

**“The system is hard to get to know”  
Home for Good: Research Report**

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February 14, 2018

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## Executive Summary

The *Home for Good* project is a three-year collaboration between four organizations who serve women experiencing housing insecurity. The agencies include: Alice Housing (supports women who have left abusive relationships); Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia (supports criminalized women and girls); The Marguerite Centre (supports women recovering from addictions); YWCA Halifax (supports women on income assistance and young single mothers facing diverse financial and social problems).

The *Home for Good project* proposal states that: “[w]omen’s housing success intersects with multiple systems as well as the commitment and willingness of partners to move toward solutions.” This report documents these systems and women’s interactions with them.

Our findings from different sources are summarized below:

### Academic Literature

- Research lacks a gendered lens
- Research focuses on housing issues faced by women fleeing domestic violence

### Policy and program scan

- Policies tend to be gender-neutral
- Many programs, mostly community-based, specialize in addressing women’s needs, especially those who have experienced domestic violence

### Survey of local programs and services; Interviews with service providers

- Services in rural areas focus on emergency shelter whereas more second stage beds are available in the Halifax region
- Women come to housing services with multiple and diverse needs that are not being met by existing services and programs.

### File review of four agencies

- Community-based agencies collect data inconsistently making it difficult to coordinate services or conduct research on women’s’ pathways to housing secure permanent housing

### Interviews with women about their transition to market or public housing

- The housing “system” is elusive and women do not see clear paths to housing security
- Women face sexism, stereotypes and stigma when looking for market housing
- Women encounter an unemphatic bureaucracy when exploring housing options with government agencies
- Women’s financial constraints and sense of safety are gendered but the system does not address them as such

Because the *Home for Good* partnership included agencies that provide housing to women with addictions and criminalized women, it became clear that these agencies are not typically included as part of the “housing” system. We saw this reflected in the academic literature and the environment scan of policies and programs. But our interviews with women clearly demonstrated the importance of these agencies and their services to housing.

Our findings can be summed up as follows:

**Housing is not a gender-neutral problem.**

This report highlights how gender affects women’s efforts to move from supportive housing to market or public housing. We demonstrate how concerns such as finances and safety are inherently gendered. The barriers to achieving housing security are gendered but the system designed to provide housing are not designed as such.

**“The system is hard to get to know”**

The quote from one woman we interviewed sums up the experience of women who described the system as uncoordinated with disconnected services and programs that often are unaware of each other or where they fit into the system as a whole. What they see is less of a system than a series of disconnected stepping stones. The women cannot see a path to housing security through the maze of disconnected services and programs.

This report has raised several specific questions about system change:

- How can the system shift to incorporate a more gendered approach to the barriers women face when dealing with housing insecurity?
- How can the system promote culture change to erode gendered and sexist stereotypes?
- How can the housing system address the specific and gendered nature of “safety” for women seeking housing security?
- How can the system account for the way that financial constraints affect women differently from men?

The stories women told in our interviews show that the stakes are high. Finding safe and affordable housing keeps them from going back to abusive relationships, gives them a fighting chance at avoiding relapse into addictions and provides their children with some sense of security. A gender-neutral housing system cannot meet these challenges.

This report provides a springboard for partners and stakeholders to work on specific system changes to support more successful moves from second stage to market or public housing. This gender-based analysis of the system opens up questions about the system that should generate new opportunities to improve women’s experiences and ultimately change the outcomes of their stories.

## I. Introduction

### The *Home for Good* Project

The *Home for Good* project is a three-year collaboration between four organizations who serve women experiencing housing insecurity:

- Alice Housing (supports women who have left abusive relationships)
- Elizabeth Fry Society (supports criminalized women and girls)
- The Marguerite Centre (supports women recovering from addictions)
- YWCA Halifax (supports women on income assistance and young single mothers facing diverse financial and social problems)

*Home for Good* aims to address the barriers and failures of the current housing and homelessness system that affect women moving from second stage<sup>1</sup> to market or public housing. More specifically the *Home for Good* project aims to:

- 1) Empower women who use transitional and second stage housing to identify problems and solutions in the attainment of safe, stable and affordable housing.
- 2) Improve the health and well-being of women and their children in the community through making changes to the systems that affect them.

With these objectives in mind, the Strategic Work Priorities for the *Home for Good* partnership include:

- Accessing First Voices – Engaging and consulting with women who have lived experience with second stage housing
- Knowledge Building – Raising awareness of the issues women in second stage housing face and the systems they come into contact with
- Knowledge Translation - Presenting women’s stories to stakeholders and decision-makers to leverage the research and video into recommendations for change
- Systems Change – Partner and stakeholder initiate changes within their organizations and departments

Prior to our having begun the research, *Home for Good* staff consulted with stakeholders to identify information that would help inform their work.

The research presented in this report includes voices and stories of women accessing services from the four *Home for Good* partner agencies. We aim to bring their experiences to bear on policy and system decisions. Our understanding of these stories has been informed by several workshops about the results, including one that involved housing stakeholders and another that brought women with relevant lived experience together to provide input. The research method and workshops align with the *Home for Good* project assumption that women’s voices should inform policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Second stage housing is supportive, safe and affordable housing, usually provided by a community-based agency, to provide shelter for a period that could range from months to years. It is not for emergencies but to help clients transition from an emergency situation to more permanent housing solutions.

This report also includes information from academic research, research on the local housing context, and the policy and program landscape from across Canada. This information puts the stories into the wider system context. Our research is fairly unique in this regard.

This report provides background, context and an exploration of women's lived experiences. As the *Home for Good* proposal states: "Women's housing success intersects with multiple systems as well as the commitment and willingness of partners to move toward solutions." This report documents these systems and women's interactions with them.

## Gender-Based Analysis

We have applied a gender-based analysis to women's housing problems. According to the Status of Women Canada, gender-based analysis includes an assessment of how policies/programs affect gender equality. It aims to close gaps between all genders.<sup>2</sup> Our *Home for Good* research focuses on gender as a social construct and explores systemic and structural sources of gender inequality that lie at the root of women's housing insecurity. We access these systemic and structural sources through women's experiences, a review of literature and exploration of selected local and national programs.

The recent National Housing Strategy<sup>3</sup> has applied a gendered lens to housing issues. But, this has not traditionally been the case. Indeed, the few researchers who have explored the gendered nature of housing insecurity have noted the absence of a gender-based analysis (Burnett et al 2015; Little 2015). As stated in one research report:

A common thread of revision needed through all of the policies is the noticeable absence of a gender-based analysis which highlights the unique oppressive circumstances that women face and inherent gender based systemic inequities (Burnett et al 2015:13).

Researchers who have explored women's housing needs have clearly concluded that housing is not a gender-neutral issue (Kennett and Wah 2011; Vickery 2012) but the housing system has tended to take a gender-neutral approach to the problem. Our research shows how this plays out in women's lived experiences.

## Report Overview

This report describes all components of the research project. The first section provides context. We describe relevant academic research, map existing policies and programs across the country, and; provide information on some local resources and services available to women facing housing insecurity. This section also includes information from a review of files from the partner agencies on the *Home for Good* project. The second section describes lived experiences from interviews with women who have made, or will soon make, the transition from supportive

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/gba-acis/index-en.html?wbdisable=true#what>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.placetocallhome.ca/>

housing to the community. We analyze the interviews to reveal both system challenges and system successes that emerged from the women's stories.

We have appended documents to support our findings including an annotated bibliography, a list of policies and programs and details from the file review.

Taken together, the research described in this report explores successes and challenges of current systems; documents existing services; and identifies strengths and limitations of the current service landscape.

## **II. Context**

### **i. Canadian Academic Research**

To place local issues within a wider context, we searched for relevant academic literature focusing on research that explores how the housing system addresses women's specific needs as they transition to market or public housing.

We searched three academic databases<sup>4</sup> for articles between 2012 and 2017 using combinations of the following keywords: woman, women, second stage housing, Canada, second stage, housing, housing insecurity, policy, supportive housing, transition housing. Appendix A includes an annotated bibliography of our findings.

In addition to the literature reviewed we compiled a list of academics working in this field. While several address women's issues, none that we can tell have addressed the gendered nature of moving from second stage housing to market or public housing and succeeding in that transition. Appendix B lists these researchers with some details about their particular research niche.

Researchers in Canada have produced little about women's housing issues, specifically the transition from second stage to market or public housing. Most research on women's housing insecurity focuses on women leaving domestic violence (Burnett et al 2015; Little 2015; Tutty et al 2014) or living in emergency/transition shelters (Burnett et al 2015; LeBlanc and Week 2013). This research shows that leaving an abusive relationship can easily lead to homelessness and housing insecurity and that women sometimes return to abusers because of problems accessing secure housing.

Research on the "system" has explored how provincial policies in Ontario have affected service delivery in shelters (Burnett et al 2015; Burnett et al 2016). This research reveals the unintended consequences of three policies: Ontario Works; The Child and Family Services Act; and, the Social Housing Reform Act (Burnett et al 2015). Instead of making the system easier to navigate,

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<sup>4</sup> We used the Novant library database which accesses publications held in university libraries across the province. Within Novanet we searched the following databases: JSTOR (Journal Storage database), Sociological Abstracts and Women Studies International.

these policies have made the work in shelters more difficult, shifted workers' focus to paperwork rather than engaging with clients, and gives expertise among shelter workers little credibility. Other system problems noted in the research included silos that make the system difficult to navigate (Burnett et al 2015); the burden of having to "prove" abuse to access services (Burnett et al 2015), and; tension between safety and family court directives allowing victims' abusers to see their children (Burnett et al 2015). The latter two issues relate specifically to women's experiences.

Other Canadian research has focused on women's experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness and the factors that lead up to it (Whitzman 2006; Tutty et al 2014; Scott 2007), as well as women's experience in various housing situations including shelters, second stage and social housing (Little 2015). This research raises concerns about accessibility of shelters, wait times and short stays. Relating particularly to women, this research revealed concerns that landlords discriminated against abused women fearing that their partners or boyfriends will create problems. Little (2015) points out that all the issues are exacerbated by race and that marginalized women experience these problems more acutely.

#### 1) Housing is not a gender-neutral problem

The pathway that leads women to experience housing insecurity differs from that of men. In particular, their experiences in violent relationships leads them into housing insecurity. Furthermore, women's housing needs differ mainly because of child care responsibilities and difficulties associated with how family court deals with providing abusers with access to children. Women also face sexism from landlords.

#### 2) Policy and research lacks a gender based analysis

The research highlights a lack of gender-based policies to housing and how gender-neutral policies differentially affect women and fail to account for their specific needs, circumstances and pathways to housing insecurity.

When it comes to thinking about the *Home for Good* project, the literature reveals the distinctiveness of the partnership. For example, we found no discussion of "halfway houses" or residential programs for women dealing with addictions. As well, no researchers connected housing insecurity and continuum of victimization-criminalization experience by women. None focused on the housing implications for women leaving residential addictions programs. Lastly, no researchers explored the experiences of young mothers and how their lived experiences as young women with children affected their efforts to find secure housing.

We cannot say for sure that researchers in Canada do not explore the experiences of these particular populations. But, we can say that this research was not identified by searching for keywords related to women and housing. This suggests that those who explore such issues are not exploring them in relation to housing insecurity. Further, this demonstrates that service providers working with criminalized women, young mothers or women with addictions, for example, are not considered part of the "housing" system. As some of the *Home for Good* partners have noted, this can have negative implications for funding and licensing.



## ii. Policies and Programs

We completed an environment scan of policies from each province in Canada, along with those at the national level. Appendix C provides details about the policy context across the country.

Looking across the country, the list shows that about half the provinces have agencies or departments specifically devoted to housing. Other provinces have included housing under other departments, such as Family and Social Services. The policies show attention being paid to affordability and homelessness as both are specifically named in policies from almost all the provinces. Few policies focus on specific populations, but several provinces have policies particularly related to the Indigenous community and seniors. Only half the provinces appear to have specific policies related to women, most of which focus on shelters and women fleeing domestic violence. Several other provinces have policies addressing victims of violence more generally. Most policies are gender-neutral and do not target any one group's specific needs.

We should note that in some cases, policies that appear gender-neutral may be practiced in a way that takes gendered experiences into account. As an example, we understand that in Halifax, public housing officials will prioritize women on their wait list who are escaping violence in their homes. It may be that some of the policies that we have listed have gendered experiences embedded in how they are practiced. But the point remains: a glance at the policy names does not suggest that housing insecurity differentially affects men and women, or other demographic groups, differently.

Notably, the new National Housing Strategy has included a gendered analysis of housing problems, has identified housing as a human rights issue, and has included a full chapter devoted to gender. The strategy has committed that at least 25 percent of investments arising out of the strategy will target the specific needs of women and girls. The strategy expects to have a “particularly positive impact on women” (page 24).

Appendix D includes a list of the programs we found in an internet search. The list is not comprehensive and our search was not systematic, but it does show how services cluster around particular issues relating to women's housing insecurity.<sup>5</sup>

Programs varied considerably from small and very local, to large programs embedded in larger organizations. The list in Appendix D shows that many community-based organizations are filling the system gap. The services are responding to system failure and they are rather ad hoc.

They are also responding to the heterogeneity of the population.

In contrast to the policies, we see a specialization of services around specific issues, particularly domestic violence and addictions. By far, the largest number of programs dealt with domestic violence. Many dealt with addictions while some focused on women, sometimes young women,

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<sup>5</sup> In Google, we used the same combination of search terms used in the academic databases: woman, women, second stage housing, Canada, second stage, housing, housing insecurity, policy, supportive housing.

who were pregnant or just had a baby and also faced housing insecurity. Some were emergency shelters. Several programs specifically address the needs of Indigenous women while other focus on serving women with mental health issues.

