and online surveys included opportunities to identify regional and community-specific needs for shelter and housing. The review also included consideration of housing models more generally, and options for ensuring that women and children are appropriately served across the spectrum of need, from crisis intervention through full independent living.

Among the needs that were identified in terms of housing design were the following:

- More adaptable and flexible housing designs, which would allow houses to reconfigure their spaces to adapt single or double-use rooms to meet the needs of larger families. This would allow houses to accept larger households without requiring families to share small rooms, as tends to be the case under current models.

- The incorporation of more welcoming, home-like spaces that invite families in to share time, connect with each other and help women with daily tasks. The use of more family-friendly spaces was often cited as a way both to help women feel safe and comfortable, and to ease the burden on staff with respect to requirements such as childminding.

- Better and more consistent inclusion of accessibility in design, including features such as wider doors, ramps, and accessible bathrooms.

- Design options that include consideration of the needs for people to have their pets on site or nearby. For many women fleeing violent situations, the ability to take their pets with them can be determinative. There are notable regional variations in approaches to this issue, and a more consistent approach to inclusive design would be welcomed.

- Development of housing and shelter options that are near to related and necessary services, such as schools, retail stores, and transportation routes. Transportation is an issue that can pose a significant barrier to existing and potential service recipients. Whether or not children can easily access school can also be a determinative factor in a woman's decision to leave an abusive situation and seek help through a transition house.

- A general desire for flexibility in design was also a common theme. Flexibility was discussed both in terms of housing models (e.g. providing options that included both women/children only housing, and mixed housing, and options that include a full spectrum of supports) and in-house features (e.g. addressing pressure points in house by offering more private ensuite bathrooms, and more spaces that provide options for privacy).

The following themes were reflected in the limited literature available about transition housing design.

First, reports noted the importance of design in supporting women's feeling of safety, control, and comfort.

- Sense of safety can be supported through ensuring the building is securely locked, with controlled access such as through key cards to ease curfew policies. Design can also provide safety through well lit indoor and outdoor spaces, and open spaces with clear sight lines. Noise control can be extremely important in providing spaces that feel safe for women who have experienced trauma.

- Sense of control can be supported through design factors such as thermostats in bedrooms, and adjustable window blinds or shades. Including some smaller common spaces, such as alcoves near the bedrooms, allows residents to retreat from large group situations, and visual access to large common spaces allows residents to see who is in them before entering.

- Comfort can be supported through multiple design features, such as:
  - Reducing sense of crowding through light coloured walls and larger floor space in common areas and other high traffic areas
  - Kitchens designed for multiple simultaneous users with multiple cooktops, and generous fridge and countertops
  - Large laundry facilities
  - Seating arrangements in public spaces to increase socialization and support relationship development
  - Toys and books in family sleeping rooms, as well as library nooks.
  - Art, music, natural light, and plants as part of a welcoming environment with colors, imagery and references that are culturally relevant to the people the program serves.
  - Locked spaces for residents to store personal belongings
  - Private spaces for counselling and for telephone calls
  - Space for pets
  - Connectedness to the natural world outside, including healing gardens, and play spaces for children with purposeful movement such as loops and pathways.
  - Design which supports order and cleanliness
  - Access to indoor and outdoor play spaces for children which can be observed from other common spaces such as the living room and/or kitchen
  - Access to spaces to support pursuit of healing activities such as exercise and meditation.

Second, the literature acknowledged that most women's shelter spaces are not purpose-built but are rather repurposed and renovated spaces which limits design flexibility. Similarly, transition housing programs often have limited budgets, which further prevents capital spending, and requires an efficiency of space use.[24]

Interviews and regional sessions also discussed the spectrum of housing options, from crisis intervention through second stage and more permanent housing.

With respect to transition houses, many agencies in larger communities expressed interest in exploring a potential role for specialist transition houses, which would be recognized and resourced to work with specific sub-populations such as women with substance use or mental health challenges. This would both provide more directed and effective supports for service recipients and help address the challenge of trying to train generalist support workers to appropriately support women with these challenges.

For safe homes, a general movement away from relying on hotels, motels or the use of rooms in volunteer private homes was identified as a positive change by review participants. An increased use of dedicated spaces in communities that offer safe homes is generally supported by the sector, which points to the instability and unpredictability of partnering with commercial providers as a significant barrier in being able to offer women safe spaces when they are ready to leave abusive situations.

Second stage housing is consistently identified as the area of greatest need throughout the province. Even in areas where agencies are generally able to provide first-stage support through a transition house or safe home program, there is a significant challenge in securing more supported, affordable second stage housing for women regardless of the level of support they may need. Along with the need for more second stage housing spaces is a related need for more clearly defined and consistently offered support services.

The below table outlines what respondents to the WTHSP staff and managers' survey reported when asked about the housing options for women experiencing or at risk of violence that are missing in their communities:

---

[24] Building Dignity: design Strategies for Domestic Violence Shelter, http://buildingdignity.wscadv.org;
Berens, Michael, "A Review of Research: Designing the Built Environment for Recovery from Homelessness", Design Resources for Homelessness;
Kesler, Sarah, "A Safe Place to Start Over: The Role of Design in Domestic Violence Shelters", Undergraduate Research Journal for the Human Sciences, Volume 11, (2012);
Joshi, Rutali, "Understanding the Built Environment of Shelter Homes for Survivors of Domestic Violence", Clemson University (2017).

