

*The Ontario Housing First Regional Network
Community of Interest (OHFRN-Col) presents a
webinar on...*

Rent Assistance

Thursday May 4, 2017 1pm – 2:30pm (EDT)

Rent assistance webinar

HOUSEKEEPING

- The audio is being stream via your computers. For optimal sound, please use external speakers or earphones. If you are still having trouble hearing our presenters, you can dial into 1-800-509-6600
Participant PIN: 95437934#
- This webinar will be recorded and posted on the [Col's webpage](#) following the presentation.
- Please also let us know via the chat box if someone is watching the webinar with you!
- Some collected data from the webinar might be used for reporting.
- We would appreciate having your feedback on today's knowledge exchange webinar. You will receive a link to an online survey towards the end of the webinar. Thanks in advance for the 5 minutes of your time to complete our online feedback survey.

Rent assistance webinar

Today's webinar

In this webinar, the results of a recent study of rent assistance are presented, along with a panel from three communities about their approaches to rent assistance.

Today you will learn about:

- ✓ The OHFRN-Col;
- ✓ A recent evaluation of the impacts of rent assistance on housing stability and quality of life of persons experiencing persistent homelessness the Waterloo region of Ontario;
- ✓ Experiences from the ground, specifically:
 - How to obtain rent assistance for homeless persons; and
 - How to implement rent assistance.

Rent assistance webinar

Before we begin, we would like to know a little about YOU!

WHICH SECTORS are participating in today's webinar. Please answer the poll:

What sector do you work in?

- ☐ Hospital
- ☐ Community mental health and addictions
- ☐ Housing and homelessness
- ☐ Developmental disabilities
- ☐ Family services
- ☐ Primary care
- ☐ Justice
- ☐ Corrections
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Culturally based and/or ethno/faith/language/population specific services
- ☐ Government/Ministry
- ☐ Persons with lived experience
- ☐ Public health
- ☐ Funder
- ☐ Peer support services
- ☐ Employment
- ☐ Other (please specify which sector in the chat box)

Rent assistance webinar

Before we begin, we would like to know a little about YOU!

WHO is participating in today's webinar. Please answer the poll:

What is your main role in relation to the addictions and/or mental health sectors?

- ☐ Agency Leadership
- ☐ Direct Service Provider
- ☐ Knowledge Broker/Implementation Staff
- ☐ Person with Lived Experience and/or Family Member
- ☐ Policy Maker/Decision Maker
- ☐ System Planner
- ☐ Researcher/Research staff
- ☐ Other (please specify in chat-box)
- ☐ Not in the addictions and/or mental health sectors

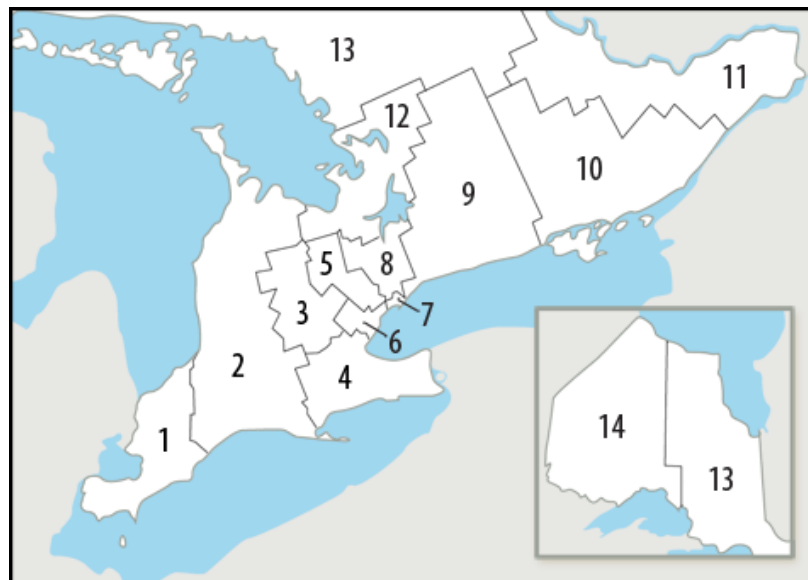
Rent assistance webinar

Now we would like to know a little more about YOU!

WHERE everyone is participating from. Please answer the poll:

Which Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) area are you participating from?