While we see specialization around particular populations, we do see gaps that our keyword search did not pick up. For example, we did not identify programs dealing with women victims of trafficking or women in conflict with the law. These programs and services do exist but are not “keyworded” as programs relating to housing insecurity for women. This finding echoes our earlier observation about how academic research has framed housing insecurity for women around a narrow set of problems.

### iii. Women’s Housing Agencies in Nova Scotia

The table below shows details about women’s housing agencies in HRM as of June 2017. We see twice as many beds available in transitional housing than in emergency housing. Partner agencies on the *Home for Project* supply 60 percent of the transitional housing available in HRM.

Agency	Emergency Housing (Temporary Shelter Beds)	Transitional Housing (time limited supportive housing)	Non-Profit (independent housing)
Adsum House	16		
Adsum Centre		16	
Adsum Court		24	
The Alders		10	
Adsum Condominiums			3
Alice Housing		18	
Barry House*	20		
Bryony House	24		
Holly House**		8	
The Marguerite Centre		11	
Nehiley House*		8	
Supportive Housing for Young Mothers (SHYM) 1 ***		9	
Supportive Housing for Young Mothers (SHYM) 2 ***			5
Women in Supportive Housing (WISH) 1 ***		24	
Women in Supportive Housing (WISH) 2 ***			10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>18</b>

- \* operated by Shelter Nova Scotia
- \*\* operated by the Elizabeth Fry Society
- \*\*\* operated by the YWCA

The table shows that the *Home for Good* partners provide just under half of the housing support for women in Halifax and that most beds are available in limited time supportive housing.

Alice Housing provides safe housing for women and children fleeing domestic violence. The agency offers counselling, advocacy and support to the women living in Alice Housing along with other programs to help support women as they recover from domestic violence and work toward finding housing. Women can stay living at Alice Housing for up to two years, some in an apartment building and others in townhouses.

Marguerite Centre provides housing and facilitates addictions recovery. Women can stay up to 12 months and participate in addiction education, life skills enhancement, holistic therapies and supportive life coaching. The Centre provides service to an average of 30 women annually.

The Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia works with hundreds of criminalized women and girls each year to provide legal navigation and advocacy, programming and housing support. The Society oversees Holly House, with space for eight women transitioning out of prison, who can stay for up to one year.

The YWCA of Halifax oversees two housing programs: WISH (Women in Social Housing) and SHYM (Supportive Housing for Young Mothers). WISH provides housing to 34 single women in apartments in various areas around Halifax. SHYM provides housing and programs for young mothers in one large apartment building.

Outside Halifax Regional Municipality, it appears that services are more focused on emergency shelters and less on second stage or limited term supportive housing.

We reached out to nine agencies in rural Nova Scotia and one in HRM who provide housing services to women. Six rural and one HRM agency participated in a brief telephone interview. We asked them a series of questions regarding the housing work they do with women, the housing options available in their communities, and the barriers that women face when looking for housing. Appendix E provides details on the questions we asked.

The picture provided here is not exhaustive but provides a snapshot of work being done across the province. Among those we interviewed, one service provider described their services as a shelter; four said they were a transition house and two described their work as both shelter and second stage housing.

Five of the agencies interviewed provide housing or shelter for women and their children who are escaping abusive or violent situations, whether that be intimate partner violence, family violence, or landlord violence. One agency provides housing for women only (i.e., no children) who are experiencing homelessness or coming from shelters. One other agency provides housing for women and their children who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness. While the agencies focus on serving “women,” two agencies have policies related to transgender persons and their children.

Bed numbers range from nine to 32. Only one excludes children and one other caps the number of children at four. The agencies do differ on how they deal with male children. Some allow male children up to a certain age (14, 16 and 18) but several are flexible on this.

The agencies vary in the type of accommodation they offer. Two use an apartment building in which the women share bedrooms. Two have emergency-type shelters that are inside one large house. Another provides duplexes. Two agencies have multiple accommodation types including apartments, emergency shelters, condos, and shared living spaces.

Three of the seven agencies have a waiting list, and the other four do not. The three agencies that have a waiting list vary in length depending on the length of time current service users plan to stay at the agency.

The length of stay for the agencies varies depending on the type of housing they provide. Those that provide transition housing (four) allow women to stay for six weeks before being reassessed. The agencies providing second stage housing allow women to stay for up to one year before being reassessed.

All seven agencies said that they work to find their clients more permanent solutions to housing problems. All mentioned that they provide advocacy (including advocacy with income assistance, child protection services, surrounding arrears, etc.) and that they help clients search for apartments (or 2<sup>nd</sup> stage housing). Five agencies have staff available to accompany women to apartment viewings.

The table below shows how the agencies help their clients find permanent housing.

<u>Assistance Provided</u>	<u>Number of Agencies</u>
Provide advocacy	7
Help look for apartments	7
Assist when viewing apartments/provide transportation	5
Provide supportive counselling	4
Provide landlord lists	2
Help with mental health/addiction	2
Help with resumes	1

All agencies differed in the number of female clients that they provide housing services to per year. Some served several hundred (up to 500) while others served around a dozen. On average, the agencies served 60 women each year.

In our telephone interviews with service providers we asked about their services and the local housing context more generally. We also talked to staff in the *Home for Good* partner agencies for their views.

All seven agencies had very similar responses when asked what kind of housing is available to their clients in the community. They described apartment buildings/complexes, low income housing, subsidized housing, rooms or flats rented out in someone's home, second stage housing, or group homes.

Almost every agency mentioned the lack of low income/affordable housing in safe neighbourhoods. As one staff person pointed out, income assistance rates have remained stagnant while rents have increased. Some staff at the partner agencies felt that single women faced more financial barriers because they did not have child benefits. Others felt that, even with more money, women with children face the burden of having to find larger places and that those with more than one child faced the scarcity of three-bedroom apartments. According to staff, too often women are forced to take a 2-bedroom apartment when they need a 3-bedroom, simply because they cannot afford it. The women also end up living in neighbourhoods that may not be safe for them or their children.

When asked what kind of housing the women typically find, most agencies said that the women tend to find temporary housing. This includes apartments, low income housing, boarding houses, independent regular housing, supported housing, or they end up moving back in with family members/friends.

The agencies felt that women simply want a clean, safe, decent, and affordable place to live and staff from the *Home for Good* partners agreed. They want somewhere that is good for their kids – a place that does not have mold or rotten staircases and is close to schools and resources. Agency staff told us that women are often forced to leave their communities just to find a place to live.

When asked what type of housing is lacking in their community, every agency immediately said safe, affordable housing. Also mentioned was second stage housing (in rural areas), places for women who are experiencing mental health issues or addictions, more accessible units, and more housing for seniors and women with many children. Very generally, the agencies felt that there was simply not enough housing available for women and, even if there was, it was all in the same location and not spread out. The agencies also felt that there needs to be more landlords who pay attention, and more people to be able to check in on the women.

All seven agencies said that access to affordable housing in their communities was quite limited. Staff in the partner agencies agreed. All agencies also brought up the fact that it is extremely difficult to find an affordable place to live while on income assistance and that wait lists for affordable housing also presented a barrier to the women they serve.

When asked how they would define affordability, the agencies' responses ranged between \$500-\$700 a month. Typically, the agencies said that rent should be 30-35% of a woman's income. They also distinguished between single women or women with children, saying that single women's rent should be lower as they do not receive a child tax benefit. Some also believed that utilities should be included in the rent as many women have arrears and trouble getting power in their name.

We received many different responses about other services available in the community to support women's housing needs. Included in these responses were low income housing; women's centers; consignment shops; food banks; churches and community groups that help with heating and utilities; local housing coalitions; family resource centers; clothing depots; community kitchens; advocacy and legal aid, and; mental health/addictions support.

The agencies describe the services they believed were lacking in their community. Public transportation was a very common response among the agencies, as most of them were located in rural areas. Mental health and addictions services, employment programs, and child care were also mentioned by multiple agencies. Two agencies also believed that there needs to be more subsidized housing or private landlords offering housing for lower rates. Finally, the agencies mentioned the fact that the Department of Community Services needs to increase income assistance rates.

#### **iv. Characteristics of Women using Housing Services**

We asked each agency to describe a typical case of a woman who is trying to find secure housing. Common themes were that the women simply cannot find safe and secure housing – she is often forced to live in an unsafe neighborhood, or unsafe situations. Agencies brought up the fact that many women have issues with damage deposits, have no credit, or owe money to Nova Scotia Power so they are unable to get power in their name. One agency mentioned that since they are located in a small town, if a woman gets evicted, word travels fast and many landlords may not rent to her. Often women will find something eventually, but it is usually not what they want or need. One agency compared a woman's struggles with finding housing to a boat with a leak in it – she will slowly start to sink

We asked the seven agencies we interviewed to describe their client-base and the table below shows what they said:

	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Rarely
Mental health problems	6	1
Addictions	3	4
Criminal justice system involvement	1	6
History of domestic violence	5	2
Bed credit	6	1
Supportive social networks		7
Trouble finding or keeping work	3	4
Transportation problems	6	1
Child care needs	4	2
Low education	2	5
Child protection involvement	4	1
Accessing employment services	1	6
Accessing family resource centres	4	2
Accessing sexual assault centres	2	5
Accessing women's centres	5	2

We asked about whether the agencies' clients had been human trafficking victims: two said no while the other five said yes.

Most of the women being served by these agencies were on income assistance. In one case, the agency said that about half are not on income assistance when they arrive but they most will apply while using the services.

These details provide an anecdotal account of those using services in agencies across the province, mostly in rural areas. To provide a more detailed account we conducted a file review of ten files from each of the *Home for Good* partner agencies. The goal was to describe the clientele's backgrounds and circumstances to create a profile. As it turns out, we discovered that the data collected by the agencies varies considerably so the data do not provide a complete picture.

From the file review, we did find patterns about the women using the partner agencies. The data need to be read with some caution because not all the files included these variables consistently.

- About half had a note related to addictions or substance use in the file
- Just over half were on income assistance and a large majority were not working
- About half had some criminal justice system involvement at some point in their lives
- More than three-quarters had mental health issues noted in their file
- Few with a disability noted in the files
- Most had children
- Average age was 38 and they ranged from 20 to 66.
- At least half had experienced domestic violence
- Approximately one-quarter were single

Before coming to one of the four partner agencies, the women's housing circumstances varied considerably. Many were couch surfing or staying with friends or family. A large proportion of referrals come from Bryony House. Many others came from friends, victim services and Pheonix Family Support.

As mentioned, the information contained in agency files was inconsistent both among agencies and between files in one agency. See Appendix G for a listing of materials in the files. The inconsistency makes it difficult to describe the population using housing services or identify patterns that may help improve the system or contribute to improved collaboration among service providers.

## II. Lived Experiences

To learn more about the lived experiences of housing insecure women we interviewed 22 women who had used services offered by one of the *Home for Good* partner agencies. We also included women in two local halfway houses to ensure that we had enough interviews from women who were working to move from prison to the community. Interviews started in summer and ended in the fall 2017. *Home for Good* partners identified potential participants.

Our interviews were guided by the principles of narrative research methods that focus more on gathering people's stories, rather than their opinions. For these interviews, we developed an unstructured interview guide designed to hear about a women's housing story and using probes to gather details about what happened, who was involved, how she felt along the way. We asked fewer questions about "what should change?" and more about "what happened?". Appendix H includes the interview guide.

A few women had been involved with more than one agency, or involved with the same agency more than once, and we have counted their most recent agency involvement in the table below.



	Number of interviews
Alice Housing	5
WISH/SHYM (YWCA)	7
Elizabeth Fry/Nehiley House	5
Marguerite Centre	5

The table below provides some information about these women’s circumstances.

Average number of children	1
Average age	42 (ranged from 19 to “mid 60s”)
Finished program	73%
Children under 18	61%
Children over 18	24%
Child protection involvement	24%
Working	50%
Mental Health Issues	24%
Addictions	42%
Abusive relationship	48%
Credit problems	48%

Very few identified as anything other than heterosexual, white and female, suggesting that the agencies involved in the *Home for Good* project are generally serving this population and as opposed to immigrant, racialized or non-binary identifying women. This limited our ability to think intersectional about how the system interacts with identity.

#### i. What were the Stories About?

##### *Supportive community agencies*

The agencies provided a much needed reprieve from what women needed to escape from – domestic violence, poverty, and certain neighbourhoods.

Moving in here was a good thing. We finally had our own space again, our own home again. It was really good after living with somebody else [family member] for a year. It was good to be in our own place and be us again.

I spent the last four years fighting my way through school as a single parent and dealing with landlord problems. I am not ready to start fighting again.

The experiences were mainly positive. The women felt welcome, supported, and thankful.

For some, the fact that the agencies work exclusively with women was helpful—several talked about having learned from the lived experiences of other women. Many had had abusive relationships with men making a “woman-centred” space appreciated.

Some women worried that they received too much support from the supportive housing agency. They felt that the safety net was hard to give up both because it provided them with security and because they did not feel able to be independent. A gendered phenomenon is evident here because many of the women had never lived on their own or made major decisions for themselves.

We don't know how to get out there and talk to people and figure out things about how the system and subsidized housing and daycare and who can reach out to, and how we can transition, and what we need.

I didn't even know how I liked my eggs cooked. Or my potatoes. I always let him make the decisions.