Table 19: Staff reported housing options for women departing services by region, WTHSP review staff survey[25]

	Interior	Lower Mainland/ Fraser	North and North Coast	Vancouver Island
Safe, affordable permanent housing for women with and without children	92%	85%	80%	91%
Permanent Safe Home Program	75%	67%	75%	76%
Options to shelter women experiencing violence to shelter with pets	57%	72%	68%	87%
Second Stage Housing with bedrooms to accommodate large families	73%	68%	66%	80%
Second Stage Housing to accommodate single women without children	65%	63%	58%	80%
Supportive recovery facility	69%	57%	71%	63%
Second Stage Housing Program	69%	58%	56%	76%
Physically accessible Second Stage Housing for people with disabilities	63%	60%	58%	76%
Safe shelter space for women experiencing homelessness, at risk of violence	59%	65%	48%	74%
Physically accessible TH or SH for people with disabilities	45%	55%	44%	43%
Bedrooms to accommodate large families in TH or SH	51%	40%	39%	39%
Single bedrooms in Transition House	43%	42%	27%	17%
Transition House Program	22%	18%	17%	7%

A desire for more longer-term and permanent housing was also expressed when participants were asked what they felt was the most urgent need that should be considered as government makes funding available for new housing across the province. All regions ranked relative need as follows:

1: Additional permanent affordable housing
2: Additional second stage housing
3: Additional transition house
4: Additional safe home

6.1 Housing Supports

Staff and managers of WTHSP-funded programs were also asked about several housing support programs and initiatives which have been made available throughout the province. Participants were asked to rank[26] various programs' eligibility (i.e. the extent to which women who access WTHSP services meet the eligibility criteria of the program), ease of access (i.e. the program's application process and documentation requirements), and availability (i.e. the extent to which supply meets demand, length of waitlists, and the availability of the program in the participant's community).

---

[25] Staff survey, n=234
[26] Scale: very good, good, somewhat, not good, not at all good, don't know

Support programs that were considered were:

- The Rental Assistance Program, which provides rent supplements for eligible low-income working families to help with their monthly rent payments in the private market.

- The Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) program, which provides rent supplements for lower income seniors to help with their monthly rent payments in the private market.

- The Homeless Prevention Program (HPP), which provides rent supplements to help people at risk of homelessness access rental housing in the private market (including Homeless Outreach and Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Programs).

- Subsidized housing is long-term housing for people who reside in British Columbia. Rental fees are calculated on a rent geared to income basis (30% of household total gross income, subject to minimum rent based on number of people).

- The Priority Placement Program, which helps women in British Columbia who have experienced violence or are at risk of violence by giving them priority access to the Housing Registry.

The Homeless Prevention Program, in particular, was frequently raised during the regional sessions. Communities which had Homeless Prevention Program supplements reported how important and valuable they were in supporting women to transition to stable housing and praising the flexibility of the program. Those communities without Homeless Prevention Program supplements asked BC Housing to consider increasing the budget for the program in order to expand the numbers of communities who could access it.

In the WTHSP review staff survey, respondents were asked to rate eligibility, ease of access, and (where applicable) availability, of housing support programs in their regions for the women accessing their services.

Across the province, staff most commonly reported room for improvement with:

- Availability of Subsidized Housing, Second Stage Housing, the Priority Placement Program, and the Homeless Prevention Program.

- Eligibility of the Rental Assistance Program and Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) programs.

- Ease of access of Subsidized Housing, the Rental Assistance Program, Second Stage Housing, and the Priority Placement Program.

Regionally, concerns about availability, eligibility, or ease of access with various programs were:

- Rental Assistance Program: Greatest concerns about eligibility and ease of access in the Lower Mainland / Fraser

- Homeless Prevention Program: Greatest concerns about availability in the Lower Mainland / Fraser and Vancouver Island

- Second Stage Housing: Greatest concerns about availability in the Lower Mainland / Fraser and Vancouver Island

- Subsidized Housing: Greatest concerns about availability in Vancouver Island, the Interior, and the Lower Mainland / Fraser.

- Priority Placement Program: Greatest concerns about availability in Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland / Fraser.

Both second stage and subsidized housing were the clearest priorities for increasing availability. Regionally, the areas of highest dissatisfaction are as follows:
- Interior: availability of subsidized housing
- Lower Mainland/Fraser: availability of subsidized and second stage housing (tied)
- North and North Coast: availability of second stage housing
- Vancouver Island: availability of subsidized housing

Eligibility ratings were relatively consistent across regions and programs, with a slight increase in respondents expressing concern about eligibility for second stage housing. Similarly, ease of access concerns were most often expressed about second stage and subsidized housing.

6.2 Regional priorities

Information on priority housing needs was gathered through two main sources: questions on WTHSP staff and management survey, and discussions at regional sessions.

When asked on the survey to rank the most urgent new housing need for women and children, respondents across the province ranked the four options in the following order:
1. Additional permanent, affordable housing
2. Additional Second Stage Housing
3. Additional Transition House
4. Additional Safe Home

At a regional level, the responses were prioritized in the same way. However, when responses were considered community-by-community, some different priorities emerged.

The following section summarizes priorities at a regional level: Interior, Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley, North and North Coast, and Vancouver Island.

6.2.1 Interior

The table below shows the housing priority of each community where WTHSP services are provided in the Interior. While the most common overall desire that respondents in the region

44

identified was permanent, affordable housing, eleven communities identified other priorities, including transition houses and second stage housing. Two communities did not identify priorities through the survey or regional sessions.

It is interesting to note that some safe home programs working with private, volunteer homes still identified permanent, affordable housing as the top priority (e.g. Clearwater and Salmo). Many regional session participants identified the lack of affordable, long-term housing in their community as a central barrier for women to escape abusive situations – often, preventing them from entering safe homes or transition houses to begin with, knowing how few rental units would be affordable to them upon their departure.

