

The need for prevention and system coordination

Some families on social assistance have only



\$1,000 =



etc.

per month to cover: rent, food, transportation & other expenses



1 in 5

of all rental households in Canada spend

>50%

of their income **ON RENT**

235,000

Canadians experience **homelessness EACH YEAR**

Gaetz, S., Gulliver, T., & Richter, T. (2014): The State of Homelessness in Canada: 2014. Toronto, ON: The Homeless Hub Press.

BETWEEN

April 1, 2009 & March 31, 2010

64,500 women



sought refuge at a **VAW*** shelter

*Violence Against Women

Sinha, M. (2013b). Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends.

Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics & Statistics Canada, Juristat Article.



841,191



Food Bank

an increase of

↑ 25%

from 2008

people in Canada visited food banks

Food Banks Canada. (2014). Hunger Count 2014. Downloaded at: www.foodbankscanada.ca/HungerCount

Executive Summary

Beyond Housing First: A Holistic Response to Family Homelessness in Canada, part of Raising the Roof's national *Child and Family Homelessness Initiative*, speaks to Housing First as a means of early intervention for families experiencing homelessness. However, while Housing First has been identified as a successful and effective approach in assisting those currently experiencing homelessness, this report aims to hold a parallel discussion of what it would mean to genuinely *prevent* homelessness from occurring, and how we can ensure that the systems and structures are put in place so that workers are better able to assist Housing First participants.

Homelessness is not a social concern that occurs in a vacuum, but one that intersects with multiple social concerns. This includes poverty and Canada's declining social safety net. It is the contention of this report that by addressing the *root causes* of homelessness – such as affordable housing, income, food security, discrimination, and violence – we can prevent the cycle of poverty and homelessness experienced by families and eventually eliminate the need for Housing First.

In addition, the complex systems and services provided to families experiencing poverty or homelessness must be better coordinated. This includes income assistance programs, education, child welfare, and social housing, among others. It must also be noted that a lack of overall services has resulted in decreased success among Housing First 'graduates' and other program participants. To assist those at-risk and provide them with opportunities to escape the cycle, these services must be supported and implemented in a way that matches the unique needs of families experiencing homelessness.

To demonstrate, the report features qualitative research from interviews with both Housing First participants and workers from across the country. This in-depth analysis identifies the most common barriers and challenges faced by these two groups, and provides insight for long-term solutions.



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