I am not ready. I am not prepared. I am sure you probably heard this dozens of times but when you are in school, you don't learn about the things that you need to learn about. You do not learn about credit. You do not learn about how to do your taxes. You don't learn about interest on credit cards, or overdue bills, or anything like that. You do not learn about any of those things.

One staff person described the experience of one woman who left the agency:

She was living in a town house which, in all honesty, was a bit of a disadvantage to her because she has a town house that was beautiful. It was a nice neighborhood, included power, she could come and obtain food bank with us every day, and she's got income assistance. If she was low on diapers, she could call us for diapers. If she need Tylenol, we would get her Tylenol for her children. One of the comment she made to made was that she found that after she moved out and looked back, although she appreciated it, it hurt her. We were not there anymore. There was no one else as far as she was concerned to go to, to get that extra help.

Others were ready to be on their own and proud.

I will miss here but it will make me feel more independent. I will be buying my own groceries with the help of my partner, and can come and go as I please. I don't have to call in o more, ad come back for curfew. . . . You get a little bit of freedom here but you don't have whole freedom. Living in my own apartment again and rearranging my apartment and you know.

### *Encounters with Landlords*

We asked for stories about looking for housing and these stories varied considerably. Women used many ways to find housing. Most involved the housing support worker at the agency. Others used Kijiji or social media networks. It does not appear that one route worked better than another.

Some women had a fairly easy time, usually when they had financial resources or supports. Most stories about getting into apartments owned by the big property managers were quite positive.

[I got the apartment because] I told the super because the super is involved with [one of the agencies] and stuff like that, so I told her I have bad credit, and she was like ‘well we will figure something out’ so they gave me the apartment without even a credit check, which helped out a lot.

Others struggled having bad experiences meeting landlords. They felt like their private lives were under a microscope and that some landlords asked too many personal questions.

I went to one place and the [landlord] who was showing me the apartment and she kept asking me ‘so there is no man? You don’t have a man?’ I kept saying ‘no’ and she was saying ‘well what would you do if you need to fix this? What would you do if you need to fix that?’ but really it was crazy.

Several felt judged, stereotyped and demeaned in those interactions.

From one woman with addictions:

I looked at a bunch of different place, and pleaded my case about what had happened hoping somebody would be understanding of my situation. But nobody would give me a break. I was ready to fall apart. I was looking through Kijiji again trying to see if I could find any private basement apartment and stuff like like, somebody renting in their home so they wouldn’t be strict on background checks and stuff. I could not even get a place with a co-sign. My mom was ready to co-sign but everywhere rejected me.”

One woman described meeting a landlord and everything was going well. They chatted about the Marguerite Centre and the landlord assumed the woman worked there.

At the beginning she comments about the previous address, and at this time it was my third or fourth apartment appointment and so I was starting to see the pattern. When she went through my last known address I said ‘it’s the Marguerite Centre’ and she said ‘oh okay’. I was probably a little overdressed but I had another appointment to go to that day, which like I said, the lady probably thought I was working because I was wearing a blazer and dress pants. As I told her as we started the journey in, she was going on about how she hears lovely things about the Marguerite Centre, this was the very beginning mind you. She was talking about how a friend of hers was getting blankets and donating them and another friend of hers would go up at Christmas time and do up gift bags for the girls that would be there at Christmas. I was there at Christmas so I just thought I would share it with her, I said ‘oh my god that was the best Christmas ever, even though I was away from my kids’ Just the look on her face when she clued in that I was not staff and that I was a resident, you could just see how it changed. Then she

said ‘What is going on right now? You must have been pretty bad if you were there?’ but like it doesn’t matter if I get my drugs on the street or a doctor was my drug dealer. The bottom line is I came for addiction. By the end of it she said ‘I don’t think this building is a fit for you. We are very quiet. Most people here work’. The discrimination that came along with it. If you could see how her demeanor changed from the beginning to the end, somewhere in between when she found out I was a resident of the Marguerite Centre, even though I did complete 6 months.

We might expect the stigma of a criminal record to affect some women’s search for housing but this did not seem to be a problem for the women interviewed. Unlike credit, it seems not to have been something that landlords asked about. In one case, a woman described how she had told a prospective landlord about her criminal record and he did not seem concerned. She wondered whether her might have treated a man with a criminal record differently.

The struggle to find housing created so much stress that going back to an abuser, for one woman, would have been “the easy way out.” The nature of this problem is gendered—if women’s needs are not met they may go back, sometimes with children, to abusive relationships.

Many women felt unprepared to look for housing and felt that they lacked enough knowledge about money, credit and leases to do well on their own. Several talked about the fact that they had never before had to look for a place to live.

### *Safety*

Finding an affordable place in a safe neighbourhood was almost always a challenge for those in income assistance and no subsidy. Many stories were about the search for safe housing.

I do not want to be living in an area that I am going to feel worried about. I want to feel secure in an area, with a nice neighborhood, so that I can send my daughter to a school that I know is properly managed. I am not familiar with these areas out here, and I just want to make sure I am feeling comfortable.

Some women felt safe in public housing:

I loved it. It was very community based, I mean everybody knew your business but that’s part of being in a community. I never had any problems with anybody. If I did, it was because of my own doing with my drinking. The resources that are there are amazing, if you reach out, most likely someone is going to help you

Others had a more negative experience: “The people in my building terrify me”.

They felt safe when living in supportive housing:

[My daughter] always tells me how safe we are in our big house, [at Alice Housing] and she will frequently talk about how my ex has hurt me . . . When cops drive by, she says ‘oh they must be going to get him.’ I say ‘of my gosh, we are safe. Our house is safe’ I have pointed out the cameras to her, and the security systems and how the house works and who keeps us safe.

The women’s sense of safety has been worn down by their experiences of abuse and violence and these are gendered experiences, embedded in the wider cultural context that supports sexism and misogyny.

For those with addictions, a safe neighbourhood needs to be clear of drugs on the street. Otherwise, one woman said she would be walking into a “trap.”

I get so depressed. I look and I think I cannot afford that. Right now, I do not have a job and there is no way with income assistance I can afford that safe area, even though the rent is half decent there, income assistance does not cover that. My options are maybe further out, in [specific neighbourhood] or something where there are a lot of vacancies. I do not want to be out there. I think it is high risk. I have seen so many people come through here, and I have been here a long time, who have left and immediately it is hard. They look for support so they go to a guy, and that pattern starts again. It is unhealthy relationship on unhealthy relationship. Then drugs and whatever else goes on with it comes, and the next thing you know, she is on the streets trying to make money for a bad habit again. All of that hard work is not gone, it’s still in here, but it’s lost. It is really scary.

Women have legitimate safety concerns about particular neighborhoods. Those with addictions want to be away from neighborhoods in which drugs are easily available. Those leaving violent relationships want distance between them and their abuser.

Some women, as one staff person described, will be fearful regardless of the neighborhood. They have experienced trauma and often suffer from anxiety that will not be quelled by finding the “right” neighborhood. As she described one client:

She is very narrow in her choices because she feels that with the safety piece, he is everywhere. She feels that not only is he everywhere but that has friends everywhere. We have seen nothing to support that for her except it is in her head. That is her trauma. She has gone so far as to have support letters written for her to say here for long due to her beliefs. That is something that that we can’t accommodate . . . Her mental health is stunting her.

### *Financial Barriers*

The women’s stories highlighted two financial barriers to finding good housing: debt and rental rates.

Several women faced crippling debt, particularly to utilities. This led to both a bad credit check for landlords who did them, and the inability to be hooked up to power or get telephone service even if they were approved to rent a place:

I will never be able to own a house. I cannot ignore it. I won't be able to buy a house. I will never be able to go further. That is a lot of money to pay back and it is more than just the back rent I had like I had a credit card when I was younger and stupid. There is a couple of cell phone on there and stupid things you screw up when you are young.

Rental rates are also unaffordable for those on income assistance especially without the subsidy. The women found this extremely frustrating especially having left and abusive relationship or worked to recover from addictions. The market felt like a “punch in the stomach”.

These issues are not particularly gendered—men have debt and those on income assistance would struggle similarly to pay rent. The gendered aspect to this barrier revolves around the fact that women earn less than men and have less access to well -paid employment, especially when they lack post-secondary education. More women are single parents and this exacerbates the financial problems faced by women.

To be clear, money does not solve all the problems associated with housing for these women—a few who had financial resources left supportive housing early, because they could. But they regretted leaving early. As one participant described her situation:

I had done the six-month program and there were a couple of issues at the centre. I didn't feel like I could stay. It was a decision that I made fairly quickly which sometimes I regret in a way. I think I probably should have stayed for the two months . . . I had a bit of unemployment so I had a little bit of money so I left and looked for an apartment.

She feels coy about going back for help since she left early even though she will likely lose her apartment in the coming months because she has been unable to manage her finances and still struggles under the weight of her addictions.

### *Transitions and Readiness*

This woman's story also relates to transitions and readiness to move into market or public housing. Transitions were a central theme to many women's stories.

Several told stories of having to paralyzing fear about the transition from supportive housing to the market. One woman talked about not looking for a job because she was too afraid to leave. She was at the end of her time in supportive housing but had made no moves toward looking for a job or a place to live.

I have not applied for too many jobs because I am not sure I want to go. Fear is holding me back.

Another described the fear somewhat differently:

Everybody has plans of moving on and all that. I have plans of doing that but I have a lot I want sorted first. Like I said, it's overwhelming and it is scary, I am afraid to face it. I'm afraid of how hard it is going to be and how much it is going to be. I know that the longer I sit on it, the worse it is going to get. It's kind of like sitting in front of a wall but right beyond the wall is the solution to fixing everything but I just can't get past that wall.

Others felt more optimistic about their ability to make a smooth transition:

More and more each day I feel a little more confident about life and with being safe and looking out for those red flags that we talked about in class and self-worth and knowing that I am important too.

[The program] taught me a lot about myself. That I am capable of doing this. That I am a lot stronger than what I thought. Life isn't that scary.

I would like to feel like I am able to stand on my own two feet when I walk out of here. I want to feel stable. I don't need to have it all. I just want to have a roof over my head and feel safe, and have food and feel like a normal family, loving. It sounds so simple but it is so hard to do.

Some women who had made the transition out of supportive housing had not had much trouble. Typically, they had work or some family support. Even a little family support went a long way in enabling the women to establish independence. One woman, who had made a successful transition, described her disappointment about the community's willingness to support her:

I thought people – see this is my glass half full thinking – I thought people would want to help. I thought they would look at the situation and think awe she is a single mother, came from a bad situation, came from this program, she turned everything around, and she just needs a place to live. I thought that people would want to help people like that but it's not like that at all. People don't want to help anybody.

We heard some concerns about whether the supportive housing agencies should encourage women to leave, especially before their time has expired. One woman felt almost punished for having done well in her program:

Yeah it was surprising and the way that they justified it to me was that there was other people in need and they thought I was doing really well. I did feel pushed out. She did tell me that I don't have to and it can wait a couple months.

## *Identity*

Several women's stories involved their own struggles around identity and what their circumstances might say about them as a person or how their new lifestyle did not align with their identity. Several felt shame about the kind of place they had to live in. One described in detail her struggles with eliminating pests from her apartment. While clearly the bugs were

annoying, her story about pushing he landlord to act had as much to do with how did not see herself as someone who would live in a building that had bugs.

Others struggled with having staff in the supportive housing programs “in my business,” as one woman put it. While they appreciated the support, the idea they the needed support, or someone to help guide their decisions, contradicted their sense of themselves. One woman said, in reference to living in a relatively cramped apartment building: “I have never been that way.”

A few women struggled with their identities as “addicts” or “victims” or “welfare moms.” The circumstances that brought them to supportive housing led them to question what it meant to take on this new identity and how it would affect other people’s perceptions of them.

It took me six to 12 months to even admit to myself that this was a domestic violence situation and not just a shitty relationship. I struggle with the word victim a lot because that was used in counselling quite often. They were like “you were a victim” but it’s like I don’t feel like a victim.

### *Bureaucracy*

Several stories involved the government bureaucracy, although these did not dominate the interviews. Women complained about the housing subsidy, that it is difficult to access and easy to lose:

It feels like now that I am being independent I am being punished again because I am allowed back out into the real world. That could be a trigger itself.

Women had many complaints about their income assistance workers. They did not return calls, they did not lay all the options for income assistance or housing support, and they did not show much empathy. Some blamed the system that income assistance staff work in rather than the individuals themselves

Worker turnover was also a problem:

While I was on assistance and while I was here, my worker retired and nobody contacted me so I had no worker for a month maybe. I didn’t realize it until I had to fill out an income statement and drop it off, and all of a sudden it said it was unassigned. I called them right away and said I just noticed my worker is unassigned, did something happen to her? Is she okay? They said ‘Oh no she just left and moved on’ so I said ‘So I have no worker now? What does that mean? What am I supposed to do?’ but then they were like ‘we’ll assign you someone else’ so then I had another one, they assigned me to somebody that I never met that was my worker for a month, then they assigned me again to someone I never met who was my worker for about a month, and then they assigned me to the one I have now. When I talked to him, he didn’t know anything about any of my



history or anything like that necessarily. It was probably in his notes. Unless they have a reason they want to meet with you, you can't just have a meeting with them. You can't just go in there and say 'Hi, this is me. You are representing my entire life. The reason I am alive is because you give me money. Maybe we can touch base please' but it doesn't work that way at all. I remember them calling me like 'Why do you want to have a meeting with him?' and I was like 'because I would like to meet him and know who my worker is. Am I not allowed to do that?' and they were like 'we can get him to call you' and that was about it.