It is also interesting to note that despite limited access to second stage housing in the region (there are only three providers in the Interior), only four communities identified this as a priority. Survey responses differ slightly from regional session data, where two more communities (Vernon and Cranbrook) identified second stage as a top priority.

Table 20: Current stock and future priorities WTHSP housing options, by community: Interior

	Current WTHSP Program	Top Survey Housing Priority[27]
100 Mile House	Safe Home (Private)	Transition House
Castlegar	Safe Home (Permanent)	N/A
Cranbrook	Transition House Second Stage	Permanent Affordable Housing
Clearwater	Safe Home (Private)	Permanent Affordable Housing
Creston	Older Women Safe Home and Safe Home, both Permanent (Society owned) and private volunteer	Permanent Affordable Housing
Fernie	Safe Home Second Stage	Transition House*
Golden	Safe Home (Private)	Permanent Affordable Housing
Grand Forks	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Invermere	Safe Home (Private)	Transition House
Kamloops	Transition House	Second Stage Housing
Kaslo	Safe Home (Private)	Permanent Affordable Housing
Kelowna	Transition House	Additional Transition House
Lillooet	Safe Home (Private)	Transition House*
Nakusp	Safe Home (Private)	N/A
Nelson	Transition House	Second Stage Housing
Osoyoos/Oliver	Safe Home (Private)	Transition House*
Penticton	Safe Home (Private) Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Princeton	Safe Home (Private)	Transition House and Second Stage*
Revelstoke	Transition House	Second Stage Housing
Salmo	Safe Home (Private)	Permanent Affordable Housing*

---

[27] Asterisk denotes a community that expressed its priority expressed in regional session, as no survey respondents reported being from these communities, or answered this question. 30 respondents (13%) chose not to identify their communities, and 36 respondents chose not to identify a housing priority.

	Current WTHSP Program	Top Survey Housing Priority[27]
Salmon Arm	Transition House	Second Stage Housing*
Trail	Transition House Second Stage	Permanent Affordable Housing
Vernon	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Williams Lake	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing*

6.2.2 Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley

The table below shows the housing priority of each community where WTHSP services are provided in the Lower Mainland and the Fraser Valley. This is the region of BC where rental housing prices are amongst the highest, and so permanent affordable housing is at a premium. Twelve of the 19 communities in this region identified permanent, affordable housing as their top priority. Two communities had a tie in survey responses for housing priorities, so both have been reported.

Table 21: Current stock and future priorities WTHSP housing options, by community: Lower Mainland/Fraser

	Current WTHSP Program	Top Survey Housing Priority[28]
Abbotsford	Transition House	Additional Transition House
Aldergrove	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing; Additional Transition House (tied)
Burnaby	Transition House Second Stage	Additional Second Stage Housing
Chilliwack	2 Transition Houses	Permanent Affordable Housing
Coquitlam	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Delta	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Hope	Transition House	Second Stage Housing*
Langley	Transition House	Additional Transition House
Maple Ridge	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Mission	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
New Westminster	Transition House Second Stage	Additional Transition House
North Vancouver	Transition House 2 Second Stage	Permanent Affordable Housing and Second Stage Housing (tied)
Pemberton	Safe Home (BCH owned)	Permanent Affordable Housing
Powell River	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Richmond	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Sechelt	Transition House Second Stage	Permanent Affordable Housing
Squamish	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Surrey	5 Transition Houses 2 Second Stage	Additional Transition House
Vancouver	4 Transition Houses 2 Second Stage	Permanent Affordable Housing

[28] Asterisk denotes a community that expressed its priority expressed in regional session, as no survey respondents reported being from these communities, or answered this question. 30 respondents (13%) chose not to identify their communities, and 36 respondents chose not to identify a housing priority.

Six communities identified needing another transition house. Most of these communities have above average numbers of nights being full or above capacity, and higher rates of non-sheltering because of space. It is notable that Surrey has five transition houses, and still requested an additional transition house as their top priority.

Few communities identified second stage housing as the top priority, and the majority of second stage housing units are currently located in this region. In the regional sessions more communities identified second stage housing as their top priority (Richmond, Maple Ridge, Hope, Delta, New Westminster), while Coquitlam identified an additional transition house as a priority, providing separate options for families and single women. In both Lower Mainland / Fraser regional sessions, participants expressed widespread support for multi-use buildings, integrating safe homes, transition house, second stage, and longer-term housing in a single facility.

6.2.3 North and North Coast

The table below shows the housing priority of each community where WTHSP services are provided in the North and North Coast. Communities in this region are located long distances from each other, with limited transit options between them. Relocating to a new community for housing and remaining in touch with family and friends would be difficult.

Table 22: Current stock and future priorities WTHSP housing options, by community: North and North Coast

	Current WTHSP Program	Top Survey Housing Priority
Burns Lake	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Chetwynd	Safe Home (Private)	Additional Safe Home and Permanent, Affordable Housing (tied)
Dawson Creek	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Fort Nelson	Transition House	Second Stage Housing
Fort St. James	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Fort St. John	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Kitimat	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Mackenzie	Safe Home (Private)	Transition House
Masset	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
McBride/Valemount	Safe Home (Private)	Transition House
Prince George	2 Transition Houses	Permanent Affordable Housing
Prince Rupert	Transition House	Second Stage Housing
Quesnel	Transition House	Second Stage Housing
Smithers	Transition House	Second Stage Housing
Telegraph Creek	Transition House	Additional Transition House
Terrace	Transition House	Additional Transition House
Tumbler Ridge	Safe Home (Private)	Permanent Affordable Housing
Vanderhoof	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Watson Lake	Transition House	Additional Transition House

Nine of the 19 communities in this region identified permanent, affordable housing as their top priority. Two communities with safe homes using private volunteers identified a transition house, while another identified a permanent safe home location (tied with affordable housing). Four identified second stage housing. Though three northern communities have second stage houses, only one receives operational funding through BC Housing.

