

# Maintaining Housing Guidebook

for Emergency Shelter & Outreach  
Service Providers



September 2012



BC Housing

# Maintaining Housing Guidebook

The information in this guide comes from front line workers throughout the province and research in the area of homelessness. The goal of this tool kit is to provide you with client-centred, practical suggestions to support clients in staying housed. Some of this information may be new to you and some of it may already be a part of your daily work. As each client's situation is different, and availability of local services varies dramatically, this guide is not designed as a one size fits all checklist. It provides suggestions that may help you, depending on a client's unique situation and needs, on how you could try to develop an appropriate mix of housing and supports for each individual. Feel free to pick and choose those strategies that best serve you, your agency and the people you support.



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## MEETING WITH A CLIENT FOR THE FIRST TIME

### Set out clear expectations and responsibilities

- Demonstrate you care sincerely about their well-being and are committed to assisting them with the resources that you have available.
  - Do not become *personally* involved with individuals.
  - Allow clients to make their own decisions about their goals. At times this may mean you need to ensure your own personal preferences are not too influential. Ensure the support you provide is client-centred.
  - Foster client honesty through your own actions: good eye contact, active listening, patience, understanding, non-judgemental attitudes. Celebrating clients' strengths and successes will help you find common interests.
  - Encourage their own efforts and recognise when they act on help that is offered.
  - Be clear, fair, kind and direct in conversations.
  - Clarify and repeat roles, duties and expectations.
- Ask co-workers or experienced support workers for advice on how to engage clients that they already know, or start "new conversations" – for example, asking someone, 'Where are you from, What is your background, How can I help?' The goal is finding common ground, building relationships and brokering trust.
  - Make it clear that, if they are interested, someone will be supporting them and why. If possible, introduce them to the support person.
  - Ideally, a single staff member and client can work together on developing and following a case plan, rather than involving many different staff at the start, in order to provide consistency and to allow a genuine relationship to form.

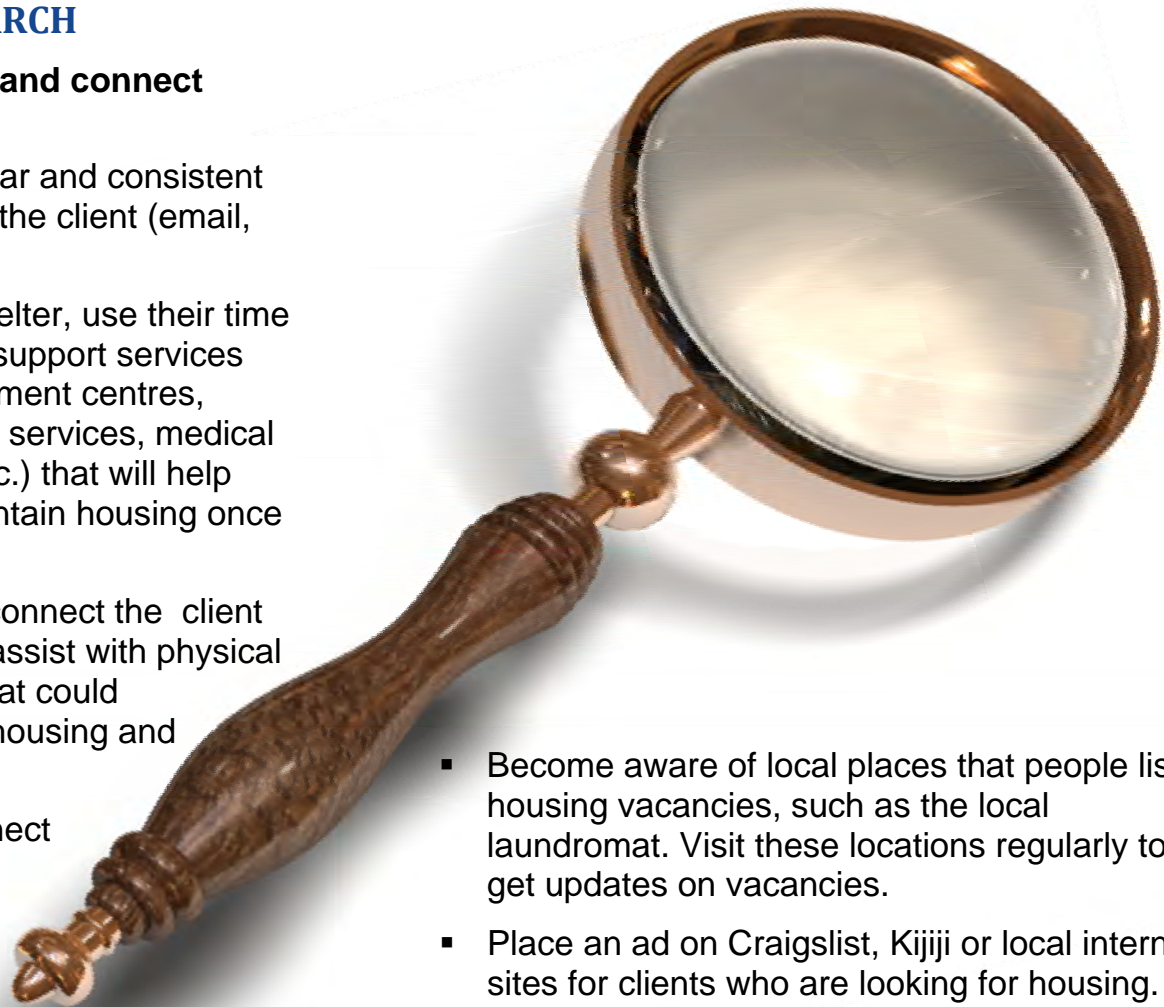
### It's important to...