- ☐ 1. Erie St. Clair
- ☐ 2. South West
- ☐ 3. Waterloo Wellington
- ☐ 4. Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant
- ☐ 5. Central West
- ☐ 6. Mississauga Halton
- ☐ 7. Toronto Central
- ☐ 8. Central
- ☐ 9. Central East
- ☐ 10. South East
- ☐ 11. Champlain
- ☐ 12. North Simcoe Muskoka
- ☐ 13. North East
- ☐ 14. North West
- ☐ I am participating from outside of Ontario
- ☐ Not sure



Rent assistance webinar

Housing Poll Questions

Does your community have rent supplements or housing allowances with your housing first program?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Rent assistance webinar

Housing Poll Questions

Does everyone in your housing first program have access to rent supplements/housing allowances?

- ☐ Yes – please type in the chat box what percent if you know
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Rent assistance webinar

Housing Poll Questions

For a single person, how much is your housing allowance?

☐ Please type in your response in the answer box.

Rent assistance webinar

A little about the OHFRN-COI

The Ontario Housing First Regional Network Community of Interest (OHFRN-COI) is intended to assist communities across Ontario to develop, evaluate, and improve Housing First (HF) programs based on the Pathways model tested, adapted, and shown to be effective in the At Home / Chez Soi Demonstration Project.

OHFRN-COI's goals are to:

- Build local capacity for HF programs;
- Expand HF programs across the province;
- Promote high quality implementation of the HF model that includes both fidelity to and adaptation of the model;
- Obtain financial support for HF programs and research; and,
- Inform provincial and local housing and support policies for homeless people with mental illness and addictions.

Rent assistance webinar

A little about the OHFRN-Col

Upcoming activities:

- Work with groups to develop locally relevant HF implementation plans, workshops, trainings, webinars and evaluation.
- Establish a roster of Ontario HF training and technical assistance and research/evaluation consultant experts.
- Devise an Ontario HF Network infrastructure development plan for facilitating networking, knowledge brokering, implementation and capacity development.
- Identify themes (e.g., harm reduction approaches) for potential Communities of Practice where members can share experiences and learn from one another.
- Provide policy briefings on HF in Ontario to provincial policy-makers.

Rent assistance webinar

A little about the OHFRN-Col

Membership

Members of the OHFRN-COI will consist of Ontario HF policy-makers planners, managers, service-providers, researchers, and persons with lived experience, including representatives from the housing, health, and justice sectors. Key partners may include the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, the Homeless Hub, Service Canada and the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, and local HF programs.

The OHFRN-COI encourages community entities to participant in our Col!

For more information, visit <http://eenet.ca/housing-first-community-of-interest/>

Today's presenters:



Marie Morrison, Manager Housing Services, Region of Waterloo

Marie has worked with the Region of Waterloo in the area of homelessness to housing stability for the past 15 years. Marie supported the development of the local STEP Home housing first program in 2008, led the Region in piloting the first Registry Week in Canada in 2014 as part of the 20K Homes Campaign, participated in the MHCC Housing First Training and Technical Assistance program over 2014-2016, sits on many provincial and national consultation and working groups and is an Institute for Global Homelessness Leadership Program Fellow.



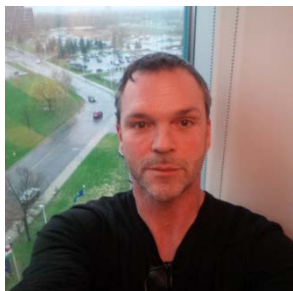
Courtney Pankratz, Co-principal Investigator for rent assistance research, Wilfrid Laurier University, Community Psychology program

Courtney holds a Master's degree in Community Psychology from Wilfrid Laurier University. She has a strong interest in community mental health and is particularly interested in using research to identify solutions to homelessness among individuals living with mental illness. For her graduate thesis, she evaluated the effectiveness of a rent assistance program for individuals experiencing persistent homelessness in the Waterloo region. This project has informed the scaling up of Housing First in communities across Ontario. Courtney is currently a research analyst for an evaluation firm in Vancouver, BC.



Lisa Medd, Program Manager, CMHA Ottawa

At the Canadian Mental Health Association Ottawa now for 17 years, Lisa spent more than a decade on community development initiatives to advance social determinants of health for people living with serious mental illness. After a short stint managing an intensive case management team, Lisa recently became Manager of the Housing Department, a small team with a big portfolio. Coming back into the housing field feels like coming back to her roots. Lisa and her team have implemented a new MOHLTC rent supplement program with 9 community mental health partner agencies, bringing in Sam Tsemberis, CEO and Founder of Pathways Housing First, to support the multiple teams to understand and integrate best practices.

