



PROGRAM POLICY		
Policy # 2	Housing First	
		Effective Date: January 1, 2011

Policy:

Transitions to Home (T2H) is based upon the housing first approach designed to quickly move long term emergency shelter users (and those at risk) out of the shelters, off the streets and into stable long-term housing. "Housing first" is not a single model. Since 1992 when the first "housing first" program was established called Pathways to Housing (New York City) over 30 housing first program variants have been established in Canada and the United States. Housing first is built upon two core convictions, housing is a basic human right not a reward for clinical success (staying sober, being drug free, completing treatment) and eliminating shelter use and homelessness from a person's life, allows social, clinical and housing stabilization to occur faster and last longer.

In a 2007 review of housing first programs in the United States, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) discovered amongst the different U.S. providers some similar attributes that contribute to a program's success. As well, the mental health Commission of Canada has been piloting "housing first" projects in order to conduct scientific research. The following points in bold are the attributes of success that can be identified from these programs with some following comments about the range of program varieties.

1. **People move into housing directly from streets and shelters without a requirement of mental health or substance abuse treatment prior to participation in the program.**
 - Some programs use temporary or transitional housing first while waiting for vacancies to occur.
 - Some programs strongly encourage participants to participate in a transitional housing program first.
 - Often the wait in temporary housing is used to help the participant identify the housing that would best suit their needs.
 - There is a wide variation on the immediacy of placements (length of time from engagement to placement) in permanent housing units due to different levels of organizational resources.

2. **The majority of programs provide continuous assertive case management and require participants to agree to participate in this as a precondition to program entry.**
 - Pathways to Home requires participants to participate in a money management program and a minimum of two case manager visits a month.
 - At Home/Chez Soi (Mental Health Commission of Canada Pilot programs) require participants to participate in one visit a week from program staff
 - Most programs assigned a primary case manager with the back-up of a team of clinicians.

- Daily participant contact is the norm in many programs with goal flexibility and client choice to ensure clients worked at their individual pace and chose to have this contact.

3. Programs embrace harm reduction approaches to addictions.

- Programs utilize a low demand approach to substance use
- Support services focus on helping individual participants do whatever is required to maintain their housing and improve their health and well-being

4. Residents have leases and tenant protections under the law.

- More often than not, participants hold their own leases for the permanent housing units.
- The majority of sites used a scattering of private market units, termed a “scatter site” approach

5. Once housed, continued tenancy is not conditional upon participation in services.

- After housing placement, participants often withdrew from case management services over varying lengths time, but did not lose their tenancy when case management was over or they withdrew.
- In many programs participants could end and restart case management depending on their self-determined needs.

T2H is based upon these 5 attributes of success.

Current Application:

The following describes how the T2H program implements and recognizes each attribute of success.

1. People move into housing directly from streets and shelters without a requirement of mental health or substance abuse treatment prior to participation in the program.

T2H will assist participants to move into housing regardless of their completion or participation in mental health or substance abuse treatment. T2H assists individuals to find the appropriate medication that they find helpful and assists participants developing acknowledgement and understandings of a mental illness, addiction, acquired brain injury and other maladies.

The immediacy of moving from the shelter to a housing unit is based upon the availability of financial supports (housing allowances), housing units and each individual participants needs.

2. The majority of programs provide continued assertive case management and require participants to agree to participate in this as a precondition to program entry.

T2H provides ongoing case management supports according to written policies.

T2H participants must commit at the time of program entry to participating in case management supports through a mutually developed case plan with the Case Manager. Commitment is

formalized in a goal based case plan that includes a mandatory goal of finding and maintaining stable housing. Participants must accept case management visits as a pre-condition to being housed. The frequency of case management visits on average is one visit per week. The frequency of visits is determined by the needs of the participant.

Case Management services and activities are supported by a clinical services team to ensure timely access to clinical services if a participant identifies a need for therapy and/or addictions counselling. Clinical services are provided according to written policies.

3. Programs embrace harm reduction approaches to addictions.

T2H works with participants to reduce the harm of addictions, become clean and sober, find medication that works and /or participate in mental health services if this is what they choose. Individuals are viewed through their skills, abilities and behaviours that will assist them in creating a successful tenancy. Their commitment to change is expressed in a case plan.

4. Residents have leases and tenant protections under the law.

All Transitions to Home participants hold their own lease. Transitions to Home works primarily with private market landlords to identify permanent housing for the programs' participants. Some participants move to social housing if they are offered a unit off of the Access to Housing waiting list. Transitions to Home staff strike a balance between working with the T2H participants to insure their rights are upheld by landlords and social housing providers, while working to meet the needs of these housing providers to have good tenants.

T2H does not hold keys to participant's units, T2H access to a unit is through invitation by the participant or in conjunction with a landlord through legal process under the Residential Tenancy Act.

5. Once housed, continued tenancy is not conditional upon participation in services.

All T2H participants hold their own leases with private market landlords or social housing providers', therefore the tenancy is permanent provided the participant does not violate the lease agreement. Continued participation in services is at the choice of the participant and/or at the discretion of the T2H program given the participant's abilities to maintain a good tenancy.

In circumstances where tenancies deteriorate to the point of eviction, T2H will help participants find another affordable housing option and continue supports if the participant continues to accept case management visits.

Housing Readiness

T2H is a voluntary program that is upfront about the requirement to have case management visits after being housed. In the research available on housing first models, housing readiness is a term defined by the requirement for treatment (and or sobriety/abstinence), proof of compliance with medication and/or the acknowledgement of mental illness and/or addictions prior to housing. T2H does not make these demands on individual participants. Transitions to Home uses the term, housing ready in reference to the commitment to case management.

Housing readiness is defined as the individuals' demonstrated commitment to ongoing case management visits once they have found housing and their development of a case plan with the Case Manager. This represents the commitment to find and create stable housing in alliance with T2H.

While many individuals' express interest in the housing component of the program, they may not be interested in the case management component of the program. Through regular engagement visits of a minimum of one per week, the Case Manager helps individuals to develop their commitment to the program. The length of time that an individual takes in this stage is determined by their personal circumstances. Some individuals will not be interested in this commitment and therefore do not enter the program.

Approval:

	2010
Signature & Title	Date Approved