- Get a sense of a client's goals throughout the process (such as employment, volunteering, recovery commitments etc.) and provide appropriate referrals in order to assist the client to work towards those goals.
- Manage expectations about what housing the client can afford and sustain.
- Don't try to do this all yourself, use the community resources that you have, helping clients to be self-sufficient.

## STARTING THE HOUSING SEARCH

### Continue to build relationships and connect clients to support networks

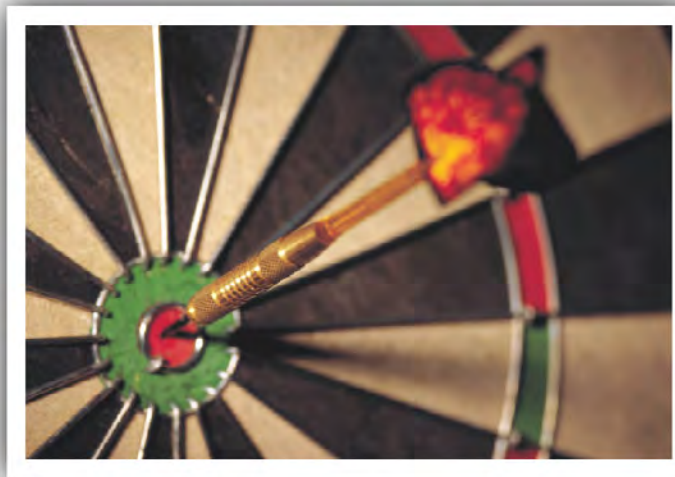
- Be available. Set up a regular and consistent way of communicating with the client (email, cell phone, text message).
- If clients are staying at a shelter, use their time there to connect them with support services (such as child care, employment centres, mental health and addiction services, medical services, food programs, etc.) that will help them find housing, and maintain housing once housing is secured.
- If possible and applicable, connect the client with a community nurse to assist with physical and mental health issues that could prevent them from finding housing and remaining housed.
- Encourage clients to reconnect with friends, family and support networks, where appropriate. When clients have a sense of belonging and purpose they are more likely to stick to their goals.



- Become aware of local places that people list housing vacancies, such as the local laundromat. Visit these locations regularly to get updates on vacancies.
- Place an ad on Craigslist, Kijiji or local internet sites for clients who are looking for housing. Offer to accompany vulnerable clients to Craigslist rentals; not everyone is friendly and safe!
- If possible, look for housing close to public transit in order to facilitate access to services the client needs to maintain their housing.

