



Homelessness Solutions

Service Plan

Executive Summary

Service Plan in Brief

Purpose:

The Service Plan identifies our priorities for the next three years, as we continue to build and strengthen a responsive homelessness service delivery system which uses an integrated and person-centred approach to address homelessness. These priorities will advance our shared goal of ending chronic homelessness in Toronto.

Outcomes:

1. People experiencing homelessness in Toronto have access to safe, high quality emergency shelter.
2. People are provided housing-focused supports that ensure homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring.

Approaches:

- Housing First
- Human Rights
- Person-Centred
- Equity-Based

Priorities:

1

Advancing reconciliation

Meaningfully address Indigenous homelessness

2

Focusing on equity

Address Anti-Black racism

Incorporate an intersectional and inclusive approach

3

Delivering high quality services

Improve access to homelessness services

Enhance safety and quality

Provide a range of person-centred supports

4

Reducing chronic homelessness

Enhance housing focused service delivery

Prioritize available housing resources for maximum impact

5

Developing an integrated systems response

Implement shelter diversion approaches

Increase system coordination and planning

Enhance collaboration and engagement

6

Strengthening and modernizing the sector

Enhance system tools and data

Invest in staff and sector capacity

What Success Looks Like

Advancing reconciliation

Sustain a strong and respectful relationship between SSHA and Indigenous partners

Increased number of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness assisted to find housing

Homelessness is reduced among Indigenous people in Toronto

Focusing on equity

Homelessness services are delivered with an approach that recognizes and addresses the reality of Anti-Black racism

Homelessness is reduced among Black people in Toronto

Services are informed by and recognize inequities for diverse socio-demographic groups that experience intersecting barriers

Delivering high quality services

People experiencing homelessness are able to access timely services that are responsive to their needs

Homelessness services provide a safe, accessible and welcoming environment and work toward eliminating barriers that prevent or inhibit access to service.

All shelters provide person-centred, wrap-around services that are tailored to each individual's unique needs and goals

Reducing chronic
homelessness

People are assisted to develop a housing plan and find housing as quickly as possible

People experiencing chronic homelessness have a comprehensive assessment of housing and support needs

Chronic homelessness is reduced

Developing an integrated
systems response

Increased use of data and standardized approaches to improve outcomes for service users

Community partners, key stakeholders, the public, and frontline staff are engaged in developing collaborative solutions to shared challenges

Service users and people with lived experience are meaningfully engaged in developing and improving programs and services

Strengthening and
modernizing the sector

Use of innovative solutions and technology to support best practices in the homelessness sector and enhance system coordination

The collective capacity of diverse homelessness service providers is strengthened and enhanced

Mental wellness among frontline staff is increased

Alignment with HousingTO

In 2019, after extensive public and community consultation, City Council adopted the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan to provide a blueprint for action across the full housing spectrum to create a city where housing opportunities are available for all.

The HousingTO Plan includes as a key strategic action to Prevent Homelessness and Improve Pathways to Housing Stability. SSHA is responsible for implementing the components of the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan that relate to the homelessness service system. Key to addressing homelessness are also upstream interventions to prevent people from becoming homeless, and adequate supply of affordable housing with support opportunities to assist people to quickly exit homelessness. Components of the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan that relate to housing are led by the Housing Secretariat and are supported by ten other City divisions. This Service Plan outlines in more detail the implementation actions that SSHA and our partners will take over the next three years to achieve those strategic directions related to the homelessness service system.

Ending chronic homelessness is possible only through both a strong and housing focused homelessness service delivery system and a robust housing system that provides housing opportunities for all.

HOUSINGTO'S 13 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
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- 11
- 12
- 13

Strategic Direction 3: Prevent Homelessness and Improve Pathways to Housing Stability

Actions:

- Focus on upstream interventions that prevent people from becoming homeless
- Ensure an effective and housing-focused emergency response to homelessness
- Better connect people experiencing homelessness to housing and supports
- Develop strategies and programs that meet the needs of specific populations
- Increase availability of supportive housing