This quote exemplifies other women's experiences finding it difficult to get information or even returned phone calls. But it also reflects how important these workers are to the women.

A few did tell stories of positive relationships. The women can feel encouraged by the empathy from someone working in the system. One woman had a very positive story about how much a public housing worker tried to help her when she was spiraling back into addictions after having left supportive housing. From her description, she felt that he believed she was trying and was saddened that he had to have her removed from her apartment because she had failed to pay rent so often. That he displayed concern for her made it possible for her to accept the decision to be evicted from housing. She felt grateful for his support even though she had been evicted.

### *Children*

Children figured prominently in the stories we heard. They motivated women to leave abusive relationships, deal with addictions, and avoid being in conflict with the law. The women want to be good role models for their children. As one woman said, "If I am not healthy and stable, how is she going to have a healthy and stable life." Another described how she could see her child's demeanor change once she took her out of the violent home in which they had lived for several years.

Children also complicated housing decisions. Women with more than one child were looking for rare three-bedroom apartments. Proximity to schools or daycares was an important consideration. The women also wanted their homes to have amenities like yards away from busy streets. They wanted their children to live "normal" lives and housing had a great deal to do with their ability to make this happen.

Some women had child protection services involved with their children, and a few had lost custody. One woman talked about how she chose to enter supportive housing so that she would not lose her child. Another made a direct connects between good housing and access to her children: "How can I fight for my babies if I don't even have somewhere to live".

That women are more likely to be caring for children enhances the gendered nature of housing insecurity for women.

## *Problems Accessing Information*

Women's narratives of transitioning from supportive to community housing included stories about not being able to navigate the system or even know about its components. The women felt that service providers often did not know about all the options, or how they might be useful for them. Some women talked about learning about the system by talking to the other women in the supportive housing agency.

When you go into income assistance or into housing like this, it would be really fantastic if somebody could sit down with us and be like 'so what do you need?' and 'what are you trying to do that we can help you with?' and tell us what kind of option you have in order to support us. If we don't know what those options are, we are not going to ask for them. We are constantly told if you need this, ask. If you need something, ask. We don't know what we are asking for. We are kind of left wandering around aimlessly hoping that everything is going to fall into place. We are scared and we are alone. We have a child to take care of and it is extremely scary to do it on your own when you are not in a position to do so.

I did not know these programs were around. For instance, I did not know there was a WISH program. When I was using out there, I knew people were going to counsellors and this and that but I did not know this was here for women. When I went to the shelters, we were having a conversation and they did not even know some of the program like what I said about the Women Now program, and see I did not know that.

For some, navigating any kind of system is a new experience. As one woman said: "It's not a system I am used to." She felt like she was getting the run around and was starting to feel a bit "hopeless" about how the system can help her. Several women talked about how it seemed odd that no one could just lay out all the options. She worried that she did not know about services or programs that might help her:

I didn't know that there were subsidies and stuff I could apply for. Nobody gave me that information so I didn't know that there was any sort of help involved at all that I could access. No idea. Still, there might even be help that I could access to pay my rent now and nobody communicated that to me.

It may be that the system silos make it difficult to navigate and difficult for anyone to truly know about or understand all the disjointed parts of the system or the range of available services and programs.

### ii. System Profile

In one interview, a woman told the interviewer that "A system is hard to get to know." The interview stories reveal what the system looks like, its components and form. But the picture that

emerges is still somewhat murky—the women’s experiences and journeys do not follow a prescribed set of steps and some of the links between the system components are not clear to them. There does not seem to be highly predictable flow of women through supportive housing to the community.

The system revealed by these stories is disjointed—much like the picture that emerged from the environmental scans of policies and programs. The system is, indeed, hard to get to know.

We did not ask explicitly about system components until the end of the interview and let women tell their stories to see what emerged. Some parts of the system, as identified by the partners, did not materialize from the interviews. For example, while several women complained about access to mental health services, these services did not figure into their stories about transitioning from supportive to community housing. This is not to say that the women did not face problems accessing mental health services. It just means that they did not associate these problems with their efforts to find housing. Likewise, the transportation system did not emerge in the narratives. Women certainly experienced problems with transportation but these did not figure prominently in their stories about finding secure housing.

Several system components emerged from the interviews. They were confirmed in our workshops with the partners, other stakeholders and some of the women themselves in a follow-up workshop after the interviews.<sup>6</sup> The components include: actors, culture, rules/regulations/policies and services/agencies. The components need to be targeted to generate system change that the women themselves will view as related to their housing needs.

The lists include the main parts of each component of the system that emerges from the stories and our workshops. It is important to note that the discussion below does not constitute a “system map” but only the parts of the system that emerged from the interviews.

Many parts of this system would likely be similar for men facing housing insecurity but there are important potential differences the we explore below.

### ***System Actors***

Abusive partners

Supportive housing agency staff

Landlords/property managers

The violence women experience is gendered so the presence of an abusive partner or former partner (regardless of whether the woman was going through a domestic violence related agency) affects her ability to use the system to her advantage. In a sense, the housing system is not designed to protect people from danger but the context in which women face housing insecurity is often shrouded in abuse and danger.

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<sup>6</sup> After we completed interviews, we ran two workshops to help identify themes in the stories and begin developing partnerships with stakeholders. One workshop included the four *Home for Good* partners. The second included representatives from agencies from across HRM.

Women typically have positive experiences with supportive housing agency staff. These agencies are explicitly oriented to meet women's needs. Women typically have many negative experiences with landlords and property managers who seem, far too often, to draw on negative, or even sexist, stereotypes about women. In some more positive encounters, landlords seemed to understand the gendered context in which women were struggling to find housing and were willing to help.

### ***System Culture***

Helping culture of the supportive housing agencies  
Bureaucratic culture lacking in empathy  
Broader cultural factors: Stigma, judgement, blame

We see two contrasting cultures emerging from these interviews – the 'helping culture' evident in the supportive housing programs and the more administrative, bureaucratic (and arguably gender-neutral) government supports. The former was exemplified by caring and supportive staff who, if anything, may provide too much support in a way that stifles independence for some women. The latter was exemplified by lack of empathy; it was not built to care.

As one woman commented: "There is a stigma attached to [domestic violence]. Like this can't happen to women who are educated, with strong minds and strong wills".

The helping culture of the supportive housing agencies, in contrast to the unempathetic bureaucracy, relies on a gendered lens to understand women's struggles to find housing. While some women did tell positive stories about their income assistance workers or staff in other parts of the housing bureaucracy, we cannot tell whether the people behind these more positive encounters understood the women's experiences as gendered. What is clear, however, is that women's positive experiences were grounded in a sense that the person they were dealing with cared and understood about their circumstance, without judgement or blame.

### ***Rules/Regulations/Policies***

Credit checks/reference checks  
Income assistance/housing subsidy

The rules, regulations and policies encountered by the women we interviewed, when they were looking for housing or state support (i.e., income assistance, housing subsidy) did not appear to have a gendered approach to addressing women's needs. Our review of policies showed little attention to gender and this appears to be borne out in the women's experiences.

### ***Services/Agencies***

Supportive housing agencies (including emergency shelters)  
Food bank  
Utilities (power, phone)  
Employment services

Most services and agencies that women referred to in their stories were "gender-neutral." Other than the supportive housing programs, none of the women talked about any other services

specifically aimed at supporting women find secure housing or any of the factors that may make that possible (e.g., employment services).

#### **IV. Conclusion: Challenges and Opportunities**

“Our stories are different but our situations are the same”

This report has highlighted system issues from various levels: policies, programs and lived experiences. How do we make sense of this system with a gendered lens? We can see that the housing system was not designed to deal with the gendered aspects of women’s experiences. While it may not do well at providing reasonable, affordable housing to anyone living in poverty, the gendered nature of women’s experiences have not been built into the system. Furthermore, the system would not doubt be unresponsive to the specific needs of marginalized communities (e.g., LGBTI, immigrants, racialized).

Our research has looked at a very particular experience related to women moving, or preparing to move, out of second stage or transitional housing. We have included voices of women fleeing domestic violence, recovering from addictions, transitioning from prison to the community and young women with babies. The inclusion of this diverse group makes this research unique. The women we interviewed all face similar challenges navigating the housing system. Our research has used the women’s voices to identify specific ways in which their efforts to secure permanent housing are stymied by their gender. In this way, our approach differs from other research that has shown how women’s pathways to housing insecurity are gendered. Our research explores the gendered nature of their efforts to recover from housing insecurity rather than how they found themselves in this situation to begin with.

The research has also taken an inductive approach. We were not explicitly testing hypotheses about the gendered nature of women’s experiences. In other words, our interview questions did not ask about specific issues that had been identified as barriers until a woman had told her story. The themes that arose from the stories form the basis for the analysis provided in this report. In this sense, the themes emerged from the stories and were not driven by researcher or stakeholder identified priorities. Toward the end of interview we did ask about specific issues raised by partners and stakeholders but the women’s stories stand on their own as experiences unfiltered by other priorities.

Women’s experiences show that they see the system as uncoordinated with disconnected services and programs that often are unaware of each other or where they fit into the system as a whole. What they see is less of a system than a series of disconnected stepping stones. The women cannot see a path to housing security through the maze of disconnected services and programs. What “system” they can see is one that generically responds to housing needs, without accounting for gender (or other axes of identity, for that matter). They do not see a “system” set up to meet their needs.

This report has raised several specific questions about system change:

- How can the system shift to incorporate a more gendered approach to the barriers women face when dealing with housing insecurity?

Our environment scan has noted that many community-based supportive housing agencies have an explicitly gendered approach to their work. Our interviews with women suggest that they find these services helpful but once they leave, none of the other systems in place take gender specific needs into account. This makes the system rigid and unresponsive. It leaves people working in it unable to provide an empathic response to women’s challenges as they look for safe and affordable housing.

- How can the system promote culture change to erode gendered and sexist stereotypes about single mothers and women recovering from addictions?

Our research has demonstrated that women face gendered and sexist stereotypes when looking for housing. While these stereotypes are deeply embedded in the culture at large, the system reinforces these indirectly when not explicitly accounting for gender in policies. The siloed nature of services exacerbates this problem.

- How can the housing system address the specific and gendered nature of “safety” for women seeking housing security?

Everyone should have access to safe housing. But what that means differs for men and women particularly for women who have experienced violence and abuse. While not all women we interviewed had entered the supportive housing system because of experiences of domestic violence, almost all had encountered abusive men or had been victimized at some point in their lives. Their perception of safety is therefore deeply gendered and the system ought to account for this in how it addresses women-specific housing needs.

- How can the system account for the way that financial constraints affect women differently from men?

Men and women living in poverty face housing problems due to the increasing costs of market housing and the inability for income assistance to meet market demands for rent. Having said that, women’s financial insecurity differs from men due to child care responsibilities and the labour market. Women who work still make less than men. The employment market is simply not equitable and housing solutions designed for women must take this into account.

Our research has highlighted the need for a well-coordinated system of housing solutions designed to address the gender specific experiences of women. This would be a first step toward ensuring a system designed to meet other groups’ needs, including immigrants, members of the LGBTI population, and racialized groups including those who identify as indigenous. A gender-based analysis of the data provided in this report would suggest that if women’s needs are not able to be met the system will remain unsuited to addressing any marginalized groups’ specific experiences. Incorporating a gender-based framework into policy would lend a flexibility to the system that would be more responsive to other marginalized groups.

The stories women told in our interviews show that the stakes are high. Finding safe and affordable housing keeps them from going back to abusive relationships, gives them a fighting

chance at avoiding relapse into addictions and provides their children with some sense of security. A gender-neutral housing system cannot meet these challenges.

This report provides a springboard for partners and stakeholders to work on specific system changes to support more successful moves from second stage to market or public housing. This gender-based analysis of the system opens up questions about the system that should generate new opportunities to improve women's experiences and ultimately the outcomes of their stories.

## Appendix A: Annotated Bibliography

**BC Housing Research and Corporate, Planning Department, & Canadian, E. L. (2012). *Understanding women's second stage housing programs in BC*. Burnaby, BC**

Describes British Columbia's second-stage housing program but is somewhat dated. The book provided details on funding structure.

**Burnett, C., Ford-Gilboe, M., Berman, H., Wathen, N., & Ward-Griffin, C. (2016). *The day-to-day reality of delivering shelter services to women exposed to intimate partner violence in the context of system and policy demands*. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 1-17. doi:10.1080/01488376.2016.1153562**

Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is the most common form of gender-based violence affecting Canadian women. Women often seek help from shelters to deal with IPV and its consequences. These shelters function within a broader context that shapes how services are delivered. This study was undertaken to better understand how structural factors including policies shape shelter service delivery and reveal systemic and structural complexities that influence those services and women's ability to rebuild their lives. This feminist qualitative study combined in-depth interviews and focus groups with 37 staff and 4 executive directors from 4 shelters in Ontario, Canada, and included critical discourse analysis of salient policy texts. The findings illuminate the complexity of the structural challenges faced by abused women and the shelters that support them. Systemic impediments were shown to determine how shelters support abused women, the obstacles women face moving forward, and the extent and availability of their options. Future research should include policy evaluation of policy written and enacted, cost analysis examining the actual costs of delivering shelter services and supporting women after leaving, examination of potential alternatives to the identified structural challenges, and investigation of system coordination of services and support for abused women.