## TARGETING HOUSING

- Allow clients to drive the housing selection process to ensure that any housing they gain is able to meet their needs. If the housing does not meet their needs, there is a risk that they may become homeless again.
- Consider location carefully in terms of the supports and service that they need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This may include proximity to family and friends, health, mental health and addictions supports, employment, location of schooling for the client or children, accessibility of transport and accessibility of the building.
- Take neighbourhood and community preferences into consideration when setting up supports, rather than setting up supports and having to arrange transfers of these supports if the client finds their accommodation in another area. If the client is not intending to remain in the area, it may be helpful to assist them in finding a shelter in the area that they intend to move to, to assist in building connections and familiarity with the area.



- If necessary, take the time to support clients in understanding the realities of housing and their lifestyle choices, such as pets. Sometimes the perfect solution is not available and compromises might be necessary to move forward. (Sometimes a simple 'pros and cons' list can help illustrate insights into their choices).
  - If a pet is a key issue for housing success for clients with mental health issues, a local doctor may confirm the pet as a service animal for companionship.
    - Assist clients in making a fully informed decision about the type of building that they are entering. Some buildings share different amenities such as bathrooms, common/recreational areas and eating areas. Choice about where to live is important for housing success.
- If the client is trying to break from past lifestyles and habits, consider whether the building, or the area in which it will be located, may act as a trigger for the client. The impact of triggers may be mitigated if adequate support is available.



## FINDING HOUSING AND PREPARING TO MOVE

- Encourage clients to be personally ready for any appointments for housing. They should plan to arrive with good hygiene, sobriety, clean clothes and lots of sleep for several nights before, having taken appropriate medication, eaten proper meals, lots of confidence and feeling happy. If they need any assistance with these things, offer your support.
- Review some basic tenancy rights with the client so that they know their rights and their landlord's rights. For more information, go to the Residential Tenancy Branch website: <http://www.rto.gov.bc.ca/>.
- Ensure that the client has a way to receive messages from potential landlords, either through friends, family, or a service provider if they do not have a phone.
- Assist the client in preparing questions to ask the landlord during their first meeting. This might include questions about utilities coverage, rules about visitors and other landlord expectations.
- Remind the client that preparing to meet a landlord is similar to a job interview.
- If possible, have the client gather letters of reference from someone who can vouch for them. For example, an employer, a support or service provider.
- If possible, utilize a connection with an Employment & Assistance worker in order to have Intent to Rent forms processed faster, and order beds through Income Assistance in advance when possible.
- If rent supplements are available, consider using them for purchases such as a bed, low cost furniture, bed bud protectors for mattresses, or for covering property damages if they occur.
- In some communities, organisations may be able to arrange for provision of donated household goods. Support clients in connecting with these, if available.
- Print out a personalized list of appropriate community resources available in the neighbourhood where the client has found housing. Take them to these resources and help make introductions.
- Encourage clients to make a budget of how they will pay for their housing. If a client is on Income Assistance, you can suggest setting up automatic payments.
- For clients who are moving from one place to another and have a large quantity of personal belongings, hoarding may be an issue. If applicable, assist the client to reduce their belongings and offer connections to mental health supports.

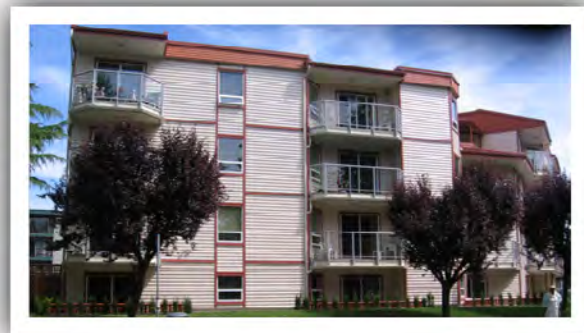
## SUPPORTING A CLIENT ONCE THEY ARE HOUSED