More regional session participants expressed a desire for second stage housing than did the majority of survey respondents from those communities. In the regional sessions, participants from Kitimat, Telegraph Creek, Fort St. John, and Prince George all expressed a need for second stage housing. Several communities also spoke about the need to provide services along the continuum within each community, so women could transition smoothly to the next stage of support needed.

6.2.4 Vancouver Island

The table below shows the housing priority of each community where WTHSP services are provided on Vancouver Island. Of the 12 communities in this region, nine identified permanent affordable housing as the highest housing priority. The remaining three identified second stage housing.

Table 23: Current stock and future priorities WTHSP housing options, by community: Vancouver Island

	Current WTHSP Program	Top Survey Housing Priority
Campbell River	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Courtenay	Transition House	Second Stage Housing
Duncan	Transition House	Second Stage Housing
Gold River	Safe Home (Private)	Permanent Affordable Housing
Nanaimo	Transition House	Second Stage Housing
Parksville	Safe Home (Permanent)	Permanent Affordable Housing
Port Alberni	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Port Hardy	Safe Home (Private)	Permanent Affordable Housing
Salt Spring Island	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Sooke	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Ucluelet	Transition House	Permanent Affordable Housing
Victoria	Safe Home (Permanent) 2 Transition Houses 2 Second Stage	Permanent Affordable Housing

The structure of the regional session on Vancouver Island was slightly different, and each community was not asked to identify a housing priority. However, those communities without second stage housing did express a clear desire for this housing option. Several communities also spoke about the value of co-located housing models, offering different levels of supports in response to the needs of the women being served.

7. Summary of Recommendations

Core Service Areas

1. Increase funding to WTHSP agencies, to ensure staff have time to work more intensively with women with complex needs and to provide ongoing support and accompaniment for women in the programs, and for those who have left the programs. Also, staff need time to work with women who cannot enter the program because of space restrictions. More funding would also be required to address the challenge of recruiting and retaining appropriately skilled staff in a competitive market where similar sectors often offer better compensation.

2. Increase funding for transportation and explore the development of a province-wide bus ticket subsidy program. The previous initiative as part of the Provincial Domestic Violence Action Plan was highly valued by the sector and particularly made a difference for women in rural and remote areas. Current partnerships with Translink are very valued by the WTHSP staff and service recipients in the Lower Mainland.

3. Work with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General to improve provincial level coordination among ministries and agencies that provide services to, and work with women fleeing or at risk of violence (including the Ministries of Children and Family Development, Health, Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation). In addition to funding for coordination efforts at the local level, province wide direction will support regional and local relationship development and initiatives.

Policy and Administration

4. Review and update the data collection process. Options should be considered that ease the data collection processes, the format by which data is collected, and the content of data collection requests. An important consideration should also be provision of data back to the sector in a form that is useful and could aid in program and service development and delivery.

5. Consider additional BC Housing personnel to support the WTHSP program. The current program manager is highly valued by sector partners, but there is a shared recognition that the WTHSP's breadth and complexity requires additional support at the provincial coordination and program management level.

Meeting diverse needs

6. Develop a strategy to address the needs of women with complex needs, including trauma (including generational), mental health and substance use challenges. This includes

specific training for WTHSP staff, the development of partnerships with groups such as Health Authorities, and the expansion of programs with specific mandates and expertise.

7. Develop a strategy to increase culturally safe programs and services for Indigenous women. The strategy should focus on partnerships with local Indigenous groups and programs and culturally safe, accessible and appropriate practices.

8. Develop a WTHSP sector training plan with BCSTH including training for leadership and management staff including executive directors and boards of directors. Resources should be dedicated to collect, develop, and disseminate relevant training throughout the province, with topics based on priorities identified by the sector. The plan could include options for online, regional, and provincial training, to ensure that it is as widely accessed as possible.

9. Work with the BCSTH to lead the coordination and sharing of best practices that address issues commonly identified by WTHSP's. Many programs are doing creative work and BCSTH is also a leader in providing guidance on how best to address specific and diverse needs. This coordination could include engaging with service providers and service recipients to confirm emerging needs and the sharing of lessons learned.

Housing priorities

10. Consider prioritizing permanent Safe Homes in communities that are still using private homes and motels and review the length of stay for Safe Homes.

11. Explore expansion of the Homeless Prevention Program into new communities, to address identified needs for increased funding and staff support.

12. Consider regional supply and demand of related services when allocating new funding including reviewing the expressions of interests and consider exploring models that include co-location of safe home, transition house, second stage and affordable housing options.

Bibliography

Abramovich, A. and J. Shelton (eds.), *Where Am I Going to Go? Intersectional Approaches to Ending LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness in Canada & the U.S.,* Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press (2017)

Albert, M., B. Pauly, G. Cross, T. Cooper, "The Cycle of Impossibility: Pathways into and out of Family Homelessness," Centre for Addictions Research of BC, Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, and Community Social Planning Council (2014)

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, Returning to Our Ways: a Toolkit for Planning & Delivering Programs to Address Domestic Violence in Aboriginal Communities (2017)

BC Housing, *Understanding Women's Safe Home Programs in BC* (2011)

BC Society of Transition Houses, *Reducing Barriers to Support for Women Fleeing Violence: A Toolkit for Supporting Women with Varying Levels of Mental Wellness and Substance Use* (2011)

BC Society of Transition Houses and BC Housing, *Accessing Stable and Safe Housing Guidebook* (2015)

Berens, Michael, "A Review of Research: Designing the Built Environment for Recovery from Homelessness", Design Resources for Homelessness.