**Burnett, C., Ford-Gilboe, M., Berman, H., Ward-Griffin, C., & Wathen, N. (2015). *A Critical Discourse Analysis of Provincial Policies Impacting Shelter Service Delivery to Women Exposed to Violence*. *Policy, Politics, & Nursing Practice*, 16(1-2), 5-16.**

Shelters for abused women function within a broad context that includes intersecting social structures, policies, and resources, which may constrain and limit the options available to abused women and tacitly reinforce the cycle of abuse. This feminist, qualitative study combined in-depth interviews and focus groups conducted with 37 staff and four executive directors from four shelters in Ontario, Canada, along with a critical discourse analysis of salient policy texts. Together, the interviews and critical discourse analysis formed an integrated analysis of the dialectic between policy as written and enacted. The study findings illuminate the complexity of the system and its impact on women, shelters, and the community and highlight how specific types of social policies and various social system subsystems and structures, and system configuration, shape the day to day reality of shelter service delivery and impact outcomes for abused women and their children. Collectively, these findings offer direction regarding where



these policies could be improved and provide a basis for shelters, policy makers, advocates, and the community to strengthen current services and policies, potentially enhancing outcomes for women.

**LeBlanc, K., & Weeks, L. (2013). Are transition houses equipped to meet the needs of women in midlife and older? *Journal of Family Violence*, 28(6), 535-545. doi:10.1007/s10896-013-9525-x**

This study addresses the extent to which transition houses, defined as residential facilities for abused women and children, meet the needs of women in midlife and older. Seventeen transition house directors completed an on-line survey and eight participated in an interview. Women in midlife and older comprised 28 % of the transition house population. Thematic analysis resulted in the identification of three key themes: life at home and in the community, living in the transition house, and starting a new life. While policies, accessibility, privacy, support and outreach could be improved, the transition houses offered safety and security for women across the lifespan. Recommendations for research, policy and practice are included to ensure that transition houses offer a welcoming, suitable, and supportive environment for women in midlife and older.

**Little, M. (2015). Between the abuser and the street: An intersectional analysis of housing challenges for abused women. *Canadian Review of Social Policy*, (72), 35-64.**

Abstract

This article provides an overview of the limited housing options available for abused women in Canada. The author explores the erosion of a commitment to housing for Canada's marginalized, the need for an intersectional analysis to fully appreciate the impact of this erosion, and then addresses the results: the exceedingly limited housing possibilities for abused women (shelters, second and third stage housing, social housing and the private market). The author draws upon qualitative interviews with abused women; government and nongovernmental agency reports to argue that abused women in Canada, especially those marginalized by race and colonialism, have few alternatives between their abuser and living on the street.

**Tutty, L. M., Ogden, C., Giurgiu, B., & Weaver-Dunlop, G. (2013). I built my house of hope. *Violence Against Women*, 19(12), 1498-1517. doi:10.1177/1077801213517514**

Violence from intimate partners is a serious reality for a number of women. For some abused women, leaving becomes a path to homelessness. In fact, when abused women and their children leave their homes because of partner abuse, they become homeless even if they subsequently seek residence in a shelter for woman abuse. This project interviewed 62 women from across Canada who had been abused by partners and were homeless at some point. The women were asked about their experiences with both partner abuse and homelessness and the effects on themselves and their children, which suggest important policy shifts.

Walsh, C., Hanley, A., Ives, J., & Hordyk, N. (2016). Exploring the Experiences of Newcomer Women with Insecure Housing in Montréal Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 17(3), 887-904.

The objective of this study was to explore housing insecurity among women newcomers to Montreal, Canada. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 26 newcomer women who had experienced housing insecurity and five women's shelter service providers. The primary cause of housing insecurity for newcomer women was inadequate income in the face of rapidly rising housing costs, coupled with unfamiliarity with the dominant culture and the local housing system. Specific events often served as tipping points for immigrant women—incidents that forced women into less secure housing. To avoid absolute homelessness, most women stayed with family, couch surfed, used women's or educational residences, shared a room or an apartment, lived in hotels, single rented rooms, or transitional housing. These arrangements were often problematic, as crowded conditions, financial dependency, differing expectations and interpersonal conflicts made for stressful or exploitive relationships, which some- times ended abruptly. Only two of the 26 women interviewed described their current living situation as stable. Based on the findings on the study, we recommend training for housing and immigration service providers, wrap-around services in terms of health, housing and immigration settlement programs that take into account a broad range of immigration statuses and transitional housing that caters to the specific needs of migrant women.

## Appendix B: Canadian Academic Researchers

### Stephen Gaetz

- York University, Toronto
- Social justice and homelessness relevant to policy and program development.
- Policy in the Canadian Response to homelessness.
- Tanya Gulliver
  - York University, Toronto
  - coordinator for the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (they have produce one report related to women)
- Fran Klodawsky
  - Carleton University, Ottawa
  - affordable housing
- Rae Bridgman
  - University of Manitoba, Winnipeg
  - chronic homelessness among women and men, youth homelessness
  - innovative housing models addressing their needs.
  - Author of Safe Haven: The Story of a Shelter for Homeless Women
- Jimmy Bourque
  - Université de Moncton, Moncton
  - Principal Investigator for At Home/Chez Soi (part of the homeless hub)
  - Homeless women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside
- Aaron Segart
  - Homelessness Partnering Secretariat
  - Author of the National Shelter study, which was the first national report to use shelter data to establish a baseline count and description of the homeless population in Canada
- Susan Farrell
  - University of Ottawa
  - health and housing in transition, shelter utilization patterns
- Carol Kauppi
  - Laurentian University
  - migratory and transient homelessness, housing need, police practices and regulation of homeless person, support services for new mothers
- Rebecca Schiff
  - Memorial University of Newfoundland
  - housing, homelessness, and marginalised communities in the Canadian Prairies (specifically Aboriginal women)
- Brigitte Krieg
  - University of Regina
  - Marginalization of Aboriginal women, impacts of relative homelessness on Aboriginal single mothers
  - Aboriginal Women's Voices: Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness and Incarceration

- Margaret Forbes
  - Independent, community-based researcher
  - Worked on several housing related research studies: affordable housing, homelessness, small market unit construction, health transportation, and issues specific to shelter for women experiencing violence in a relationship.
  - Currently working on a second stage housing needs assessment and pilot for women fleeing violence

## Appendix C: Policy Scan Results

Canadian Network of Women's Shelters, & Transition Houses, & Canadian Women's Foundation. (2011). *Scan of funding and policy initiatives to respond to violence against women*. Toronto, Ont.: Toronto, Ont.: Canadian Women's Foundation.

### New Brunswick

- New Brunswick Housing Corporation – Department of Social Development
- <http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/sd-ds/pdf/Housing/housingstrategy-e.pdf>
- New/Enhanced Housing Initiatives (pg. 23)
  - NB Affordable Housing Act
  - Home Ownership Assistance Program
  - Public Housing: Introduction of Mixed Income Projects
  - Affordable Rental Housing Program – Continuation
  - Portable Housing Allowances
  - Rent Supplements Designed to get Homeless People off the Street
  - Stable Funding for Homeless Shelters
  - Homelessness Partnering Strategy Agreement
  - Crescent Valley Revitalisation
- Existing Program Initiatives
  - Rental Assistance Programs
    - Non-Profit Program
    - Public Housing Program
    - Rent Supplement Program
    - Rural/Native and Basic Shelter Program
    - Affordable Rental Housing Program
  - Renovation Assistance Programs
    - Federal/Provincial Repair Program
    - Federal/Provincial Repair Program for Disabled Persons
    - Federal/Provincial Emergency Repair Program
    - Social Assistance Emergency Repair Program
    - Housing Adaptations for Senior Independence Program
    - Energy Efficient Retrofit Program
    - Rental and Rooming House RRAP Program
    - Shelter Enhancement Program
    - RRAP Conversion Program
  - Home Ownership Assistance Programs
    - Home Ownership Assistance Program
    - Home Completion Loans Program
- Women Related
  - Shelter Enhancement Program (pg. 29)
  - Women and Girls At-risk Steering Committee (pg. 33)

## PEI

- Government of PEI – Family and Human Services
- <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/family-and-human-services/housing-assistance>
  - Housing Assistance
    - Family Housing Program
    - Seniors Housing Program
  - Women Related
    - None

## Quebec

- Société d'habitation Québec
- <http://www.habitation.gouv.qc.ca/english.html>
  - Programs
    - AccèsLogis Québec
    - Emergency Repair Program
    - Low-rental Housing
    - Program for Residences Damaged by Pyrrhotite
    - Home Ownership and Renovation Program for the Kativik Region
    - Residential Adaptation Assistance Program
    - RénoRégion
    - Rénovation Québec
    - RénoVillage
    - Rent Supplement
    - Shelter Allowance Program
  - Women Related
    - AccèsLogic's 3<sup>rd</sup> component revolves around temporary, transitional, or permanent dwellings with services for people with special housing needs such as battered women or women in difficulty.

## Ontario

- Ministry of Housing
- <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page125.aspx>
  - Affordable Housing and Ending Homelessness
  - Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Update
  - Rental Housing
  - Social Housing Business
  - Housing for Off-Reserve Aboriginal Families
  - Property Assessment and Taxation System
  - Housing Research Reports
  - Municipal Guide for Facilitating Affordable Housing
  - Women Related
    - None

## Manitoba

- Manitoba Housing
- <https://www.gov.mb.ca/housing/tenants/pubs/shrp-policy-changes-chart.pdf> (Policy Guideline to the Social Housing Rental Program)
- <https://www.gov.mb.ca/housing/tenants/handbook.html>
  - Rental Housing
    - Social Housing Rental Programs
    - Social Housing Assisted Living
  - Social Housing with Private and Non-Profit Housing Partners
    - Cooperative Housing
    - Private Non-Profit Housing
    - Rent Supplement
    - Sponsor Managed Social Housing
    - Urban Native Non-Profit Housing
  - Affordable Housing Rental Program
    - Affordable Housing Rental Program
  - Women Related
    - None

## Saskatchewan

- Saskatchewan Housing Corporation
- [https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/afhoce/fuafho/iah/afhopracca/afhopracca\\_012.cfm](https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/afhoce/fuafho/iah/afhopracca/afhopracca_012.cfm) (the government webpages would not open)
  - Affordable Housing Programs
    - Capital Rent Subsidy Program
    - Rental Development Program
    - Saskatchewan Secondary Suite Program
  - Programs to Renovate and Repair Housing
    - Saskatchewan Home Repair Program – Homeowner Repair
  - Programs to Foster Safe Independent Living
    - Saskatchewan Home Repair Program – Adaptations for Independence
    - Shelter Enhancement Program (New)
    - Shelter Enhancement Program (Renovation)
  - Women Related
    - Both Shelter Enhancement Programs

## Alberta

- Human Services Alberta
- Alberta Housing Act
- [http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/PlanForAB\\_Secretariat\\_final.pdf](http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/PlanForAB_Secretariat_final.pdf) (A Plan for Alberta - Ending Homelessness in 10 years)
  - Housing First Philosophy
  - Better Information
  - Aggressive Assistance
  - Coordinated Systems
  - More Housing Options
  - Effective Policies

- Supports to Maintain Housing Stability
  - Pathways to Housing
  - Rapid Exit
  - Streets to Homes
- Women Related
  - None but women are mentioned in relation to fleeing domestic violence

## **British Columbia**

- Housing Matters BC
- [http://www.housingmattersbc.ca/docs/HousingMattersBC\\_2014.pdf](http://www.housingmattersbc.ca/docs/HousingMattersBC_2014.pdf)
  - Strategies
    - Stable Housing
    - Priority Assistance
    - Aboriginal Housing
    - Rental Housing
    - Homeownership
    - Built Environment
- BC Housing
- <https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance>
  - BC Home Owner Mortgage and Equity Partnership
  - Rental housing
    - Subsidized Housing
    - Affordable Rental Housing
    - Indigenous Housing Providers
  - Rental Assistance & Financial Aid for Home Modifications
    - Rental Assistance Program
    - Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters
    - Home Adaptations for Independence
  - Homelessness Services
    - Emergency Shelter Program
    - Temporary Shelters
    - Homeless Outreach Program
    - Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program
    - Homeless Prevention Program
  - Housing with Support
    - Assisted Living Residences
    - Seniors Supportive Housing
    - Supportive Housing
  - Women Related= Women Fleeing Violence
    - Women's Transition Housing & Supports Program
    - Priority Placement Program

## **Yukon**

- Yukon Housing Corporation
- <http://www.housing.yk.ca/>
  - Social Housing
  - Seniors Housing



- Staff Housing
- Loan Programs
  - First Mortgage Loan
  - Owner Build Loan
  - Down Payment Assistance
  - Home Repair Loan
  - Rental Suite/Secondary Suite Loan
- Grant Programs
  - First Nations Partnership Program
  - Victims of Violence Housing Program
  - Affordable Rental Construction Program
  - Emergency Repairs Program
  - Municipal Matching Rental Construction Program
  - Rental Housing Allowance for Families
  - Rent Supplement Enhancement
- Housing Action Plan
  - <http://www.housingactionplan.ca/vision/>
- Women Related
  - None – but there is a Victims of Violence Housing Program for families

### **Northwest Territories**

- Northwest Territories Housing Corporation
- <http://nwthc.gov.nt.ca>
  - Homelessness Support
    - Homelessness Assistance Fund
    - Small Community Homelessness Fun
    - Shelter Enhancement Fund
    - Northern Pathways to Housing
    - Housing First
  - Rentals
    - Public Housing
    - Transitional Rent Supplement Program
    - Affordable Housing
    - Market Housing
  - Homeownership
    - Purchase Support
    - Repair and Renovation
    - Fuel Tank Replacement Initiative
    - Seniors Aging-in-Place Retrofits
    - Units for Sale
- Women Related
  - None