### Be available and responsive when clients ask for help – address concerns quickly and with care

- Before the client moves in, make sure you've confirmed that you have the best contact details for future follow-up. Explain what type of follow-up you can provide and why.
- Continue ongoing check-ins with the client to help prevent conflicts or issues that could lead to an eviction. These could be via phone or email or inviting them to drop by.
- Help them connect all utilities as well as cable, telephone and television. There may be options to set up direct payments to utilities.
- Help them connect with recreation centres and low-cost entertainment opportunities in the area.
- Provide information on topics such as what makes a proactive tenant and how to be a good neighbour.
- Assist the client with referrals to other agencies and support workers who can help them to achieve their longer term goals and to help maintain their tenancy.
- Link the client to educational opportunities, life skills workshops (e.g. hygiene, money or anger management, grocery shopping, high school diploma, etc) or courses that match their positive interests.
- Connect to food resources to ensure there is food in the fridge from day one. Assess and address the ability to cook healthy meals. Refer to community kitchens and food banks where possible, and confirm whether they can travel independently (or need support) to pick up food.
- If appropriate, encourage the client to volunteer as a way of building social and community connections and a sense of belonging.
- Bedbugs have the potential to find their way into any household. Support clients in identifying practices to prevent and treat minor bedbug occurrences (e.g. bagging and washing clothes and sheets). Also ensure they have contacts for assistance if they do discover bedbugs. More [information](#) can be found on the BC Housing website. Be careful when selecting furniture for clients' new homes to ensure any used furniture is bedbug free.
- Try to think of small favours to amplify connection, such as; a small house warming gift, or providing stamps, cards and envelopes to let family know their new address!
- If the client has a pet, bring pet food for the client's pet on a home visit, and work to find low cost pet food resources.
- Knowledge of their rights and responsibilities under the Residential Tenancy Act can support

clients in maintaining successful tenancy. There are a number of [factsheets](#) that are available on the Residential Tenancy Branch website (<http://www.rto.gov.bc.ca/>). Walk through the relevant factsheets to support clients in understanding the appropriate expectations as tenants.

- At times, clients may need to be in touch with the Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB) to navigate a tenancy issue. If this occurs, clients may need your support in navigating the system including requesting support, making phone calls and participating in meetings.
- If they have moved to another area, ask the client if they would like to connect with a local outreach worker. If so, help the client be in touch and ensure everyone has the contact details they need to stay in touch.
- Ask the client what they need to remain housed or to spend more time at home in a positive way. Utilise community connections to help them get their needs (computer, stereo, gaming system, musical instrument, etc)
- If they move, ask them to keep in touch so you can continue to offer support.





## Building relationships with landlords

- Be honest in order to set up reasonable expectations about the prospective tenants.
- Where possible, ensure that there is a good match between the tenant and the landlord.
- If the client consents, and the situation is appropriate, ensure that the landlord is aware of housing challenges that the client has experienced in the past, to reduce surprises.
- Provide the landlord with clear lines of communication and emergency contacts and encourage them to call you to help mediate problems or with any questions or concerns. Always answer a call from a landlord.
- If the landlord is reluctant, ask them to take on the client on a trial basis (short-term lease) where the tenancy is extended only if the trial period works out, so that they will be more willing to give it a try.
- Where possible, establish an agreement with the landlord that stipulates that the client will not be evicted before the landlord has spoken to the outreach/shelter worker.
- Try to get a higher-functioning client into a building first, to help establish a good relationship with the landlord.
- Make efforts to re-establish positive relationships quickly if a client makes a mistake.
- Meet regularly with landlords individually or as a group e.g., host a breakfast for landlords every 3 months to talk about successes and challenges.
- Offer ongoing education to landlords to help address stigma and discrimination.
- Work with landlords around eviction prevention and finding solutions that work for both the landlord and participants.
- If possible secure a shelter bed as a respite to give everyone a break and allow for a cooling off period, if required.
- If possible, create a relationship where your agency is the first point of contact for a landlord when they have vacancies because they would prefer to work with you than find an unknown tenant.