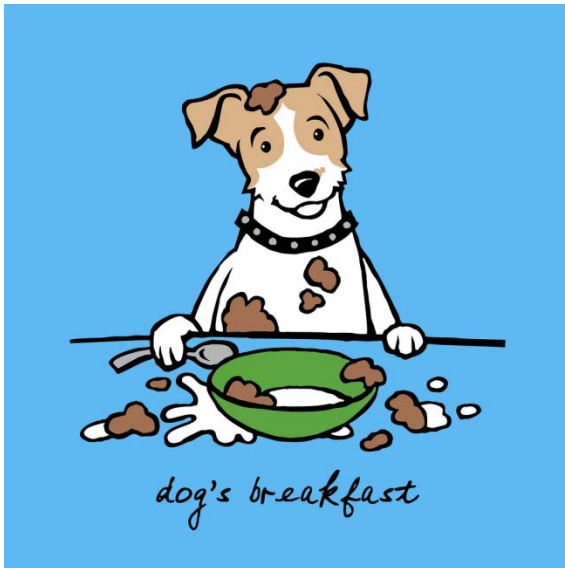


Paul Lavigne, Program Manager, Homelessness Programs and Residential Services Unit, City of Ottawa

Paul Lavigne is the Program Manager for the Homelessness Programs and Residential Services Unit at the City of Ottawa. Paul brings over 25 years of service in the areas of justice, mental health and addictions, Public Health and homelessness. In his current position, Paul acts as Project Manager for special initiatives related to homelessness and oversees the administration of programs and funding to 60 agencies in the areas of outreach, general housing assistance and Housing First, to name a few.

Clarifying Terms

- Rent Assistance
 - Rent Supplement
 - Housing Allowance
 - Portable Housing Benefit



Rent Supplement

- Rent for tenant is 30% of income - Rent Geared to Income (RGI)
- Contract with landlord – subsidy is tied to unit and subsidy is paid directly to the landlord
- Generally long-term
- Legislated program in Ontario for Service Managers through Ministry of Housing (MHO)
- Must be eligible for Centralized Waiting List and removed if receive Rent Supplement
- Unit must be self-contained

Housing Allowance

- Tied to the tenant not the unit
- Top up amount for rent – variety of amounts and approaches
- Could be paid to person or landlord
- Eligible housing types can vary
- Timeframes can vary and people may remain on waitlists for RGI housing support
- Often less or no legislation governing – funded a variety of ways

Portable Housing Benefits

Examples:

- Survivors of Domestic Violence Portable Housing Benefit Pilot
- Province is currently seeking public feedback on proposed regulations that would establish the Portable Housing Benefit (PHB) Framework within the *Housing Services Act, 2011*.
 - A **client-centred** approach that allows the assistance to move with the person, giving people freedom to choose where they live.
 - An **additional tool** for Service Managers to provide greater access to a variety of housing options instead of being limited to traditional social housing stock, which may result in housing people faster.
 - An **incentive** to earn income by moving away from potential monthly changes in rent to an annual income test to calculate benefits using income tax information.



Region of Waterloo

STEP Home & Housing Allowance



The Ontario Housing First Regional Network Community of Interest
Rent Assistance Webinar
May 4, 2017



STEP Home

- [STEP Home](#) is Waterloo Region's Housing First Program. A team in Cambridge and a team in Kitchener-Waterloo serve a total of approximately 150 people each year.
- STEP Home includes a housing allowance called HAWS (Housing Assistance with Support).

HAWS

- Total of 100 HAWS
 - 40 as of April 1, 2015
 - 60 added March 1, 2017
- Portable – follows the person
- Paid directly to landlord
- Funded by the Region of Waterloo through the fed/provincial Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH)
- Hosted by Lutherwood

HAWS – Funding Amounts

- Originally up to \$350 set in 2012
 - As of fall 2016, average market rents in Waterloo Region are now \$872 for a 1 bedroom.
 - The combined amounts of the shelter portion of a check (\$376 OW or \$479 ODSP) + HAWS \$350 was not often covering the rent amounts.
 - Participants often pay from basic needs funds to make up the rent.
 - Competitive market and more difficult to find housing.
- Increased April 1, 2017 up to:
 - **\$394** for those with incomes of ODSP or higher up to the maximum allowable income
 - **\$494** for those with incomes less than ODSP (e.g., OW)

HAWS – Eligibility & Process

- Eligibility
 - Participant of STEP Home
 - Complete HAWS Participant Information Sheet to confirm subsidized housing waitlist eligibility
 - Prioritized at PATHS coordinated access meeting
 - Income set at HIL and housing max CMHC AMR (requesting from MHO to go to CMHC AMR+15%)
- Further Information
 - [PATHS Process Guide](#) – see Section 7

