

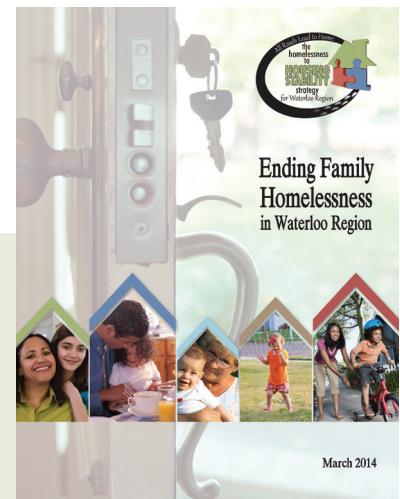
Ending Family Homelessness in Waterloo Region: REPORT SUMMARY

"All Roads Lead to Home: The Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy for Waterloo Region" (2012) includes 40 action areas, one of which calls for greater understanding of family homelessness and the development of a plan to end it. Between 2012 and 2014, **more than 200 community service providers and over 40 families participated in the Ending Family Homelessness project.**

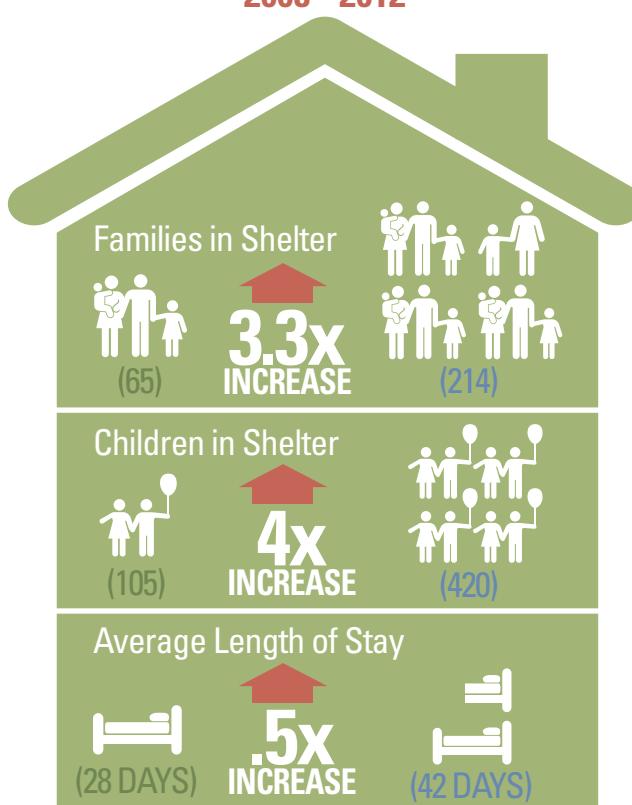
The project concluded with a final report, "Ending Family Homelessness in Waterloo Region (March 2014)" that outlines **50 areas for action**.

This summary highlights the key findings from the report.

The full report is available on the Region's website at <http://socialservices.regionofwaterloo.ca> (search "ending family homelessness").



Families in Emergency Shelter 2008 - 2012



FAMILY HOMELESSNESS IN WATERLOO REGION

There has been an unprecedented increase in demand for emergency shelter from families over the past six years. In general, risk factors linked to housing loss for families include **lack of affordable housing**, **financial crisis**, and/or **relationship breakdown**, with the recent increase in demand largely attributed to the negative impact of the 2008 recession.

Homelessness is traumatic for families. The experience of family homelessness has both immediate and long-term negative impacts on children and parents – emotionally, psychologically, socially, and physically.

Impact on Children:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Hunger
- Sleep difficulties
- Developmental delays

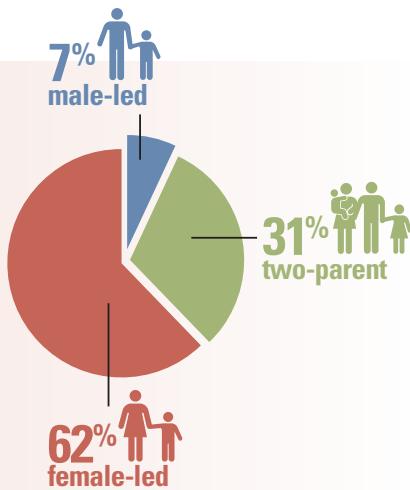


- Interaction with peers
- Physical health
- Success at school

Most families accessing emergency shelter in 2013 were female-led one-parent families.

Families accessing shelter are only part of the story. The total number of families experiencing housing instability is much higher.

More than 3,500 families experienced homelessness or were at-risk of housing loss in 2012 – 4 per cent of all families in Waterloo Region.



ENDING FAMILY HOMELESSNESS THROUGH DIVERSION

Recommendations from the report focus on a number of promising practices, one of which is emergency shelter diversion. In response, Waterloo Region began piloting a new family shelter diversion program in 2013. This program provides families seeking emergency shelter with immediate, intensive support to identify and remove barriers to housing stability.

The goal is to shorten emergency shelter stays or prevent them altogether, thereby avoiding the stress and trauma associated with accessing emergency shelter.

A diversion response is also less expensive than emergency shelter.

The average cost to support a family



to housing stability through **diversion**

is approximately **\$1,200**

...compared to the average cost

of **\$4,150** per household to

stay in **emergency shelter**.

The decrease in number of families and children served through emergency shelter in 2013 is partly a result of the success of this new approach. However, despite these improvements, the increase in average length of stay for families suggests that there is more work to do. With the diversion pilot continuing and expanding in 2014, it is anticipated that there will be further reductions in the number of families accessing emergency shelter.

Overall, while still high, demand for emergency shelter for families **DECREASED** between 2012 and 2013. At the same time, average length of stay for families **INCREASED**.

(214)



(186)

(420)



(357)

(45 DAYS)

Average length of stay has **INCREASED** to a record high

(42 DAYS)



Region of Waterloo
SOCIAL SERVICES