### **Assisting a client to be a proactive tenant**

- Talk to the client about strategies to prevent eviction and work on problem solving skills, so the client can deal with issues that might arise.
- Encourage the client not to host parties in their suites and to keep their home a place to rest and relax.
- Remind the client to be aware of noise and the impact on neighbours. (If it seems appropriate or necessary, ask the client to turn on their music or TV and go out of their suite to check that the volume is not too loud.)
- Encourage the client to come back to the agency if they require services or referrals to maintain housing.
- Have the client attend meetings with the landlord so the client understands the importance of living up to the reputation established by the outreach/ shelter team.
- Expedite a move into other accommodations if it is clear that the housing arrangement isn't working out in order to prevent eviction.

### **Assisting a client to be a good roommate/neighbour**

- If people are to live together, communication is a key to success! Help clients identify strategies that might help them address typical situations that arise in sharing a space and living near others.

- Areas that you might include are noise, food, personal and communal property, chores, visitors and paying rent and other shared costs.
- Encourage clients to consider how they will secure their room.
- It may be appropriate to work through different situations and problem solve together. Remind clients that they can seek help from you and other supports in addressing issues that arise after they have moved into their new place.

### **Creating a sense of home**

- Have conversations with clients about what they can do to feel safe in their home.
- Provide bulletin boards or frames for personal photos.
- Facilitate any faith-based interests that they may have.
- Where possible, allow them to pick out their furniture and/or some of their own items.
- Helping clients connect with social networks (through volunteering, community centres, supportive family & friends) can help create a sense of home.

## LONG TERM CONSIDERATIONS

- Host events at your agency and invite clients who have been housed to attend (e.g. a community meal or life-skills workshops). This provides clients with an opportunity to access support services they may require in a setting where they are comfortable. This also allows staff to check in with clients and offer assistance with any issues that may be arising that could affect their tenancy.
  - If possible, offer a continuum of services in one place:
    - Meal programs/food bank
    - Laundry
    - Clothing
    - Furniture vouchers or referrals for low cost or free furniture
    - Drop ins for social interaction
    - Computer access
  - Stay current about local resources and service providers by attending inter-agency meetings in the community. Or organize one if they aren't happening in your community.
  - Partner with Aboriginal and Newcomer organizations so clients can access cultural programming and support.
  - Encourage your community to support clients by donating goods and services to support those who gain housing.
- Have a nurse practitioner on site, even if it's just twice a week.
  - Offer education sessions on how to be a good tenant and neighbor; offer a certificate upon completion that can be used as a housing reference.



## SPECIAL POPULATIONS

### Clients with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

*Please note that there is great variability in the characteristics of those affected by FASD. The following is intended to provide you with some basic information to help inform your work with clients.*

Some common strengths for people with FASD<sup>1</sup>:

- Highly verbal, friendly, cheerful and affectionate
- Natural kindness with children and animals
- Fair and cooperative nature
- Caring, kind, concerned, sensitive, loyal, faithful
- Creative, especially in art and music
- Manual and mechanical skills, good with repetitive activities such as cooking and construction
- Determined, committed, persistent and helpful spontaneous, curious, and involved
- For more information and support for FASD

Website: <https://www.gov.bc.ca>

<sup>1</sup> FASD Support Network of Saskatchewan 2012, *Secondary*

*Characteristics*, viewed August 15 2012,  
<http://www.skfasnetwork.ca>

<sup>2</sup> VON Canada 2005, *Let's talk FASD: Parent driven strategies in caring for children with FASD*, viewed August 21 2012,  
<http://www.von.ca>

Often people with FASD experience challenges in understanding consequences of actions. To assist them<sup>2</sup>:

- Repeat directions, instructions and concepts so that they will be remembered more easily.
- Establishing a routine and sticking to it can help the person make better sense of the world.
- Listening/understood and spoken language may not be the same. It is very important to clarify to ensure that understanding is reached.
- Recognise that there may be difficulty in applying previous experience to a new situation. It may also be difficult to assess a situation and take step-by-step action.
- Remember to adjust your expectation to a person's developmental age, which may be different than their chronological age.
- They may have a unique level of sensitivity to criticism and could become very upset with a sigh or angry glance. It helps to be aware of this sensitivity and to act accordingly.
- People with FASD can have difficulties with time and money concepts. It helps to make reminder phone calls before appointments and provide assistance or referral for budgeting and due dates for household bills.