Billhardt, K., L. Olsen and C. Rollins, *Domestic Violence and Housing Stability: A Role for DV Programs*, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Volunteers of America Home Free Program (2014)

Building Dignity: design Strategies for Domestic Violence Shelter, http://buildingdignity.wscadv.org

Burnett, C., M. Ford-Gilboe, J. Berman, C. Ward-Griffin and N. Wathern, "A Critical Discourse Analysis of Provincial Policies Impacting Shelter Service Delivery to Women Exposed to Violence," *Policy, Politics & Nursing Practice,* vol.16(1-2) (2015)

Burnett, C., M. Ford-Gilboe, H. Berman, H. Wathern and C. Ward-Griffin, "The Day-to-Day Reality of Delivering Services to Women Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence in the Contexts of System and Policy Demands," *Journal of Social Service Research,* vol. 42, no. 4 (2016)

Canadian Women's Foundation and BC Society of Transition Houses, *Report on Violence Against Women, Mental Health, and Substance Use* (2011)

Cherniawsky, T., R. Dickinson, and F. Wang, "Promising Practices Across Canada for Housing Women Who are Older and Fleeing Abuse," Atira Women's Resource Society (2015)

DeCandia, C., C.A. Beach, and R. Clervil, "Closing the Gap: Integrating Services for Survivors of Domestic Violence, A Toolkit for Transitional Housing Programs," The National Center on Family Homelessness (2013)

Diemer, K., C. Humphreys, and K. Crinall, "Safe at Home? Housing Decisions for Women Leaving Family Violence," *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 52 (2017)

Gaetz, S., E. Dej, T. Richter, and M. Redman, "The State of Homelessness in Canada 2016", Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Research Paper #12, (2016)

Gander, L., and R. Johannson, "The Hidden Homeless: Residential Tenancies Issues of Victims of Domestic Violence," Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta and University of Alberta (2015)

Goddard, L. and H. Lee, *Building Supports: Promising Practices for Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Women Leaving Violence*, BC Non-Profit Housing Association, BC Society of Transition Houses, and Simon Fraser University (2016)

Hoffart, I., "Alberta Council of Women's Shelters Second-stage Shelter Project: Transitioning from Domestic Violence to Stability," Alberta Council of Women's Shelters project report for the Canadian Women's Foundation (2015)

Homes for Women, *Housing First, Women Second? Gendering Housing First – A Brief from the Homes for Women Campaign*, (2013)

Joshi, Rutali, *"Understanding the Built Environment of Shelter Homes for Survivors of Domestic Violence"*, Clemson University (2017)

Kesler, Sarah, *"A Safe Place to Start Over: The Role of Design in Domestic Violence Shelters"*, Undergraduate Research Journal for the Human Sciences, Volume 11, (2012)

Kirkby, C., and K. Mettler, "Women First: an Analysis of a Trauma-Informed, Women-Centered, Harm Reduction Housing Model for Women with Complex Substance Use and Mental Health Issues," *Exploring Effective Systems Responses to Homelessness,* Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 114-131 (2016)

Lauridsen, K., "Women Fleeing Domestic Violence and Housing and Homelessness, with a Focus on Aboriginal Women," Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research (2015)

Macfarlane, C. and K. de Guerre, "Housing with Supports for Women after Second Stage Shelters: A Research Review of Best and Promising Practices," Poverty Reduction Coalition (2008)

Maki, K., "Housing, Homelessness and Violence Against Women: A Discussion Paper," Women's Shelters Canada (2017)

Milaney, K., K. Ramage, X.Y. Fang and M. Louis, *Understanding Mothers Experiencing Homelessness: A Gendered Approach to Finding Solutions to Family Homelessness*, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Report #16 (2017)

Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Abuse, *How the Earth Didn't Fly into the Sun: Missouri's Project to Reduce Rules in Domestic Violence Shelters* (2016)

Munson, M., "Sheltering Transgender Women: Providing Welcoming Services," National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (2014)

Noble, A., "Beyond Housing First: A Holistic Response to Family Homelessness in Canada," Raising the Roof/Chez Toit (2015)

Paradis, E., S. Bardy, P. Cummings Diaz, F. Athumani, and I. Pereira, "We're not asking, we're telling: an inventory of practices promoting the dignity, autonomy and self-determination of women and families facing homelessness," The Homeless Hub Report #8, Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2011)

Sullivan, C.M., and L. Olsen, "Common ground, complementary approaches: adapting the Housing First model for domestic violence survivors," *Housing and Society*, vol. 43, no. 3 (2016)

Tabibi, J. and L.L. Baker, *Exploring the Intersections: Immigrant and refugee women fleeing violence and experiencing homelessness in Canada*, Center for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, Western University (2017)

Tutty, L.M., C. Ogden, B. Giurgiu, G. Weaver-Dunlop, "I Built My House of Hope: Abused Women and Pathways Into Homelessness," *Violence Against Women* (1-20) (2014)

Van Berkum, A., and A. Oudshoorn, Best Practice Guideline for Ending Women's and Girl's Homelessness (2015)

Women's Shelters Canada, Promising Responses to Women's Housing Needs (2017). Available at: https://endvaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Womens_Shelters_Housing_Practices.pdf

Women's Shelters Canada, Summary Report on Women's Shelters Canada Housing Community of Practice Gathering (2017).