Contact Information

Marie Morrison

Manager, Strategic Planning & Quality Initiatives

Housing Services


Region of Waterloo

mmorrison@regionofwaterloo.ca

519-575-4400 ext. 4671



An Evaluation of Rent Assistance for Persistently Homeless Persons in Waterloo Region



Courtney Pankratz, MA, & Geoff Nelson, PhD
Wilfrid Laurier University, Community Psychology Program
Ontario Housing First Network, Webinar on Rent Assistance
May 4, 2017

Research Study

Background & Context

Purpose: To evaluate the effectiveness of the addition of rent assistance to existing STEP Home (Support to End Persistent Homelessness) services in Waterloo Region

- ▷ STEP Home is the Region's Housing First program
- ▷ In 2014, the Region provided rent assistance to 40 individuals experiencing persistent homelessness who were receiving support services from STEP Home
- ▷ The addition of rent assistance brings STEP Home into greater alignment with Housing First principles and practices

Research Design

NON-EQUIVALENT COMPARISON GROUP DESIGN:

- ▷ Participants receiving rent assistance, **HAWS** (Housing Assistance with Support), were compared to those not receiving HAWS
- ▷ All participants received **STEP Home support**
- ▷ Interviews were conducted at **baseline** (prior to the HAWS group receiving rent assistance) and **6 months later**.

Interviews Completed

BASELINE INTERVIEW

Completed February 4, 2016

- ▷ 28 participants receiving STEP Home support and HAWS
- ▷ 32 other participants receiving STEP Home support (intensive support or street outreach connected) without HAWS or any other form of rent assistance

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

Completed July 25, 2016

- ▷ 26 participants receiving STEP Home support and HAWS
- ▷ 25 participants receiving STEP Home support without HAWS.

Background Characteristics

HAWS participants did not differ significantly at baseline from non-HAWS participants on all background characteristics and baseline measures, with the exception of time homeless 6 months prior to baseline

▷ HAWS participants spent significantly more time homeless 6 months prior to baseline compared to non-HAWS participants



Background Characteristics

Demographics		HAWS (N = 28)	Non-HAWS (N = 32)
Gender	Women	11 (39%)	9 (28%)
	Men	17 (61%)	23 (72%)
Born in Canada		26 (93%)	30 (94%)
Ethnic or Cultural Identity			
	Aboriginal	2 (8%)	4 (14%)
	Canadian	20 (77%)	19 (66%)
	Jamaican	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
	European	4 (15%)	5 (17%)
Marital Status			
	Married/Cohabiting	1 (4%)	2 (6%)
	Single/Separated/Divorced/Widowed	27 (96%)	30 (94%)

Background Characteristics

Employment/Income	HAWS (N = 28)	Non-HAWS (N = 32)
Primary Employment Status		
Employed/Volunteer	2 (7%)	3 (9%)
Unemployed/Retired	26 (93%)	29 (91%)
Current Sources of Income		
ODSP	13 (46%)	11 (34%)
OW	12 (43%)	15 (47%)
Pension	1 (4%)	4 (13%)
Monthly Income (Average)	\$748.86	\$601.80

Background Characteristics

Homelessness/Mental Health	HAWS (N = 28)	Non-HAWS (N = 32)
Total Amount of Time Homeless (Average)	57 Months	37 Months
Longest Single Period of Homelessness (Average)	36 Months	24 Months
Length of Time Connected to STEP Home Worker (Average)	30 Months	15 Months
Psychiatric and/or Substance Dependence (Self-Reported)	21 (75%)	28 (88%)