## Clients with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

*Each head injury is different. A person may experience any combination of symptoms or none at all. Severity of symptoms varies with each individual and may change over time.*

Symptoms may include<sup>3</sup>:

- Debilitation, fatigue, lack of stamina
- Sleep dysfunction, i.e. insomnia, day and night confusion
- Problems planning, organizing and initiating tasks and difficulties with multi-tasking
- Need for structure and direction to accomplish tasks
- Poor concentration, attention and memory
- Although intelligence remains intact, there is slowness in processing information, particularly new information, especially if fatigued or over stimulated
- Problems with pacing activities
- Difficulty with judgment, decision making and dealing with change, irritability, impulsivity
- Inability to cue, leading to socially inappropriate behavior
- Possible misdiagnosis as, for example, psychiatric illness

<sup>3</sup>BC Brain Injury Association 2012, *Living with injury*, viewed August 15 2012, <http://bcbraininjuryassociation.com>

<sup>4</sup>Saskatoon Health District 2000, *The survival guide: Living with Acquired Brain Injury*, viewed August 15 2012, <http://www.health.gov.sk.ca>

Things you could do that may help<sup>4</sup>:

- Slow down and simplify language
- Provide extra time for people to complete tasks
- Repeat information and use short, simple phrasing
- Encourage people to take notes
- Anticipate off-topic remarks
- Keep instructions brief and clear
- Encourage the person to do things. This will help them regain a sense of self control, that is, the belief that they can make a difference in their own life.
- A daily schedule not only provides a routine for the day, it functions as a memory aid and gives the person a sense of control and accomplishment
- Encourage feedback- ask "Do you understand?"
- Give rest periods and reduce distractions.
- Consult with ABI specialists about how to tailor treatment to the client's learning style and remain in contact throughout to monitor progress and make changes.
- Website: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/seniors/health-safety/disease-and-injury-care-and-prevention/brain-health-and-injuries>



## LGBTQ2S Clients<sup>5</sup>

*LGBTQ2S (Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans Queer and Two-spirit) clients are particularly vulnerable to homelessness due to discrimination from society because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. As a housing worker, it is your duty to advocate for your LGBTQ2S clients to ensure they receive the best treatment from landlords and housing providers.*

### What if I don't identify as LGBTQ2S?

That's okay! You don't have to identify as LGBTQ2S in order to advocate for LGBTQ2S clients. What's important is that you become an ally and inform yourself on issues that relate to LGBTQ2S people. It also involves supporting your clients whenever possible and educating others to appreciate the contributions LGBTQ2S people make towards a diverse society.

Your LGBTQ2S clients will likely have experienced one or more of these barriers in life. However, it's also important to recognize that not all LGBTQ2S people face them.

- Increased risk of homelessness from rejection and discrimination
- Increased likelihood of mental health problems, like depression, suicidality, and anxiety disorders, due to marginalization



- Higher rates of school dropout from bullying and a homo/bi/transphobic environment at schools
- Lack of access to employment because of lower education and training resulting from oppression
  - Health problems may be undiagnosed due to lack of competent LGBTQ2Q health care
    - Increased vulnerability to abuse and assault at home and on the streets
    - Greater risk for substance use
    - Inability to express their true sexual and/or gender identity for fear of their safety

### Connecting with your Client

- Demonstrate your support for the LGBTQ2S community by putting up posters, brochures, and other materials supporting LGBTQ2S people around your office area.
- Acknowledge the courage and persistence your LGBTQ2S clients possess in the face of adversity and build on those strengths.
- Recognize that some LGBTQ2S clients may face multiple levels of discrimination (ex. ethnicity, mental health, substance use).

<sup>5</sup>All material is taken directly from Vancouver Coastal Health 2000, *Working with LGBTQ2S clients for housing workers*, viewed August 15 2012, <http://www.bcnpha.ca>

- If your client is trans, use their preferred name, and if you're unsure, ask politely what their preferred pronouns are.
- Consider providing a free welcome kit when a trans client secures housing (e.g: clothes, make-up, or other items)

### **Preparing for Unit Viewings**

- Don't out your clients to landlords and housing providers unless your client gives you explicit permission to do so. It is your clients' decision to decide whether or not to tell others what their sexual orientation or gender identity is.
- If your client is trans, contact the landlord or housing provider with a friendly reminder about your upcoming visit and mention the preferred name and pronouns of your client.