### **Nunavut**

- Nunavut Housing Corporation
- <http://www.nunavuthousing.ca>
  - Public Housing
  - Staff Housing
    - GN Staff Housing Policy
    - Rental Assistance Program
  - Homeownership Assistance
    - Nunavut Downpayment Assistance Program
    - Emergency Repair Program
    - Seniors and Disabled Preventative Maintenance Program
    - Tenant to Owner Program
    - Home Renovation Program
    - Senior Citizens' Home Repair Program
    - Heating Oil Tank Replacement Program
    - Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Housing Options Program
- Women Related
  - None

## **Newfoundland**

- Newfoundland Labrador Housing
- <http://www.nlhc.nf.ca/programs/programs.html>
  - Rental Housing Program
  - Homeowner Support
    - Downpayment Assistance Program
    - Home Energy Savings Program
    - Home Modification Program
    - Provincial Home Repair Program
  - For Contractors, Developers, and Non-Profit Groups
    - Investment in Affordable Housing
    - Partner-Managed Housing Program
    - Provincial Homelessness Fund
    - Supportive Living Program
- Women Related
  - None – but there is a Victims of Violence Policy for families
- Social Housing Plan from 2009
  - <http://www.nlhc.nf.ca/SocialHsingPlan/report.pdf>
- 2010 Housing and Homelessness Framework
  - [http://www.nlhcn.org/PDF/NLHHN\\_Framework.pdf](http://www.nlhcn.org/PDF/NLHHN_Framework.pdf)

## **Nova Scotia**

- Housing Nova Scotia
- <https://housing.novascotia.ca/>
  - Shelter Enhancement
  - Affordable Housing Projects

- Public Housing and Other Affordable Rental Programs
  - Cooperative and non-profit housing
  - Lone parent student affordable rental housing
  - Public housing for families
  - Rent supplement program
- Housing Programs for Persons with Disabilities
- Housing Programs for Landlords
  - Home adaptations for seniors' independence
  - Rooming house residential rehabilitation assistance program
  - Rental residential rehabilitation assistance program
- Financial Assistance and Grant Programs for Homeowners
  - Disabled residential rehabilitation assistance program for homeowners
  - Emergency repair program
  - Family modest housing program
  - Home ownership preservation
  - Homeowner residential rehabilitation assistance programs
  - Parent apartment program
  - Provincial housing emergency repair program
  - Small loans assistance program
- Housing Programs for Seniors
- Landlord Supplement Program
- Programs for Developers of Affordable Housing
- Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative
- Down Payment Assistance Program
- Housing Strategy for Nova Scotia 2013
  - [https://novascotia.ca/coms/hs/Housing\\_Strategy.pdf](https://novascotia.ca/coms/hs/Housing_Strategy.pdf)
- Women Related
  - Shelter Enhancement Program: for emergency shelters and second stage housing for women

## Appendix D: Programs Across Canada

### Programs Across Canada Providing Second-Stage/Transition Housing

**Crossroads for Women Inc, New Brunswick.** <http://www.crossroadsforwomen.ca/content/our-services>

Our Second Stage offers another option for our clients. This program gives access to affordable on-site housing for up to 12 months while participating in a plan that offers an opportunity to regain self-confidence and self-esteem through support and guidance. Help is provided to these women and their children according to their needs that may include healthy relationship, budgeting, exploring career options, transitional periods, educational upgrading, legal assistance, etc.

**Gignoo Transition House, New Brunswick.** <http://www.gignoohouse.ca/services/>

Provides Second Stage Housing for First Nations women and their children who are fleeing violence. Addictions treatment, parent skill building, counseling services, budget and financial support, and victims' services are some of the many services provided at Gignoo. There is also Mi'kmaq and Maliseet speaking staff available.

**Liberty Lane Inc, New Brunswick.** <http://www.libertylane.ca>

Safe housing for women (and their children) leaving an abusive partner. Liberty Lane has an apartment building with individual units for each woman. They pay affordable rent and utilities during a 12-month lease. Support services are provided at the apartment building as well, including counselling, advocacy, life skills training, and a children's support program.

**L'Escale MadaVic, New Brunswick.** <http://www.escalemadavic.com>

A program that helps women emerge from an abusive relationship and establish a life free of abuse. Second Stage Housing provides a stable, safe and supportive environment that prepares them for self-sufficiency. Services include advocacy, child support, individual and collective support, as well as provides a healing and empowering environment.

**Grace House for Women – Fredericton Homeless Shelters, New Brunswick.**

[http://50.87.248.190/~theshen2/?page\\_id=13](http://50.87.248.190/~theshen2/?page_id=13)

Grace House for Women was established in 2001 and is home to 10 women and the resident house cat, Gracie. Recognizable by the brightly colored exterior, Grace House provides a comforting, supportive, safe environment that fosters and produces dignity and self-determination. The residents of Grace House have access to staff 23 hours per day, as well as laundry and shower facilities, a full kitchen, a resource library equipped with computers, Wi-Fi and phones, and a donation pool. Grace House is a safe and accepting space that is kept, run, and maintained by women, for women. The staff who operate Grace House come from all different backgrounds and different experiences, but each of them understand the specific challenges that women face.

**Housing First Supportive Residential Services/Supportive Housing – John Howard Society, New Brunswick.** <http://jhsnb.ca/our-services/provincial-regional-program-service-delivery/>

For people with moderate to severe mental illness, secure housing with supports is an important

component of recovery, providing several advantages including a reduction in hospital re-admissions, psychiatric symptoms, and substance use, as well as improved housing and financial stability, quality of life, and satisfaction with living situation. Homes aimed specifically at treating people with complex and serious mental illnesses, which are often resistant to treatment, provide counselling, address psychotherapy and promote recovery, rehabilitation and community reintegration.

**First Steps Housing Project Inc., New Brunswick.** <https://saintjohn.cioc.ca/record/HDC0415>

First Steps is a residential facility operating in partnership with the community. It offers a supportive environment to young pregnant and parenting women who have no safe place to live assisting them in reaching their full potential. The home provides support and guidance for moms and their babies; a safe place; access to programs and services in the community to promote a healthy pregnancy and healthy baby; assistance with continued education and career aspirations. We also offer a crisis phone line 24 hour-a-day by staff experienced in working with women and babies in crisis, a school, a day care, and an outreach worker.

**Anderson House Shelter, PEI.**

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/infopei/index.php3?number=1354&lang=E>

The provincial emergency shelter for abused women and children, staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Anderson House is a safe and supportive shelter for women and their children who have been physically or emotionally abused or who live in constant fear of abuse. Anderson House is staffed at all times by trained women who honour confidentiality. Service is accessible for women and their children with disabilities.

**Chief Mary Bernard Memorial Women's Shelter, PEI.** <http://cmbmws.morriscode.ca>

A shelter for women in distress, women without housing, or for young mothers who need extra support. Shelter residents have access to employment services, parenting, and life skills programs, and services of the Lennox Island Health Centre. We provide safe and supportive housing on Lennox Island to both aboriginal and non-aboriginal women and their children who are experiencing family violence.

**Lacey House, PEI.** <http://www.ementalhealth.ca/index.php?m=record&ID=10272>

Lacey House provides a 24-hour supervised therapeutic, safe, structured home-like environment to assist women in maintaining a chemical-free lifestyle. Residents receive information on methods to confront chemical dependency and also learn life skills, healthy relationship building and parenting skills. Residents are provided counseling for women's issues related to the challenges of coping with life and to develop skills in relapse preventions. Long-term residential.

**Marguerite's Place Supportive Housing, Newfoundland.**

<https://sjwomenscentre.ca/programs/marguerites-place/>

From the comfort and safety of their own apartments, Marguerite's Place assists women move toward independence. We follow a trauma-informed, holistic approach and provide around-the-clock on-site staff. We provide women with tools and knowledge to develop healthy relationships, skills, and community connections to navigate challenges and crisis. To promote a sense of community, women participate in a weekly resident meal and meeting. Women engage with our housing support staff to develop personal action and support plans. Referrals are made

to community services to support these plans. Individuals are encouraged to participate in any of the programs offered through the St. John's Women's Centre. Women can stay up to 3 years.

**Iris Kirby House, Newfoundland.** <http://www.iriskirbyhouse.ca/> Iris Kirby House owns and operates 13 second stage housing units in the St. John's, Mount Pearl, and Carbonear areas. Two of those units were made possible by a 100% forgivable mortgage from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and the other 14 were made possible through the federal government's homelessness initiative and the generosity of IKH Foundation Inc. We also continue to work in strong partnership with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation (NLHC) under their victims of family violence initiative. Women can stay up to a year, but extensions may be granted.

**Jess's Place – Stella's Circle, Newfoundland.** <http://stellascircle.ca/need-help/real-homes/> Jess's Place is a supportive, independent, transitional housing program for women in recovery from addiction. We provide a safe, supportive living environment that is free of drugs and alcohol. Jess's Place is for women 18+ in recovery and in need of short-term housing. Up to three women share a house, live independently, and care for their own needs. Residents are encouraged to continue participating in the community programs that will enhance their return to society as productive members.

**Les Voisines – Old Brewery Mission, Quebec.** <http://www.oldbrewerymission.ca/en/> The fourth floor of the Patricia Mackenzie Pavilion was transformed into a spacious apartment mindfully decorated over time with found objects and furniture by our Director of Women's Services, Florence Portes, and her dedicated staff. Each resident benefits from a private or semi-private room while sharing a fully equipped modern kitchen, living room, and laundry and bathroom facilities with her roommates. The atmosphere is friendly, relaxed; a counsellor acts as a life-coach and supports each woman on her journey towards self-reliance. Since its inception in October 2012, 98 homeless women took part in *Les Voisines*—with an 85% success rate, we hope to increase the scale of this program and help even more women claim their rightful place in society.

**Le Chainon, Quebec.** <http://www.lechainon.org/> For a reasonable financial contribution, 15 women benefit from a stay of between 3 months and a year. This program allows the resident to undertake, in the company of a worker, a process of autonomy and the regaining of power over her life.

**Residence: Reintegration – YWCA, Quebec.** <http://www.ydesfemmesmtl.org/en/housing-services/residence/> The Women's Y Residence program is designed for women experiencing a difficult period in their lives, who wish to participate in a social reintegration program. This program offers community living in a secure environment at an affordable cost. Within a community life setting, a professional team of counsellors accompanies each participant in achieving goals that she has set out for herself, and as specified in her intervention plan. The social reintegration program consists of both individual consultations and group workshops as a means of reinforcing participants' life skills while promoting their interpersonal capacities. Learning to recognize their strengths and accomplishments, acquiring a greater measure of autonomy, and improving their

quality of life on a social and economic level are just some of the challenges undertaken by the residents. In addition, residents benefit from a wide range of complementary services, including a weekly food bank, a volunteer center, employment counselling services and personal development workshops.

**Dahlia Center – Herstreet, Quebec.** <http://laruedesfemmes.org/en/node/109>

The Dahlia Center opened in 2006 in a building next to the Maison Olga. It offers 13 supervised studios to facilitate the transition towards autonomy. We offer many services aimed at helping women, according to the capacities of each woman, access supervised or independent housing. When a participant thinks she is psychologically and physically ready to take the step, we support her efforts and we help her: Search for an apartment (visits, negotiations with the landlord, etc.), manage a budget and payment of the rent, follow-up of any other steps.

**Portage Mother & Child Drug Addiction Program – Portage, Quebec.**

<https://portage.ca/en/quebec/mother-child-program/>

Portage's Mother and Child Program is a residential drug addiction rehabilitation program for pregnant women and mothers with young children. Whereas many mothers hesitate to seek help for fear of losing custody of their child, at Portage they can get treatment together, while at the same time strengthening their bond. Through **therapeutic groups** and a supportive environment of peers who have been through similar struggles, the mothers work through the issues that caused their drug addiction problems and develop the **skills and competencies** to be able to better handle the challenges of everyday life. Specialized educators work with the children at the **on-site childcare service** while the mothers are involved in therapeutic groups, and also with the mother-child duo in order to build and strengthen the mother's **parenting skills**.

**Aftercare and Family Services** reinforce the process by providing the client with a solid support network following treatment.

**Anishnaabe Kwewag Gamig, Ontario.** <http://www.akgshelter.com/index.php?id=aboutus> Our shelter provides a safe, supportive, temporary alternative to a violent home for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women and their children (16 years and under) who are seeking refuge from abuse. Located in a First Nation, we help women and children to overcome the unique obstacles faced by those who access our services. We offer a blend of Aboriginal traditional healing techniques and conventional forms of counseling to both women and children during their stay at the shelter. We empower women through the use of women's circles, individual counseling and support, to help them decide on the appropriate steps for them to take on their path to healing. We offer many services including Advocacy, Referrals, Court Accompaniment, Confidential Crisis Intervention, Emergency Transportation and a comprehensive children's program facilitated by a Child/Youth Counselor. Our clients are also assisted with accessing legal, financial, housing and medical resources. Maximum stay up to 8 weeks.

**Armagh, Ontario.** <http://armaghhouse.ca/>

Provides safe and affordable, temporary housing for up to one year, emotional support and ongoing counselling from on-site and qualified staff, advocacy, ongoing support, and group facilitation. Armagh can accommodate nine women and their children.