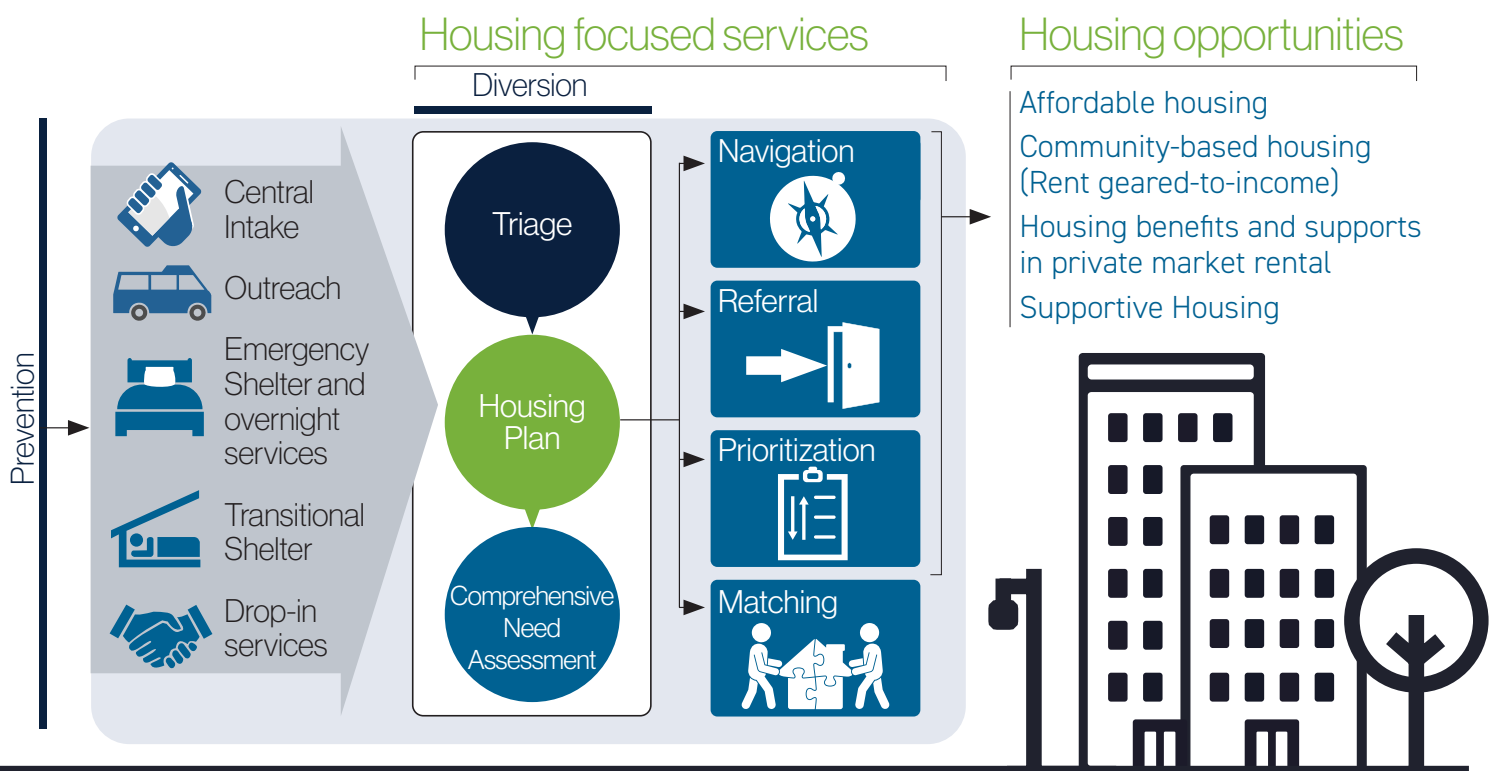
SSHA's Service Plan is focused on these three actions as part of HousingTO's Strategic Direction 3

The Homelessness Service System

SSHA is responsible for managing a coordinated and effective system of shelter and homelessness services, working from Housing First and human rights approaches and with a focus on the people we serve.

Toronto's homelessness service system provides immediate, housing-focused, person-centred services for people experiencing homelessness, and consists of emergency shelters, 24-hour respite sites, 24-hour drop-ins, temporary COVID-19 response programs, street outreach services, and day-time drop-ins. The primary roles of the homelessness service system within the broader approach to community and social services for vulnerable residents are to provide:

- Safe and welcoming emergency shelter and overnight services for those in housing crisis
- Street outreach services for people staying outdoors, with a focus on establishing supportive relationships to address immediate health and safety needs and provide supports to move into shelter and housing
- Supports for people experiencing homelessness to develop a housing plan and to access housing and stabilization supports
- Navigation and referrals to appropriate community and health services



Housing Focused Services

Over the past several years, SSHA has been working closely with the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness and the Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board to implement an integrated, systems approach to addressing homelessness that is housing-focused. This includes implementing the core components of a Coordinated Access approach, which are now requirements of both federal and provincial homelessness funding.