### **At the Unit Viewings**

- If your clients are willing, accompany them to provide them with support.
- Use your client's name and their preferred pronouns at all times for the benefit of the landlord or housing provider.
- Discrimination against your client is not acceptable. If you hear any discriminatory comments from the landlord or housing provider, challenge them immediately and if possible, educate the landlord or housing provider about LGBTQ2S issues. However, be aware that your client can be capable of responding to discriminatory comments, and if they wish to, let them speak.

### **After Unit Viewings**

- Discrimination against someone's sexual orientation or gender is illegal under the BC Human Rights Code. If you encounter a landlord or housing provider who discriminated against your LGBTQ2S client based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, discuss with your client whether legal action is appropriate or if there is a better way to deal with the situation
- Whenever possible, let your client decide what to do.

### **Other Areas of Focus**

- Some trans people may face difficulties when they have to show their ID to landlords and housing providers because of discrepancies with the picture and gender. Assist your trans clients by telling the landlord and housing provider that the gender of a tenant is not important. Furthermore, the picture is often recognizable despite some changes.
- Continue to follow-up with your clients if they are able to obtain housing. Check to ensure they are not facing discrimination, and if they are, provide support and with your client's permission, act to address the problem.
- Compile a list of LGBTQ2S-friendly landlords and housing providers in your area for easy access and convenience.

## Clients with children

Being a parent can be a challenging job at times.  
Being homeless makes this job even harder.

- When working with parents and guardians, it is important to recognise their role in their child's life and support their positive parenting efforts.
- When finding housing for clients with children consider parenting supports as part of services they may be interested in connecting with.
- Consider schooling needs that children may have when considering the location of housing for families.
- Review National Occupancy Standards and support families in seeking accommodation that meets these standards wherever possible.
- Parents and guardians may have current relationships with the Ministry of Children and Family Development. If this is the case, support the maintenance of these relationships and collaborate where possible.

## Useful Resources

- Child Care Subsidy Contact Information  
Phone: 1-888-338-6622
- Child Care Resource and Referral (Province Wide information) <http://www.ccr.bc.ca/>

- Child Tax Benefit and Universal Child Care Benefit Information  
Phone: 1-800-387-1193

## Ministry of Children and Family Development:

General Inquiries: 1-877-387-7027

Child Care Programs and Services: 1-888-338-6622

BC Aboriginal Child Care Society: 604-913-9128

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868

Helpline for Children: 310-1234 (toll free)

## Ministry of Social Development

Income Assistance and other programs

Phone: 1-866-866-0800



## Seniors<sup>6</sup>

- Many homeless seniors fall into one of two categories – those who have been homeless for a while and the newly homeless.
- Recognise that a sense of belonging may be more important to seniors than other clients and they may go to a shelter, even if they have housing elsewhere. When identifying resources and housing opportunities for seniors it is important consider the impact of belonging.
- Try to locate food resources that include getting assistance with groceries, food bank boxes, as opposed to soup kitchen line ups.
- If possible, find a single room accommodation. First-time homeless seniors need to re-capture a sense of safety.
- Shelters and the streets are not the place for end of life. If housing does not work out, refer to local hospice or seniors' services.

### Accessibility

- Provide information listing local resources. For seniors, knowledge of existing services may be a barrier as they may not be able to use internet, etc.
- Not all housing may be suitable for seniors who have mobility and other accessibility issues. Ensure that all entrances, exits and amenities are usable by seniors. Ensure available transport is adequate.

- Develop partnerships with local home health offices to support seniors.
- BC Housing has a Home Adaptations for Independence program which will pay for building modifications for seniors or people with disabilities.
- Be mindful of signs of elder abuse and support seniors in accessing support services as necessary.