TAKEAWAY MESSAGE #1

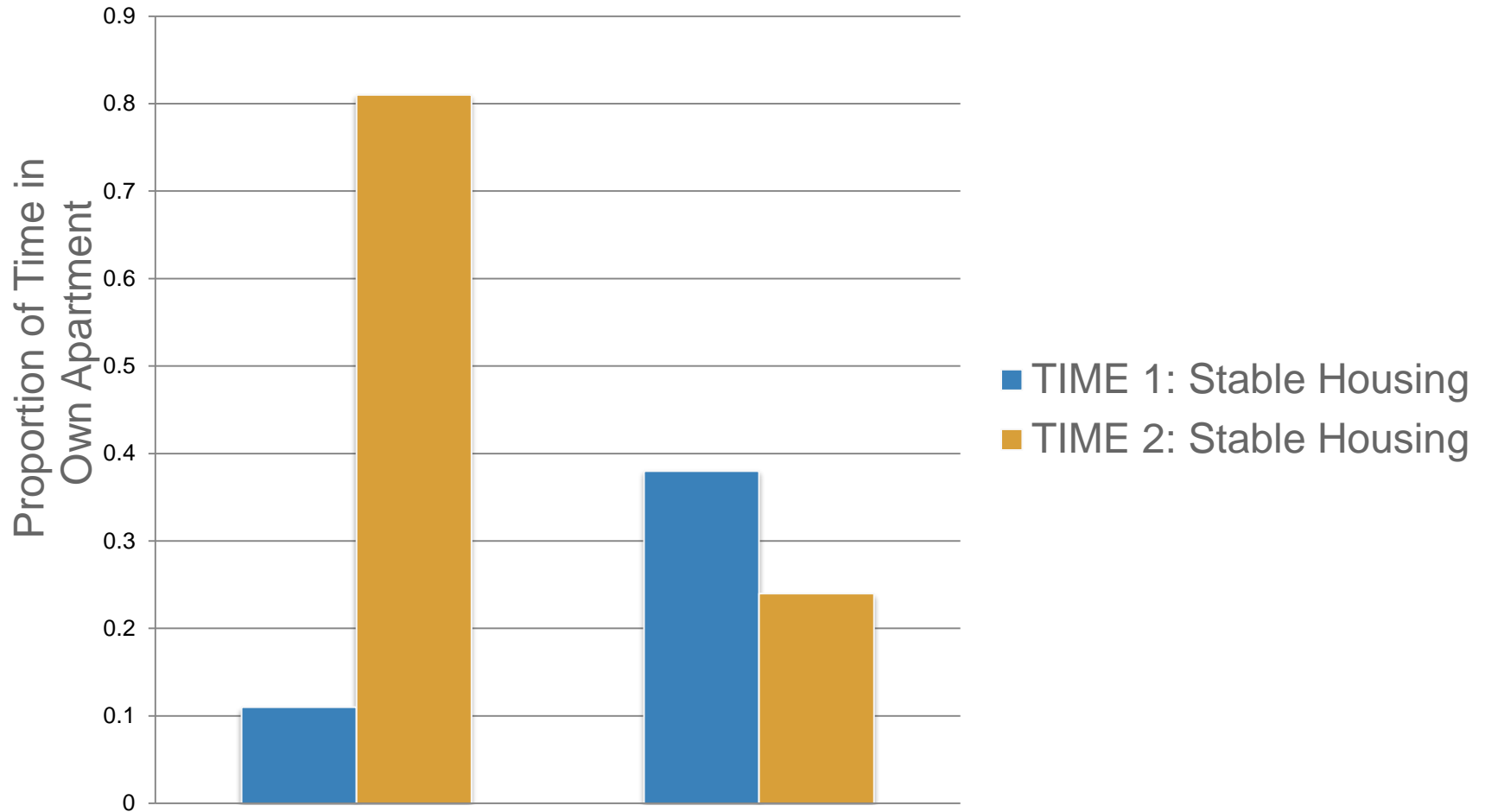
**Rent Assistance is effective at improving
housing stability**



"I'm not drifting around on the streets anymore, that's one big thing, like I have a place that's my own and...I can do more things because of it."

"The difference housing has made in my life, well, there's a lot of differences, I'm not homeless, I don't have to worry about where I'm going to stay that night or the next night."

Comparison of Participants Who Either Received or Did Not Receive HAWS Living in an Apartment at Baseline and 6 Month Follow-up



