

Appendix A

Streets to Homes Post-Occupancy Survey Summary

A Post-Occupancy survey was conducted from November 2006 through April 2007 by interviewing a representative sample of 88 clients housed through the Streets to Homes program. During the interviews, clients were asked for their feedback on the housing process, the follow-up services they receive, service use and service needs, changes in their quality of life, and any recommendations for improvements to the program that they would suggest.

Key findings from the survey include:

- People are happy with their housing. A large majority, 88 per cent, said they were mostly or very satisfied with their housing. Most people spoke about the improved stability, sense of security and privacy and an overall improved mental outlook since they moved into housing.
- Housing changes lives. Overall, 91 per cent said their life had improved since moving into housing.
- Quality of life improves. Individuals reported improvements in nearly all quality of life indicators: 70 per cent said their health had improved, 72 per cent reported improved personal security, 69 per cent said sleeping had improved, 65 per cent said their eating had improved, 60 per cent said their level of stress had improved, and 57 per cent said their mental health had improved.
- Alcohol and other drug use was reduced once in housing. Of those who use alcohol, 17 per cent said they had quit drinking since moving into housing, while 32 per cent said they were drinking less. Of those who said they used other drugs, 31 per cent said they had quit using drugs completely, and 42 per cent had decreased their use.
- Panhandling decreases once housed. Fifty four per cent of people surveyed panhandled when homeless, but only 23% reported panhandling once housed. Only 9% of those who reported panhandling while homeless said they continued to panhandle the same amount while in housing, and nobody panhandled more once housed.
- People use fewer expensive emergency health resources once in housing. There was a 38 per cent reduction in ambulance use, 40 per cent decrease in emergency room use, and 25 per cent reduction in individuals requiring a hospital stay. Individuals were now making use of routine medical services more frequently once in housing, including a 32 per cent increase in use of family doctors and 71 per cent increase in use of psychiatrists.

- The number of emergency services individuals used also decreased dramatically once in housing, including a 75 per cent decrease in the number of individuals using police detox (“drunk tank”), a 56 per cent decrease in the number of individuals arrested, and a 68 per cent reduction in those experiencing jail detention.
- When asked what service provided by their follow-up worker they found most valuable, people most frequently said that their worker helped them to discuss options and make decisions. Other common responses included providing information about other services and resources, advocating with social services or landlords, help with appointments and transportation, help finding new housing and help completing paperwork.

While the survey findings show that clients have made significant improvements in almost all areas, they also face difficult challenges. Adjusting to living indoors and the responsibilities of maintaining housing can be stressful. However, despite all these difficulties, people want to stay housed and know that, despite thinking about leaving, they are better off in their housing than they were on the street. Although many people expressed frustration or dissatisfaction with aspects of their situation, such as problems with roommates or struggling to get by on very limited income, many also expressed a sense of optimism and hope for the future that they had not felt when living on the street; 82 per cent said their outlook about their future was more positive. Many people spoke about having higher self-esteem, being able to set goals for themselves, looking for a volunteer position, and beginning to plan a return to school or work.