### Elder Abuse Resources

- BC Center for Elder Abuse and Advocacy  
Phone: 604-437-1940 | 1-866-437-1940 (toll free)
- Seniors Canada  
[Link to website](#)

### Useful Resources for Seniors Services

- BC Nurses Line  
Phone: 811 For the hearing-impaired: 711
- Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Old Age Security (OAS) Contact Information  
Phone: 1-800-277-9914
- BC Coalition of People with Disabilities Advocacy Access Program  
Phone: 1-800-663-1278 (toll free)
- Seniors Services Society (primarily for Lower Mainland, but does have a province-wide seniors housing directory)  
Phone: 604-520-6621  
Website: [www.seniorsservicessociety.ca](http://www.seniorsservicessociety.ca)

<sup>6</sup>Information in this section was obtained via the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy, Community of Practice / Homeless Seniors Initiative – What We've Learned So Far

## Youth <sup>7,8</sup>

- Build upon positive relationships, which may involve re-connecting with family or developing trusting relationships with support workers.
- Focus on creating employment and training opportunities to gain the right mix of life skills, building positive relationships.
- Encourage them to develop relationships with peers who are housed or employed so they can create a new peer group that is distant from the street lifestyle.
- Provide life skills information on grocery shopping, opening a bank account; emphasize the importance of paying rent on time etc.



<sup>7</sup>Wilks, N, Hiscock, E, Joseph, M, Lemin, R & Stafford M 2008, 'Exit this way – young people transitioning out of homelessness,' *Social Alternatives*, vol 27. no. 1, pp. 65-70.

<sup>8</sup>New York City Administration for Children's Services 2011, *More than a roof over their heads: A toolkit for guiding transition age young adults to long-term housing success*, viewed August 21 2012, <http://www.cucs.org>



## Aboriginal clients <sup>9</sup>

‘Aboriginal’ is used to collectively describe three distinct groups known as the ‘Inuit’, the ‘Métis’ and ‘First Nations’. In this guide we use the term Aboriginal peoples to refer to all groups. As a general rule, most Aboriginal people prefer to be referred to by the specific nation to which they belong.

The transition from reserve to city life leaves many Aboriginal persons “in-between”; living without a regular home, security or community. The life skills one needs to live in an urban setting can be different than what is needed in a reserve setting. Skills like navigating the rental market, filling out and submitting rental applications, and getting through the process of securing a lease may not be necessary on reserve.

- Ask ‘Where are you from?’  
This question transcends personal barriers and creates a rapport. Not only that, but the answer is the first part of getting to know each other – the first step in being able to understand how to meet someone’s needs. Make this question a regular, informal part of your first interactions.
- When discussing a plan of action, offer clients the option of bringing a family member or Elder into the conversation.
- Create a listing of Aboriginal resources in your community to share. If you have connections with a local Friendship Centre, they may have a list that you can borrow from.

- “Warm referrals,” where you go along to first visits with community services and/or assist in making the connection calls, are keys for success when working with Aboriginal persons.
- Work on continuing to develop trust. Trust is another crucial element in being able to provide for those who resist trusting any formal institutions or organizations they are not familiar with.
- Connect clients to cultural supports if they are interested. Recognise that what each person considers part of their cultural supports can be different.
- Encourage community re-integration and establishing positive relationships.
- When planning meetings with Aboriginal clients and service providers, plan your time to allow for the telling of stories and connecting background. This is an important part of communication for Aboriginal persons.
- Support clients in discussing cultural practices with regards to visits from family when talking with potential landlords.
- Establish an on-going relationship with your local Aboriginal service providers, getting to know them on a formal and informal basis.

### Aboriginal Financial Literacy Resource

Website: <https://fnbc.info>

<sup>9</sup>McCallum, K & Isaac, D 2011, *Feeling home: Culturally responsive approaches to aboriginal homelessness*, Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia and The Centre for Native Policy Research, Vancouver, Canada.

## **Newcomers**

The term “newcomer” includes both immigrant and refugees.

- ⊕ Reminder that Immigrants who don't have access to OAS are particularly at risk to become homeless
- ⊕ Access community groups for language support.
- ⊕ Provide information in languages other than English.

# Acknowledgements

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- **Canadian Mental Health Association**
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