**1<sup>st</sup> Stop Woodlawn Shelter – YWCA, Ontario.**

<https://www.ywcatoronto.org/page.asp?11=52&pid=75>

Provides shelter and support to women ages 16+ who are homeless or in immediate crisis. We help women get out of crisis and move on to independence and safety. We have private and shared dorm style furnished rooms, and 12 transitional beds for up to a 2 year stay. We offer support services and counselling, help with job searches and finding affordable housing. Women born in Canada, immigrant women, women with addictions and or mental health issues, women of colour, lesbian and transgendered women make up this diverse and vibrant community.

**Pape Avenue Apartments – YWCA, Ontario.**

<https://www.ywcatoronto.org/page.asp?11=52&l2=147&pid=148>

A 77-unit, rent-g geared-to-income apartment building for single women and women with children. We provide well-maintained, safe, permanent housing in which women and children grow, heal and thrive. There are large 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments with either a sunroom or a balcony, OR three, 1-bedroom suites. We offer on-site community support workers, workshops and guest speakers, and cultural celebrations and events. Currently only accepting internal applications from YWCA shelters

**Nellie's, Ontario.** <http://www.nellies.org/programs-and-services/housing-support/>

Nellie's operates a 36-bed Emergency Shelter for women and their children who are leaving situations of violence, poverty, and homelessness. Women and children at our shelter live communally, sharing the responsibilities of household chores including cooking and cleaning. Women and their children may reside at Nellie's Shelter for up to four months, or longer if they are dealing with legal or immigration issues. Counsellors assist and advocate for women to access the services and support they need including housing, medical, immigration, employment, and educational services. In addition to advocacy, women and children also receive one-on-one counselling from staff as well as the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of social, recreational, and educational programs. In-house educational programming is offered in the areas of parenting, health, housing, employment, arts, and anti-oppressive practice.

**314 Booth Street – Cornerstone, Ontario.** <https://www.cornerstonewomen.ca/our-residences#booth>

At 314 Booth Street, we provide affordable housing for 42 women at the highest level of need. While some who live at Booth Street will move on to more independent lifestyle, many need extra assistance to reach their highest potential and will stay with us for most of their lives. Each apartment is self-contained, so everyone has a personal and private space to call her own. Because seniors are especially vulnerable on the streets, 20 apartments at 314 Booth are dedicated to seniors. They can receive on-site healthcare through Ottawa Inner City Health, so pain and other symptoms can be properly managed and they can live with dignity and comfort, no matter what health issues they face. 314 Booth has been designed for full accessibility. It includes accessible parking, a wheelchair ramp and push button entry, elevator to access all floors, and accessible washroom and shower facilities. Women have access to all kinds of support services to help them succeed.

**Windsor Life Program – Ontario.** <http://windsorlifecentre.com/> Our six to twelve month, full time residential program is proven to produce consistent high quality,



client centered care. Grounded in compassion, we are designed to empower every woman to reach life long sobriety and achieve the successes she desires in life. Windsor Life Centre's Christian-based treatment philosophy integrates relational excellence with attention to the realities of recovery by helping women to strengthen five core aspects of self: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social. How do we do this? We at the Windsor Life Centre understand addiction is complicated and unique for each individual. We provide customized treatment plans as a key feature of our program by examining each client's strengths, treatment needs, and coping abilities. Upon admission to Windsor Life Centre and throughout the treatment stay, our team evaluates the client's progress and adjusts the treatment plan as necessary

**Michael House/Emily's Place, Ontario.** <http://michaelhouse.ca>

The Residential Program promotes good parenting skills and incorporates a life skills component that teaches cooking, budgeting and making healthy life choices. The average stay at Michael House is nine months. This allows new mothers time to complete the program and establish healthy parenting patterns. It also allows our staff time to nurture a relationship of trust and cultivate the bonds and abilities that will serve young mothers well, long after they have left our care. Our Residential Program is our philosophy of care in action. We develop a support infrastructure for the mother, strive to dismantle the poverty mindset and provide a circle of security for the infant. Michael House is pleased to report that we have eight new supportive housing apartments at our new Emily's Place location. Emily's Place residents, with the help of a dedicated support worker, will use their strengths and resources to address issues that may prevent them from providing a stable and secure environment for their child. This process will include regular check-ins to evaluate goals, progress and concerns, all in a comfortable, home-like setting full of bright communal spaces where moms and babies can enjoy the company of other young families and the ongoing support of Michael House's caring and qualified staff.

**Alpha House, Manitoba.** <http://www.alphahouseproject.ca/moving-in/>

Alpha House is a year-long program that offers women and their children long-term counselling and support programs, as well as protective and affordable housing. Our suites are fully furnished. Residents are protected by an extensive security network that includes keeping the location of the house strictly confidential. You will live independently with the support of the program to help you to rebuild your life free from abuse.

**Bravestone Centre, Manitoba.** <http://bravestonecentre.ca>

Guided by our mission, Bravestone Centre is a non-profit charitable organization that provides women and their children affected by domestic violence with secure and safe on-site housing, individual and group therapeutic counselling, support programs, advocacy, and connection with community resources. Our mandate is to address the needs of women who have already taken steps toward resolving the initial crisis involved in their decision to separate from their abusive partner. Bravestone Centre is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. For over 28 years, under the previous name of WISH Inc. (Women in Second Stage Housing), we have been honoured to work with courageous women and their children as they break free from family violence. Bravestone Centre has 14 client suites including 13 2-bedroom and one 4-bedroom suites. During our 12-month program, families live independently in their program suite and are

responsible for their own daily needs. All of our suites have basic furnishing to enable families' ease of move-in.

**Thompson Crisis Centre, Manitoba.** <http://www.thompsoncrisiscentre.org/programs> The Thomson Crisis Centre houses six suites for transition (up to 6 months) housing. This program is an option available to meet the needs of women and children after residing on the Emergency Floor. Program goals mirror those of the residential program according to client goals, while providing client-based case planning to assist women in transitioning from shelter to independent and violence-free living.

**Transitional Housing – Elizabeth Fry Society, Manitoba.**

<http://www.efsmanitoba.org/Services-Programs.page>

EFSM Housing Units are a transitional housing initiative offering a supportive living arrangement to four to six women by bridging the gap between homelessness and independent living. EFSM offers women a chance for successful reintegration, an opportunity to work on education, employment literacy, health and other identified objectives, as well as access to services. The above are done in an environment that nurtures the women's individuality and potential for success.

**Esther House, Manitoba.** <http://www.estherhousewinnipeg.ca/about-us>

Esther House is a non-profit community-based facility that provides support and shelter to women in second-stage recovery from addictions. It was recognized that recovery is a challenging process and that there was a need for a place where women could go for a period of one to twelve months to continue their recovery. Esther House opened its doors on October 1, 1997 and since that date has assisted over 100 women to remain addiction-free by providing them with a safe, stable and supportive environment. We have 6 beds available for women and residents can stay for a period of up to 12 months.

**Betty Berg/Chriss Tetlock Place – North End Women's Centre, Manitoba.**

<http://www.newcentre.org/programs/addictions-recovery/>

Both houses provide supportive environment for women to stay up to one year and reclaim their health and well-being. Our participants enjoy the safety of the home-like atmosphere while increasing their life and relapse prevention skills and staying clean of addictive substances. The women must attend weekly groups on relapse prevention, self-esteem, grief and loss, domestic abuse and goal setting, as well as counselling.

**Villa Rosa, Manitoba.** <https://www.villarosa.mb.ca>

Villa Rosa is a prenatal and postnatal residence in Winnipeg, MB, offering a wide variety of programs in a safe and nurturing environment. Any single, pregnant woman or new mother in need may access our services. Villa Rosa's mission is to provide support to mothers, babies and their families during and after pregnancy.

**Memengwaa Place – Native Women's Transition Centre, Inc., Manitoba.**

<http://www.nwtc.cc/Memengwaa-Place.html>

Memengwaa Place is a long term residential facility providing an independent living, safe environment for Aboriginal women and children who have experienced family violence. This semi-furnished apartment facility accommodates residency for up to 1 year, with extensions

granted based on need. Services and supports such as traditional teachings, one on one counselling and group supports are provided by the outreach/support worker to residents. Memengwaa residents can also access supports and programs such as the Children's, Addiction and Trauma counselling services and Learning Program through the NWTC. All Programs are delivered from an Aboriginal perspective and include Aboriginal peoples' history and the use of traditional ceremonies and healing ways (Smudging, Sweats, Sundance, Fasting, Vision Quests, Medicine picking. Elders are involved in all aspects of program delivery and service. We also respect all Aboriginal world views and ways of practicing spirituality.

**Kihiw Iskewock Lodge – Native Women's Transition Centre Inc., Manitoba.**

<http://www.nwtc.cc/Kiwih-Iskewock-Eagle-Women-Lodge.html>

Kihiw Iskewock (Eagle Women) Lodge is a new innovative residential facility providing Transitional Housing for Aboriginal Women, working to support Aboriginal women to break the cycle of involvement with the law, and to provide them with the opportunities to reclaim their place, their strength, their children and their lives. Addressing the urgent housing needs faced by women exiting or recently released from correctional institutions, Kihiw Iskewock offers a range of resident-centred healing programs to help reduce women's risk for relapse, all the while supporting their reintegration into the community and their reunification with their children.

**Adelle House – Saskatoon Interval House, Saskatchewan.**

<http://saskatoonintervalhouse.org/2nd-stage-housing/>

Adelle House is a 12 unit apartment building established for women from abusive relationships who wish to work together to develop a safe, enriched community for themselves and their children. The goals of this house are to provide low-cost, supportive housing for women and children who will live independently in a safe community and to provide opportunities for individual growth and development. Stay is up to 1 year.

**Shayil Home – Souls Harbour Rescue Mission, Saskatchewan.**

<https://www.shrmsk.com/womens-addictions/>

Shayil Home is a yearlong residency-based addictions program where women and their children can come to a safe environment, living in community with other women who are on similar journeys. The women follow a well-structured weekly schedule where they attend an assortment of classes taught by qualified individuals and participate in a variety of activities. Personal, professional counselling is provided throughout the woman's stay in the program through an independent Christian counselling center. During their stay in the program these women also have access to various forms of childcare, including Souls Harbour Rescue Mission's licensed and subsidized 'Little Souls Daycare'. Successful graduates of the Shayil Home Women's yearlong residency-based addictions program are invited to apply for entrance into the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> year; P31 Program. This specialized, P31 Program, was established as a further means of building into the women as they prepare for successful reintegration into healthy community; and as such, features numerous opportunities including SHRM Internship's, or financial support for educational goals through the Affinity Endowment Fund, work placement training/support, and overseas Mission trips. In a sense, the P31 Program is 'personalized' to the Shayil Home Program graduate.

**The Brenda Strafford Centre, Alberta.** <http://www.brendastraffordsociety.org>

The Brenda Strafford Society for the Prevention of Domestic Violence is a second-stage shelter for women and their children who have fled domestic violence. The Centre offers a safe and secure environment. During their six-month stay at the Centre, women and children are provided with programs and services in a supportive yet independent environment.

**Discovery House, Alberta.** <https://www.discoveryhouse.ca/copy-of-programs-services-1>

Discovery House has 19 safe and secure fully-furnished apartments and 24-hour security personnel who oversee a state-of-the-art surveillance system. Families are welcome to stay for up to one year, during which time they are connected to resources and supports, both in-house and in the community.

**Dol-Mar Manor – Interval Home, Alberta.** <http://www.intervalhome.org/cms/index.php/dol-mar-manor/>

Dol-Mar Manor is a Second Stage Housing facility, the next step for women and children, or women leaving an emergency shelter. Dol-Mar Manor provides longer term support, programming and security in modestly furnished, independent apartments. Dol-Mar offers one-on-one support for families, providing practical assistance with parenting, life skills, budgeting, nutritional meal planning, etc. Programs offered at Dol-Mar include: Life Skills, Parenting, Child's Play and Family Activities. All of the services available at Dol-Mar Manor are in an effort to assist women to gain the tools necessary to live a life outside the web of Family Violence.

**Joie's Phoenix House – Dr. Margaret Savage Crisis, Alberta.** <https://dmscc.ca/our-programs/for-women/>

Joie's Phoenix House (JPH) is a second stage program of the Dr. Margaret Savage Crisis Centre that will provide a safe, long-term and supportive environment for women and their children who have experienced family violence. JPH opened its doors in early 2014 and has been actively assisting women and their children since its inception. JPH gives these families access to programs and resources that will allow them to gain skills to become self-sufficient and independent. The services in place are a mandatory part of living at JPH, with an end goal of independent living. JPH includes six self-contained fully furnished 2 or 3 bedroom suites, convenient access to schools and playgrounds, and other essential services.

**St. Katharine Drexel Place – Catholic Social Services, Alberta.** <https://cssalberta.ca/Our-Ministries/Supportive-Housing>

A housing option that serves as an additional resource for women for whom safe, affordable housing is an issue. St. Katharine Drexel Place offers fully furnished suites at a drug- and alcohol- free site with staff who provide supervision and support.

**WINGS of Providence, Alberta.** <https://www.wingsofprovidence.ca/index.aspx>

Second-stage women's shelters provide safe, transitional housing with client-centered supportive programs in order to give the necessary time to begin healing from the physical and emotional wounds of an abusive relationship. Throughout a client's six month residency at WINGS, they participate in wrap-around services in addition to group and individual counseling. Topics

discussed in group sessions help to foster parenting and life skills, as well as help mothers understand and better cope with the effects of family violence. These programs assist the family in working towards independence.