YWCA Canada, *Life Beyond Shelter: Toward Coordinated Public Policies for Women's Safety and Violence Prevention* (2009)

YWCA Canada, *Saying Yes: Effective Practices in Sheltering Abused Women with Mental Health and Addiction Issues* (2014)

Appendices

Appendix A: Subject Matter Expert Interview Guide

Transition Housing Program Review
SME Interview outline

This review includes both:
- identifying strengths and potential improvements in the existing Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program; and
- informing a planned new investment of $141 million dollars to provide 1,500 new units of affordable housing for women and their children who have experienced violence.

I'd like to begin by discussing the strengths and areas for improvement within the existing Transition Housing Program, looking at the five core services within the Transition Housing Program.

1. The first service area is Initial Contact Services, including initial information gathering and relationship building, and referrals to shelters or other resources, and facilitating access to transportation. Do you have any comment on how well the Transition Housing Program is able to deliver on this service area, or potential improvements?

2. The second service area is Safe Shelter/Housing and Immediate Basic Needs, including temporary shelter or short-term housing, and in safe homes and transition houses, also providing food, child care, hygiene supplies, etc. Do you have any comment on how well the Transition Housing Program is able to deliver on this service area, or potential improvements?

3. The third service area is Personal Supports for Women and Children, including crisis and emotional support, education around the dynamics and impact of violence, assistance obtaining identification, safety planning, and accompaniment to appointments and skills support where resources are available. Do you have any comment on how well the Transition Housing Program is able to deliver on this service area, or potential improvements?

4. The fourth service area is Referrals, Advocacy and Supported Access to Services, including referrals to external services and resources, and support and advocacy to assist women in accessing services. Do you have any comment on how well the Transition Housing Program is able to deliver on this service area, or potential improvements?

5. The fifth service area is Inter-Agency Service Linking, including promoting community awareness of the program, and continuous development and maintenance of relationships with provincial and community agencies involved in services and advocacy regarding the diverse needs of women and children at risk of violence. Do you have any comment on how well the Transition Housing Program is able to deliver on this service area, or potential improvements?

6. There are a number of different systems which work to support women at risk of or fleeing violence, including the Transition Housing Program, but also Violence Against Women services, police, the judicial system, health systems, child and family development, and other housing providers. How well do you see coordination amongst these systems working, and do you have any suggestions for improvement?

7. Two of the groups of services which most directly support women fleeing or at risk of violence are primarily funded through separate organizations. The Transition Housing Program is funded by BC Housing, accountable to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General funds public safety and victim services programs related to domestic violence. Can you comment on any strengths or challenges of this funding model?

8. The administration of the Transition Housing Program was transferred from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development to BC Housing in 2009 as part of a provincial initiative to strengthen links to the continuum of housing for women and children at risk of violence. Do you have any comment on the strengths or potential improvements of administration of the Transition Housing Program by BC Housing?

9. Are there any groups of women at risk of violence who you feel the Transition Housing Program is not able to support as well as others? Do you have any suggestions about how the program could be designed differently to better need the diverse needs of women at risk of violence?

10. The second area of focus for this review is informing the planned investment of 1,500 new units of affordable housing for women and their children who have experienced violence. Are there particular types of or models of housing which you would hope would be included in this investment? For example, thinking along the continuum of housing provided by the Transition Housing Program such as Safe Homes, Transition Houses, and Second Stage Houses, or permanent housing available to women at risk of violence after the Transition Housing Program.

11. Do you have any additional points you would like to see considered as part of this review that you haven't had a chance to raise yet?

Appendix B: Sample Regional Session Agenda

Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Review

Time	Item	Lead
9:00-9:15	**Welcome**	Jane
9:15-9:30	**Overview of the project**	Sairoz
9:30-11:00	**Overarching pathway to services** Key roles, gaps and opportunities for safe homes, transition housing, and secondary stage housing in the continuum of services: • Initial Contact Services • Safe Shelter/Housing and Immediate Basic Needs • Personal Supports for Women and Children • Referrals, Advocacy and Supported Access to Services • Inter-Agency Service Linking	Jane/all
11:00-11:15	**Promising practices** Share one of your agency's practices in delivering transition housing and supports which you are proud of and would like to tell others about.	Jane/all
11:15-12:15	**Service delivery considerations** Individually on sticky notes, identify unique needs: • Health, personal care assistance, and disability • Mental health and substance use • LGBTQ women • Children and families, including larger families • Families with MCFD involvement • Women with ICAT involvement • Pets • Involvement with sex work or gangs • Immigration, refugee, or lack of immigration status • Legacy of colonization Large group report back.	Jane/all
12:15-12:45	**Lunch**	
12:45-1:45	**Policy and administration considerations** • In small groups, identify policy and administration considerations in the Transition Housing Program that you would like to be changed e.g. staffing levels, stats reporting, training	Jane/all
1:45-2:45	**Housing solutions** • In agency or community small groups, if you could develop one new housing support for women at risk of violence in your community, what would it be?	Jane/all
2:45-3:00	**Closing and next steps**	Jane/all

Appendix C: Survey Questionnaires

Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Service Recipient Survey

Which type(s) of program have you accessed services from? (please choose all that apply)
- Safe Home
- Transition House
- Second Stage Housing

The table below lists some of the key services the Women's Transition Housing & Supports Program offers. Which of these services did you access, or try to access? (check all that apply)

	Yes, tried to access, but it was not available	Yes, did access	No, did not know it might be available	No, did not need this service	Don't remember
Help to find Women's Transition Housing and Support services in your community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24/7 access to initial contact services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Support with safety planning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Travel to a Safe Home, Transition House, or alternate shelter	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Access to safe, comfortable shelter when you needed it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Crisis and emotional support for you (and your children, if applicable)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Referrals to external services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Support and advocacy with external services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Support to transition to a different housing solution	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What are up to 3 changes you would like to see to the Women's Transition Housing & Supports Program?