Coordinated Access is a best-practice, community-wide approach to transforming the homelessness service delivery system into a seamless, efficient, and equitable system that supports people experiencing homelessness to move to permanent housing as quickly as possible with supports appropriate for their needs.

Toronto's Coordinated Access approach includes the implementation of:

- a **Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS)** that enables each individual's data to follow them through the system, with appropriate consents in place;
- a **By-Name List** of people experiencing homelessness, with the goal of increasing the comprehensiveness of people experiencing homelessness represented on the list over time;
- a **common assessment tool, called STARS**, to understand the needs of people experiencing homelessness at a system and an individual level;
- a community-wide **prioritization framework** to identify people experiencing homelessness for housing and support opportunities both equitably and to achieve greatest impact with the resources available
- established **matching and referral** processes to connect people experiencing homelessness to appropriate housing and support opportunities; and
- a **comprehensive inventory of housing and support opportunities** suitable for the full spectrum of needs and experiences of people experiencing homelessness.

Housing-focused service delivery also includes ensuring wrap-around supports are available that include access to health services (harm reduction, primary care and mental health supports/case management) regardless of where they are being sheltered. The implementation of this housing-focused approach is data informed, responsive to changes in homelessness in our city, and powered by community connection, choice, and relationships.

Funding Priorities

Long-term funding priorities

- Increase prevention approaches
- Increase permanent housing solutions to homelessness
- Reduce emergency shelter use
- Stabilize and increase quality in the shelter system

Short- and medium-term funding approaches

The City will provide approximately \$28 million in existing grant funding to community partners through an open call for proposals, of which 20% will be allocated through a dedicated Indigenous funding stream. Grant funding priorities will include Housing Access, Street Outreach, Drop-in Services, Eviction Prevention and Shelter Diversion, Housing-Focused Supports, and System Supports that address issues faced by people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Funding priorities will be informed by strategic investment planning to allocate resources to most effectively meet people's needs. Strategic investment planning is informed by data, evidence and outcomes to identify and responsively address service gaps in Toronto's homelessness service system.

Principles for funding decisions will include accountability, responsiveness, equity, sustainability, alignment and impact. Without additional investment from other levels of government, realigning funding to new priorities may mean diverting funding from currently delivered services or identifying where other City divisions or levels of government may be better suited to fund certain programs.

Prioritization Framework

A prioritization approach helps to establish transparent processes for decision making about access to housing and supports for people experiencing homelessness. This ensures housing and support opportunities are targeted to achieve shared system goals, ensures that all resources aren't targeted on one specific population group while leaving others with no options, and addresses the systemic barriers to housing that are often felt by those disproportionately represented in Toronto's homeless population.

The Prioritization Framework will be applied to:

- Priority Access to Housing and Supports (PATHS) direct matching process used to identify households for city-funded housing and supports resources dedicated to people experiencing homelessness, including the Rapid Rehousing Initiative in partnership with Toronto Community Housing
- Eligibility and referral processes for Housing First programs including follow-up supports and housing benefits dedicated to people experiencing homelessness
- Assignment of a Disadvantage Code (DA) for people experiencing homelessness who are applying for rent-geared-to-income housing.

Principles for Prioritization

1. Length of homelessness
2. Indigenous homelessness
3. Equity impact
4. User experience
5. Responsive
6. Data-supported
7. Transparent
8. Collaborative design
9. Impact

The principles in this framework will be used to determine the prioritization criteria for each of the processes and programs above with a focus on system-level impacts. Based on these principles, program specific criteria that incorporate additional eligibility considerations, levels of support and program guidelines will be determined on a program-by-program basis.

Measuring Progress

A transparent, community-wide approach to data and measuring our progress allows all system partners to understand their contribution to achieving our shared goals, and enables us to adjust our response as needed.

The Service Plan is focused on two outcome statements:

1. People experiencing homelessness in Toronto have access to safe, high quality emergency shelter.
2. People are provided housing-focused supports that ensure homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring.

We are now working to develop a set of system level indicators that quantify the progress towards these outcome statements.

Equity and measuring outcomes

This service plan also includes a focus on equity, including Indigenous and Black people's experiences of homelessness and homelessness services. This requires bringing an equity lens to all of our indicators and performance measures to understand how equity-deserving groups are experiencing these outcomes.

An example indicator

Outcome: Brief. **Indicator:** Number of people experiencing chronic homelessness.

Based on shelter flow data: In August 2021, there were 3,915 individuals actively experiencing chronic homelessness. **Rolling three month average:** 3,886 people actively experiencing chronic homelessness. **Trend since January 2020:**

