

Family Voice Bulletin – Issue 30 (Feb 22nd /2022) Homelessness & Shelters

Summarized by KJ (Krystal-Jyl) Thomas, MSW, RSW

In this week's session, facilitators KJ Thomas, MSW, RSW and Tracey Kent, MSW, RSW were joined by Yannie Watson, RN, of the Psychiatric Outreach Services (POS) team, within the Community Mental Health Program.

There are a number of factors that can lead to homelessness, such as family issues, domestic violence, substance use, mental health challenges, immigration/migration, or loss of income. Additionally, there are structural factors (e.g. lack of adequate housing/income) and system failures (e.g. poor discharge planning, rising rent costs, loss of rental housing). The pandemic has added to these issues with fewer people being able to be housed in units, a sharp rise in domestic violence, and the rising costs of real estate/rental.

Finding shelter can look very different for many people. There are emergency shelters, transitional, supportive housing, social housing (rent geared to income/30% gross income), affordable housing (typically 80% of average market rent), rent supplement (30% of gross income and remainder paid by varying social services), and housing allowances (benefits paid to low-income households). Wait times for units on housing registries can be upwards of five years or more. For this reason, those who anticipate housing issues are encouraged to start applications as early as possible.

Supports and services can be found within shelters, and from POS when they are on site. Many shelters offer crisis intervention services, diversion workers (e.g. support with replacing ID, Ontario Works, ODSP), case management, harm reduction strategies, assistance with medication, and housing support workers (e.g. housing registry assistance). These services are housing-focused, person-centred, and done with trauma-informed care.

If you find yourself in a situation in which you, or a loved one, need the services of a shelter, take only what you can carry, avoid bringing valuables, aim to have ID and income tax assessments, and have your medication and emergency contacts/health care team information handy.

Resources

- Emergency Housing City Services: Call 311, Toll-Free: 1-866-261-9799, TTY: 613-580-2401
- Current housing support services <https://ottawa.ca/en/family-and-social-services>
- Local & regional services Health Services for Ottawa - champlainhealthline.ca
- Housing Registry [The Registry - Centre d'enregistrement - What is the Registry? \(housingregistry.ca\)](http://The Registry - Centre d'enregistrement - What is the Registry? (housingregistry.ca))
- Mental Health/ Case management supports Community Support Services | CMHA Ottawa
- Coordinated Access AccessMHA.ca - free mental health and/or substance use/addiction support
- Mental Health Resources Mental Health Resources, Help and Support In Your Community : eMentalHealth.ca
- Emergency Shelters/ Housing Emergency Shelter and Housing : Ottawa-Carleton, ON : Mental Health Services, Help and Support : eMentalHealth.ca
- Mental Health & Addictions Mental Health & Addiction Treatment Services | Connex Ontario
- Housing Help [Housing Help - Action Housing \(action-logement.ca\)](http://Housing Help - Action Housing (action-logement.ca))
- Homelessness Ottawa | The Homeless Hub
- Psychiatric Survivor's Ottawa <https://www.pso-ottawa.ca/resources-2c>
- The Royal Ottawa Psychiatric Outreach Team <https://www.theroyal.ca/news/psychiatric-outreach-team-reaching-ottawas-homeless>