#1	
#2	
#3	

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses provide valuable information for the review of the Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program.

57

Women's Transition Housing and Supports Program Service Provider Survey

This survey is part of a review of the BC Transition Housing Program, being guided by a Steering Committee including BC Housing, the BC Society of Transition Houses, and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General.

*This survey has been sent to all Transition Housing Program service providers, and can be completed by any staff whose position is funded in whole or in part through that program. There are no known risks associated with participating in this research study. Your responses remain **anonymous and confidential** and your IP address or other identifying details will never be collected nor made available to the researchers or any other persons or organizations. At the end of the survey, you will be given the option to enter for a draw for one of two $100 prizes. Contact information entered into this draw is not linked to your survey responses.*

If you have questions about this survey, please contact Jane Worton at Queenswood Consulting Group at jworton@queenswoodconsulting.com.

We thank you for your time and interest in this survey.

ABOUT YOU

Most of the questions in this survey are optional, and you may choose to leave them blank and continue on. The exceptions are the first three questions, which are used to determine further questions you will be asked.

Which type(s) of program do you work with? (please choose all that apply)

[ ] Safe Home

[ ] Transition House

[ ] Second Stage House

Which best describes your staff role?

( ) Management

( ) Front line staff

( ) Both management and front line staff

What region does your agency serve?

( ) Southern Interior, Kamloops, Kelowna, Penticton and Vernon

( ) Northern Interior and Prince George

( ) North Coast

( ) Vancouver Island North and Nanaimo

( ) Vancouver Island South, Saanich and Victoria

( ) Fraser Valley, Chilliwack and Abbotsford

( ) Vancouver

( ) Burnaby and New Westminster

( ) Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows

( ) Richmond and West Delta

( ) North Delta, Langley, and Surrey

( ) Sunshine Coast, Squamish, North and West Vancouver

At the end of the survey, once you have seen all the other questions, you will be asked to identify in which community your agency is located. This more specific location information will provide helpful context for your responses. However, it will reduce your anonymity. We promise that your staff role will never be reported alongside your location.

TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAM CORE SERVICES

There are five types of core services common to all three program streams. In the next few questions, please rate the extent to which the Transition Housing Program supports the delivery of these services in your community.

Thinking of the Initial Contact Services listed below, how well would you say the Transition Housing Program supports these services in your community?

	Not at all supported	Not supported	Neutral	Supported	Very well supported	Don't know
24/7 access to initial contact services	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Initial information gathering & relationship building, including: initial safety assessment and short-term plan; discussion of the woman's immediate needs; discussion of current service availability	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Referrals to appropriate alternate shelter/housing if the woman desires/requires shelter but	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

cannot be accommodated at the time of initial contact						
Referrals to other resources where required/desired	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Facilitating access to transportation out of the community where required for safety, as resources permit	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

How could the Transition Housing Program better support the provision of Initial Contact Services in your community?

Thinking of the Safe Shelter / Housing and Immediate Basic Needs Services listed below, how well would you say the Transition Housing Program supports these services in your community?

	Not at all supported	Not well supported	Neutral	Supported	Very well supported	Don't know
Transition House temporary shelter in a communal setting, with stays typically no more than 30 days	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Transition House 24/7 on-site staffing	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Temporary shelter in a Safe Home unit with stays typically no more than 10 days	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Second Stage short-term housing in independent units, with stays typically ranging from 6 to 18 months	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Access to nutritious food for at least 3 meals per day, including access to snacks and	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

61

beverages throughout the day						
Personal hygiene supplies (including feminine hygiene supplies & diapers for children)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Use of on-site laundry facilities where facilities exist	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Support in accessing child care	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

How could the Transition Housing Program better support the provision of Safe Shelter / Housing and Immediate Needs services in your community?

Thinking of the Personal Supports for Women and Children Services listed below, how well would you say the Transition Housing Program supports these services in your community?

	Not at all supported	Not well supported	Neutral	Supported	Very well supported	Don't know
Crisis and emotional support for women and children	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Access to information and education regarding the dynamics and impact of violence against women and children	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Assistance obtaining key identification and documentation	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Transportation, where resources permit*	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Safety Planning	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Accompaniment to appointments where needed/desired	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Skills support (e.g. parenting support, tenancy skills, budgeting, etc)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

How could the Transition Housing Program better support the provision of Personal Supports for Women and Children in your community?

Thinking of the Referrals, Advocacy and Supported access to Services listed below, how well would you say the Transition Housing Program supports the provision of these services in your community?

	Not at all supported	Not well supported	Neutral	Supported	Very well supported	Don't know
Referrals to external services and resources	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Support and advocacy where appropriate, to assist women in accessing external	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

	Not at all supported	Not well supported	Neutral	Supported	Very well supported	Don't know
services and resources						

How could the Transition Housing Program better support the provision of Referrals, Advocacy, and Supported Access to Services in your community?

Thinking of the Inter-Agency Services Linking Services listed below, how well would you say the Transition Housing Program supports the provision of these services in your community?