**Waypoints, Alberta.** <http://www.fmmfcs.com>

Second Stage Housing is for women and children who are either ready to leave the shelter or leave a violent or controlling relationship and need housing with additional security, subsidized rent and on-going programs and support.

**McDougall House, Alberta.** <http://www.mcdougallhouse.com/>

A second stage treatment facility for women in recovery. All of the clients must first complete an inpatient residential treatment program. Our gender specific program provides knowledge, awareness and the opportunity for change. Our aim is to assist our clients in understanding the dynamics behind their addiction. Each individual recovery plan is focused on the goals of the client.

**Aventa, Alberta.** <http://aventa.org/programs/>

Aventa provides concurrent capable, trauma informed, gender responsive addiction treatment programs to meet the unique needs of women. There are 3 phases of treatment, the longest being 3 months. Phase 1 is for pregnant women or women at risk who need immediate support and stabilization. Phase 2 is a six-week intensive live-in program that provides therapeutic counselling focusing on 4 key areas: sexual, spiritual, relationships and self. Phase 3 is a three-month live-in program for women who have completed Phase 2 or the Young Adult Treatment program and require additional treatment.

**WISH – Kelowna Women’s Shelter, British Columbia.**

<https://kelownawomensshelter.ca/programs/>

Survivors of intimate partner violence often need a longer period of safe, supportive and affordable housing before transitioning into their own homes and a new life free of abuse. WISH (Women’s Interim Supportive Home) allows women who meet the eligibility criteria, and have stayed at Kelowna Women’s Shelter to live for up to one year in a supportive environment with other women and easy access to our staff and services.

**Springhouse – The Bloom Group, British Columbia.** <http://www.thebloomgroup.org/our-work/women-children/>

Springhouse is the only women’s shelter in Vancouver that accepts male children over age 12, which helps keep women-led families together as they find permanent housing. Children and youth receive one-on-one emotional staff support in a child-friendly environment and families are connected with community resources, including schools and clinics. Family-building activities include community kitchens, crafts, games, movie nights, reading circle, group outings and gardening. Parenting support is available to moms, including assistance accessing Ministry of Children and Families Development services. 10 second-stage beds.

**Wenda’s Place – Dixon Transition, British Columbia.**

<http://dixonsociety.ca/programs/wendas-place>

Wenda’s Place second-stage housing provides individual, supportive housing units where women and their children may stay up to two years. Our caring and professional staff support the women to achieve their goals and to develop necessary skills to live independently and self-sufficiently. Services include individual and group counselling, structured activities for children and youth, life skills coaching, and resource information and referrals.

**Joy’s Place – Tri-City Transitions, British Columbia.**

<https://www.tricitytransitions.com/about/programs/2nd-stage-housing/>

Joy’s

Place is a second stage transition home that provides temporary subsidized supportive housing to facilitate security, independence, self-sufficiency and personal growth for women and children who have experienced violence. Independent living units and suites are available for women (and their children 10 and under) seeking safety from family violence. Tenants are supported through information, advocacy, victim services, family law matters, workshops and counselling. One vital support that we provide is to help all of our tenants develop a personal success plan. This plan allows tenants to work on their goals independently and also understand in which areas they might require extra support

**Santa Rosa – Women’s Resource Society of the Fraser Valley, British Columbia.**

[http://www.wrsfv.ca/programs/santa\\_rosa/santa\\_rosa.html](http://www.wrsfv.ca/programs/santa_rosa/santa_rosa.html)

Santa

Rosa Place is a 12 unit, second stage transitional housing project of the Women's Resource Society of the Fraser Valley. The apartment building is located in Mission, BC and houses women and their children from both Mission and Abbotsford. To live in the Santa Rosa, residents must be committed to an alcohol and drug-free life style. It is a women's only building and no men are permitted onsite without staff permission. Santa Rosa Place is a violence-free place and staff and residents work hard to ensure the building is a safe, secure, good quality home.

**Hope’s Place – North Shore Crisis Services Society, British Columbia.** <https://nscss.net>

HOPE’s Place program provides accommodation and ongoing support for up to fifteen months for women and their children who have left an abusive situation and have been referred by SAGE Transition House, another transition house or a community agency. This program is designed to provide transitional support for women and their children so they are able to successfully transition to independent lives free of abuse and violence.

**Westminster House, British Columbia.** <http://www.westminsterhouse.ca>

Westminster House Treatment Centre for Women is a long term residential treatment centre for women healing from addiction. Westminster House promotes and facilitates a desire for recovery. Helping women help themselves overcome addiction. The treatment program provides women with the necessary tools to trust their own ability to reclaim a drug-free existence. Westminster House teaches women how to live their life in recovery.

**Aunt Leah’s House – Aunt Leah’s Place, British Columbia.**

<https://auntleahs.org/services/housing/>



Aunt Leah's House provides safe, supported housing for pregnant and parenting teen moms currently in government care. Here, young women can prepare for their delivery, learn parenting skills and bond with their new babies in a safe and supportive environment. Each mom receives services tailored to their individual abilities and needs.

**Betty's Haven – Yukon Women's Transition Home, Yukon.** <http://yukontransitionhome.ca>  
Betty's Haven is now open! This is an additional 10-unit Second Stage Housing complex for Yukon Women's Transition Home. This building is respectfully named after Betty Sjodin, a Gwich'in Elder who has worked for YWTHS for over 30 years.

**Lynn's Place – YWCA, Northwest Territories.** <http://ywcanwt.ca/temporary-housing/lynns-place>

Lynn's Place is a safe housing building for women. It contains 18 suites on three floors. The building is for women who need safe housing after leaving a violent relationship, or who are ready to find stability in a safe environment. Applicants are assessed for need and willingness to engage in the programming offered at the safe housing building. Tenants are welcome to stay for up to three years.

**Adsum for Women and Children, Nova Scotia.** <http://www.adsumforwomen.org>

Adsum offers a range of services and support to women, families, youth and trans\* persons during periods of homelessness. Adsum operates four Halifax locations: an emergency shelter, second-stage housing and two apartments complexes where housing is supportive and affordable. Adsum also has three condos that are rented, as permanent supported housing, to women-led families. We shelter or house up to 80 people each day and more than 400 persons in a year. We provide services and support to more than 1,000 people each year.

**Naomi Society, Nova Scotia.** <http://naomisociety.ca>

Second Stage Housing was established in November 1994 and consists of 2 separate units with 3 bedrooms in each unit. Second Stage Housing is available for women and children leaving an abusive relationship where they can live for up to one year. This experience gives the families an opportunity for independent living with supportive services available. In the last 17 years, Second Stage Housing has provided shelter for over 50 families.

**Cape Breton Transition House, Nova Scotia. (no web address)**

Provides an emergency shelter, supportive counselling and advocacy, a childcare program, outreach support, and second-stage housing for women experiencing domestic violence.

**Welkaqnik Next Step Shelter – Native Council of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia.**

<http://ncns.ca/welkaqnik-next-step-shelter/>

A next step shelter providing survivors of family violence a safe affordable shelter for a period of up to one (1) year. Serving all Mi'kmaq/Aboriginal individuals and families that are victims of family violence by referral and qualify through an application intervention process. Volunteers and staff provide safe and supportive guidance, enabling families to nurture and grow through Caring, Sharing, Helping and Understanding. A full time Community Support Counsellor assists clients to gain a perspective on their situation and consider alternatives and options. Community Support Counsellor implements a "stay goal plan" and provides appropriate referrals and establishes contact with other community agencies and resources.

**Holly House – Elizabeth Fry Society, Nova Scotia.** <http://efrymns.ca/holly-house/> The Holly House is a combination of Elizabeth Fry’s offices and 8 single occupancy rooms for women. Holly House offers a shared kitchen, common room, and 2 bathrooms, plus in-house laundry facilities. The house provides safe, affordable housing for women for up to 1 year. Holly House is not a half-way house. All women in the community are eligible to submit an application! Elizabeth Fry’s professional staff will help develop a Personal Transition plan, education and employment exploration, housing search support, community resources referrals, and personal development programming!

**Women in Supported Housing (WISH) – YWCA Halifax, Nova Scotia.** <https://ywcahalifax.com/programs/supportive-housing/wish/> WISH provides safe, secure, supported housing to 34 single women. The women at WISH are 19 and older and have experienced homelessness, and have barriers to stable housing. WISH recognizes that there is limited access to safe, affordable housing for women who have experienced homelessness, traumatic pasts, and mental health related concerns. These women often have difficulty in securing long-term housing.

**Supportive Housing for Young Mothers (SHYM) – YWCA Halifax, Nova Scotia.** <https://ywcahalifax.com/programs/supportive-housing/shym/> SHYM provides supportive housing, parenting support, and life skills development for at risk young single mothers ages 16 to 24. SHYM is open to young mothers in their third trimester of pregnancy or who are independently parenting their child or children, and are in need of supportive housing. SHYM also provides housing for at risk single mothers who are attending a post-secondary institution full-time.

**The Marguerite Centre, Nova Scotia.** <http://themargueritecentre.com/about/4592844619> The Marguerite Centre provides a holistic, women centered approach to recovery from substance misuse and gambling addiction. We are an inclusive, safe, non-judgmental environment; free from discrimination and available regardless of economic status. Residents receive their own room and are empowered to create their own path to healing and recovery. Counsellors work with them to develop personal and family plans and goals.

**Alice Housing, Nova Scotia.** <http://alicehousing.ca> Alice Housing provides safe second stage housing and supportive counselling to women and children leaving domestic abuse. With 18 units located in the Halifax Regional Municipality, Alice Housing has provided a wide range of services to over 900 families in crisis from violence since 1983 and is one the largest and oldest second stage housing organizations in Canada. By providing safe, affordable housing and counselling for up to two years, families are able to recover from abuse so that violence does not have to frame their future or define their legacy.



## Appendix E: Agency interview questions

### **The first questions are about the housing work you do with women:**

1. What kind of housing support do you provide? Is it transition housing, second stage housing, or something else)
2. What is the eligibility criteria to access the housing you offer?
3. What kind of accommodations do you offer? [apartments, town houses, emergency shelter, rooms, other \_\_\_\_\_]
4. How many beds do you have in total? Of these, how many are for women and how many are for children (if any)?
5. How many women have children staying with them? Is there a cap on the number of children allowed?
6. Do male children age out of eligibility? If so, at what age?
7. Do you have a waiting list? (If yes, how long does it take to get in?) [in months]
8. How long can women stay in the housing you offer? [in months]
9. Do you help people find more permanent solutions to housing problems? [yes or no]
10. If so, what do you do in this regard? [advocacy with income assistance, advocacy with child protection, connection with mental health services/addictions; apartment searches; counselling; trusteeships; landlord advocacy, other]
11. Approximately how many female clients per year do you provide housing services to?

### **The next questions are about the options for housing available in your community.**

12. Can you describe housing options available for your clients? What kind of places are available for them?
13. What kind of housing do your clients usually end up finding? [apt/house/room? Perm/temp? rental/purchase? Roommates? Kind of neighborhoods?]
14. What kind do they want? Or need?
15. Is there one type of housing that is lacking in your community?

### **Now we will talk about the kind of supports needed by your female clients with housing issues and what kinds of barriers they face when looking for housing.**

#### **How often do these clients have... (responses are: always, often, sometimes, rarely, never, don't know)**

16. Mental health issues?
17. Addictions?
18. Criminal justice system involvement?
19. History of experiencing domestic violence?
20. Debt or bad credit?
21. Supportive social network?
22. Trouble finding and keeping work?

23. Problems with transportation?
24. Problems with childcare?
25. Involvement of child protection?
26. Low levels of education?

**How often do the clients access the following services? (always, often, sometimes, rarely, never, don't know)**

27. Employment programs?
28. Food banks?
29. Family resource centers?
30. Sexual assault services?
31. Women's centres?
32. What proportion, approximately, of the women are on income assistance?
33. Do you see any women who have been victims of human trafficking?
34. How would you describe the available housing in terms of affordability?.
35. How do you define affordability? What amount of rent would be affordable?
36. Is affordability a barrier for women seeking secure housing?
37. What other services are available in the community to support women's housing needs?
38. What services do you think are lacking?
39. Finally, can you describe a typical case involving a woman who is seeking secure housing? What typically happens when she tries to look for housing?

## Appendix F: Interview Guide for Service Users

First Question: Can you tell me what brought you to <INSERT AGENCY> What happened?

Second question: Can you please tell me about your experiences as you sought to move/or have moved from <INSERT SECOND STAGE HOUSING AGENCY> to community housing? Maybe start at the beginning and just tell me what happened.

Prompts: And then what happened? Ok, what happened next?

Third question: Looking over my notes, and going backwards a bit, can you tell me more about <INSERT SPECIFIC EVENT/EXPERIENCE>?

Prompts: Who was involved? How did you feel about that? What might have made that experience better or worse?

Can you describe the best thing that happened as you tried to get help from the system. What happened?

Can you describe the worst thing that happened as you tried to get help from the system. What happened?

Probe about any of the following that come up in the participant's story:

- Affordability (Rent, Utilities, Living Expenses)
- Neighborhoods (Home Community)
- Criminal Justice System Involvement (impact on accessing housing)
- Safety (what does safety look like?)
- Waiting Lists
- Support Networks
- Interaction with Landlords/Property Managers
- Debt/Bad Credit
- Rural Urban migration; issue relating to living in a rural area
- Access to Public Housing
- Child Care
- Social support (who was champion; networks)
- Trauma
- Transit
- Municipal Services

## Appendix G: Works Cited

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