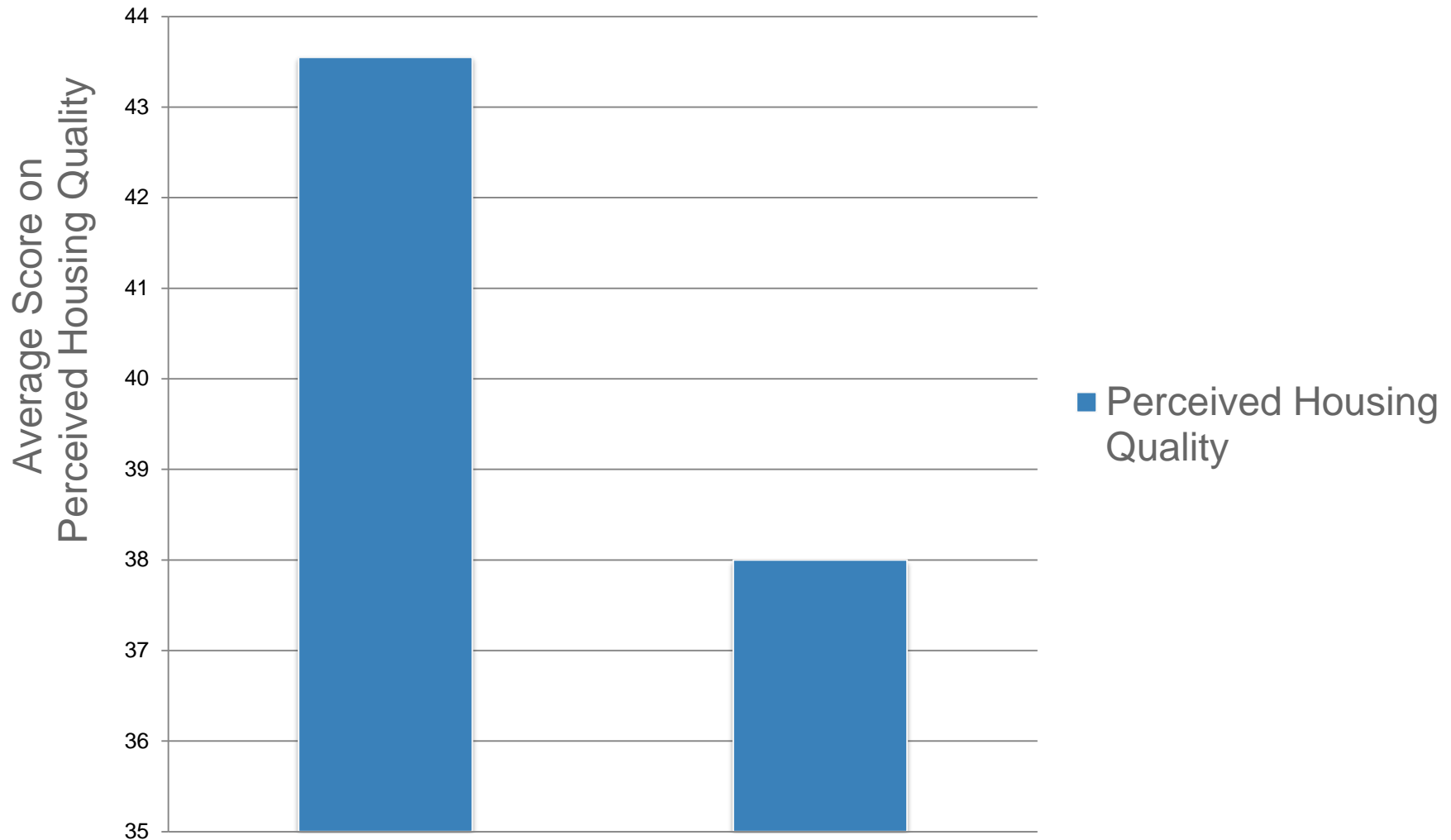
TAKEAWAY MESSAGE #2

**Rent Assistance is associated with greater
perceived housing quality**



*“My current housing is nice. It’s safe
and secure; it’s comfortable; it’s
warm; it’s cozy.”*

Comparison of Participants Who Either Received or Did Not Receive HAWS and Who Were Housed at 6 Month Follow-up on Perceived Housing Quality