	Not at all supported	Not well supported	Neutral	Supported	Very well supported	Don't know
Continuous development and maintenance of relationships with provincial and community agencies involved in the delivery of services, and advocacy regarding the diverse needs of women and children at risk of violence	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Promoting community awareness of this program for individual women to self-refer and for potential referral	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

sources in the community						

How could the Transition Housing Program better support the provision of Inter-Agency Service Linking services in your community?

What are up to 3 policy or administration changes you would like to see to the Transition Housing Program?

HOUSING

What is missing from the housing options for women experiencing violence, or at risk of violence, in your community? (Please choose all that apply)

[ ] Owned Safe Home facility

[ ] Transition House facility

[ ] Single bedrooms in Transition Housing

[ ] Physically accessible Transition Housing for people with disabilities

[ ] Bedrooms to accommodate large families in Transition Housing

[ ] Options for women experiencing violence to shelter with pets

[ ] Safe shelter space for women experiencing homelessness

[ ] Second Stage Housing facility

[ ] Physically accessible Second Stage Housing for people with disabilities

[ ] Second Stage Housing with bedrooms to accommodate large families

[ ] Affordable permanent housing for women

[ ] Supportive recovery facility

[ ] Other - Write In (Required): _____ *

[ ] Other - Write In (Required): _____ *

The BC government has announced funding for 1500 new units of housing for women experiencing violence, or at risk of violence. Thinking about your own community, please drag and drop the following options to order them in what you see as the most urgent new housing need for women at risk of violence. (most urgent at the top, least urgent at the bottom)

Note: all of these options could include purpose built or purchased and renovated housing.

- ☐ Additional Safe Home
- ☐ Additional Transition House
- ☐ Additional Second Stage Housing
- ☐ Additional Permanent Affordable Housing

Please share any additional description of the housing you think is most urgently needed in your community.

Thinking about the women who access your program, please estimate what percent are able to access the following supports to transition into permanent supported housing?

	Percent
Rental Assistance Program provides eligible low-income working families with cash assistance to help with their monthly rent payments.	
Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) rent supplements for lower income seniors renting in the private market	
Homeless Prevention Program (HPP) rent supplements to help people at risk of homelessness access rental housing in the private market:	
Second Stage Housing	
Subsidized affordable housing	

TRAINING

Reviewing the list of topics below, please help prioritize those in which you would like to see training offered for staff in safe homes, transition houses, or second stage housing.

	Top 5 Priority	**Other Priority**	**Not a Training Need Priority**
Introductory modules for transition housing program workers			
Caring for women with complex issues			
Clinical supervision			
Crisis intervention			
Cultural safety			
Harm reduction			
Immigration processes			
Mental Health			
Serving older women			
Serving women with pets			
Reducing barriers			
Trauma informed practice			
Serving LGBQT2S women			

Are there any other topics you would like to see training offered on?

TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Do you have any suggestions to improve the statistical reporting required for the BC Transition Housing Program?

Do you have any comment on the impact of having the Transition Housing Program and Anti-Violence Programs funded by two different government bodies?

Which other organizations does your agency coordinate or collaborate with?

	Refers women to us	Participates in community forums about violence against women	Identified contact person for our agency	Collaborates with us to meet individual women's needs	Not applicable	Don't know
Local RCMP / Police	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Crown Prosecutor	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Regional Transition Housing Program Service Providers	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Regional Anti-Violence Program Service Providers	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Ministry of Children and Family Development	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Local First Nation(s)	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Hospital / Health Authority	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Please share any additional comments on inter-agency collaboration.

LOCATION

This is the last question in the survey. As noted earlier, we will now ask you to identify in which community your agency is located. This more specific location information will provide helpful context for your responses, particularly for housing specific questions. However, it will reduce your anonymity. We promise that your staff role will never be reported alongside your location.

In which community is your agency located?

( ) 100 Mile House

( ) Abbotsford

( ) Aldergrove

( ) Bella Coola

( ) Burnaby

( ) Burns Lake

( ) Campbell River

( ) Castlegar

( ) Chetwynd

( ) Chilliwack

( ) Clearwater

( ) Coquitlam

( ) Courtenay

( ) Cranbrook

( ) Creston

( ) Dawson Creek

( ) Delta

( ) Duncan

( ) Fernie

( ) Fort Nelson

( ) Fort St. James

( ) Fort St. John

( ) Gold River

( ) Golden

( ) Grand Forks

( ) Hope

( ) Invermere

( ) Kamloops

( ) Kaslo

( ) Kelowna

( ) Kitimat

( ) Langley

( ) Lillooet

( ) Lytton

( ) Mackenzie

( ) Maple Ridge

( ) Massett

( ) McBride

( ) Mission

( ) Nakusp

( ) Nanaimo

( ) Nelson

( ) New Westminster

( ) North Vancouver

( ) Osoyoos/Oliver

( ) Parksville

( ) Pemberton

( ) Penticton

( ) Port Alberni

( ) Port Hardy

( ) Powell River

( ) Prince George

( ) Prince Rupert

( ) Princeton

( ) Quesnel

( ) Revelstoke

( ) Richmond

( ) Salmo

( ) Salmon Arm

( ) Salt Spring Island

( ) Smithers

( ) Sooke

( ) South Okanagan

( ) Squamish

( ) Sunshine Coast

( ) Surrey/White Rock

( ) Telegraph Creek

( ) Terrace

( ) Trail

( ) Tumbler Ridge

( ) Ucluelet

( ) Valemount

( ) Vancouver

( ) Vanderhoof

( ) Vernon

( ) Victoria

( ) Watson Lake

( ) Whistler

( ) Williams Lake

THANK YOU!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses provide valuable information for the review of the Transition Housing Program.