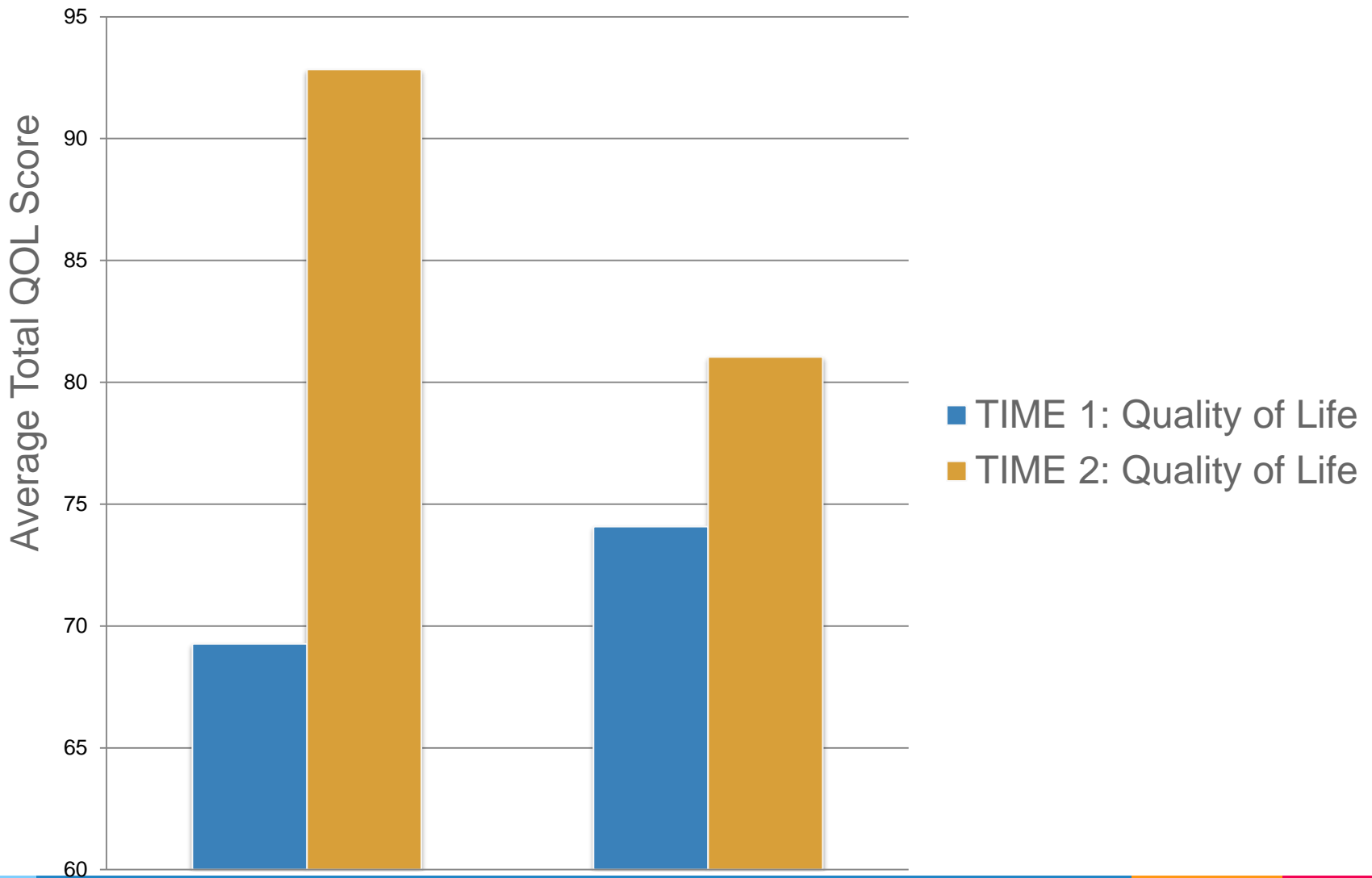
TAKEAWAY MESSAGE #3

Rent Assistance improves quality of life and other psychosocial outcomes



“It’s definitely made a difference in my mental health, having my own place.”

Comparison of Participants Who Either Received or Did Not Receive HAWS on Quality of Life at Baseline and 6 Month Follow-up



Other Psychosocial Outcomes

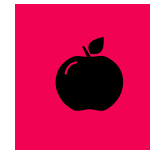
Similarly, there were positive trends for improvement of HAWS participants relative to non-HAWs participants in:



Community Functioning

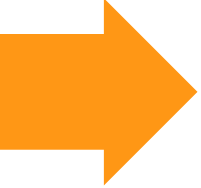


Informal Social Support



Food Security

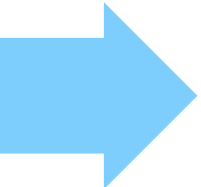
Recommendations



Continue to **invest in rent assistance** until persistent homelessness is eliminated in Waterloo Region .



Continue to **engage in community-university research partnerships** around issues of homelessness.



Conduct research projects that **take into account the perspectives of a range of stakeholders**, including people with lived experience, staff, planners, and government.

Thanks!

You can find us at:

Courtney Pankratz
courtney.d.pankratz@gmail.com

Geoff Nelson
gnelson@wlu.ca

The report can be accessed at the Homeless Hub,
<http://homelesshub.ca/>



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Ottawa
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
Ottawa
La santé mentale pour tous

CMHA Ottawa

Rent Supplement Program

Presentation by Lisa Medd, Program Manager
Rent Assistance Webinar May 4, 2017

CMHA Ottawa

Funding from:

- Government of Ontario, City of Ottawa, Federal Government, United Way, Private donations

Governance:

CMHA is a Not for Profit agency with Charitable Status supported by a volunteer Board of Directors (policy board)

Number of Employees:

- 135 FTE > 150 employees

Three primary areas of work:

- Treatment, rehabilitation and support (includes housing department)
- Social Action
- Community Capacity Building and Education

Dedication Towards using Evidenced Based Practices, Participating in Research & Evaluation & Knowledge Exchange:

- 6 Research Studies with University of Ottawa (Implementation & Outcome); 20+ publications in peer review journals
- 2 Implementation/Fidelity Studies Currently Underway (Strength Based Case Management & Familiar Faces Program)

Rent Supplements

(\$2.1 million budget)

- **CMHA Rent Supplements (240 supps)**
MOH 750 & HIF, Service Enhancement
- **Sandy Hill PA Rent Supplements (100 supps)**
MOHLTC Addictions Rent Supp
- **MHCSS & ACTT Ottawa Rent Supps (60 supps)**
MOHLTC new Mental Health and Addictions Strategy New 1000
 - Rent Supplements – make up the difference between market rent (including hydro) and income
 - Average Supplement is approx. \$490

The Housing Department

3 Housing Coordinators: Michael McGee, Katie Packer, Corry Comeau provide housing support to:

- 400 tenants – approx. 30% who no longer have ICM/ACT (graduated, ended)
- 10 partner ICM/ACT support agencies
- 150+ case managers
- 130 landlords
 - + more individual building Prop Mgrs

(+.5 FTE Finance Admin)



Housing Providers

Private Landlords: More than *130 Ottawa area landlords*

Partnership agreements: Social/Non profit Housing with:

- Ottawa Housing Corporation (30)
- CCOC (15)
- The Oaks (10)
- Cornerstone (3)

Rent Supplement Tenants

- All individuals must be receiving ICM or ACTT services at time of referral
- Priority to individuals who are homeless and those in unsafe situations and about 20% for “homeless prevention”
- All tenants must be on the Social Housing Registry, documenting their financial eligibility and household composition
 - Housing Referral Form - simple
 - Selection process differs slightly by program
 - No wait lists are kept as few vacancies per year

Housing First

**CMHA Ottawa assessed in 2012 by
Pathways Housing First as operating with
high fidelity to the Housing First
best practice model**

- *Immediate access to housing with no readiness requirements*
- *Consumer choice and self determination*
- *Individual recovery-oriented and client driven services*
- *Harm reduction approaches*
- *Social and community integration*



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

Ontario Housing First Network Rent Assistance Webinar



Mandate - Housing Services

Emergency Shelters

- Own and operate 2 family shelters with 252 beds
- 695 emergency shelter beds for single men, women and youth + overflow in shelters and motels
- Rooming house coordination



Homelessness & Residential Services

- 31 residential services operators representing over 1,000 subsidized beds
- Deliver services to the homelessness sector



Social & Affordable Housing

- 22,500 units of social housing and subsidies
- Centralized waiting list: average 10,000 households
- Develop new affordable housing



10 Year Housing & Homelessness Plan

- Implement the Plan in partnership with the Housing and Homelessness sectors



Housing Allowances

- \$250 per individual/\$50 for other members
- Paid to tenant or landlord
- On Centralized Waiting List
- Subsidy follows the tenant
- Rooming houses eligible

Housing First Program Housing Allowances

Eligibility criteria

- Chronically homeless adults and homeless/at risk youth
- Adults residing in one of the four emergency shelters
- Have a SPDAT assessment complete and consent to participate in the Housing First program
- Matched to a Housing First Housing based Case Manager

Application process

- Applicant secures rental unit
- Fill out application documents
- Submits application to delegate at the City of Ottawa for review
- Application is reviewed and submitted to the Ministry of Finance for processing

Challenges

- \$250 per person for Ontario Works is not sufficient
- Uptake is difficult as people want the deeper subsidy (i.e. Rent Supplement)
- Landlords' interest in the program is reduced when vacancy rate is low
- Lag time between application date and receipt of the subsidy

Rent assistance webinar

Discussion session for audience

What are your experiences with housing allowance?

Let us know in the chat box!

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Q/A Session

**Please let us know your questions by
typing in the chat box.**



Rent assistance webinar

Thanks to all participants for joining today's webinar.

The OHFRN-Col would also like to give a special THANKS to Courtney, Lisa, Marie and Paul for today's presentation!



Please take a few minutes to answer our survey on today's webinar and give us suggestions on future webinar topics:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ohfrncoi_rentassistancewebinar

The recording of today's webinar will also be posted the Col's [webpage](#) shortly.

STAY TUNED FOR MORE WEBINARS FROM OUR COI!