



BREAKING THE CYCLE OF ABUSE AND CLOSING THE HOUSING GAP

SECOND STAGE SHELTERS IN CANADA



**WOMEN'S
SHELTERS
CANADA** | Shelters and
Transition Houses
United to End Violence
Against Women

Women's Shelters Canada

Women's Shelters Canada (WSC) is based in Ottawa, Ontario. Bringing together 14 provincial and territorial shelter organizations, we represent a strong, unified voice on the issue of violence against women on the national stage. Through collaboration, knowledge exchange, and adoption of innovative practices, we advance the coordination and implementation of high-quality services for women and children accessing VAW shelters and transition houses.

Women's Shelters Canada acknowledges that the location of our office and the work that we do in Ottawa is on the traditional, unceded territories of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg people.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Second stage shelters are a form of transitional supportive housing for survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) who are at risk of danger post-separation and need additional time and support to heal from their trauma and rebuild their lives. Many are affiliated or connected to violence against women (VAW) emergency shelters and were created out of an identified need for safe and affordable longer-term housing with accompanying provisions for IPV survivors. Second stage shelters offer wrap-around support and afford survivors additional time and space to heal, develop independence, establish long-term goals, build community and networks of support, access programming, and transition to a life free from violence.

There are over 124 second stage shelters in Canada,¹ yet there is a significant lack of research and knowledge about these organizations. With the support of research funding from the Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation (CMHC), Women's Shelters Canada (WSC) embarked on a pan-Canadian mixed methods study on second stage shelters. The purpose of this study was to fill the research and policy gap and highlight the work of second stage shelters for survivors of violence. This study is the first of its kind in Canada. It addresses knowledge gaps in the spectrum of supports for IPV survivors and explores how second stage shelters break the cycle of abuse and close the housing gap.

This study situates violence against women at the centre of its inquiry into second stage shelters; this has shaped all aspects of the research design, questions, and analysis, as well as the approach to interviews and collaboration with participating second stage shelters. The project centres the lived experiences of survivors and is community-driven, collaborative, participatory, and action-oriented, with an overarching goal of creating impactful social change.²

This study builds on the foundational knowledge of WSC's 2019 survey report, "Transitioning to a

Life Free from Violence: Second Stage Shelters in Canada."³ The current study consists of four key parts: an extensive literature review, a national survey, interviews with survivors and executive directors, and two focus groups. The survey received 97 responses – a 72% response rate – from every province and territory except Nunavut, where there are currently no second stage shelters. Seventeen interviews were conducted with five executive directors, six current residents, and six former residents of second stage shelters in British Columbia, the Yukon, Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador. The final stage of the research consisted of two focus groups held in Ottawa on February 21, 2020. Participants were split into two groups of eight to discuss preliminary research findings, knowledge mobilization, and advocacy strategies, bringing their unique regional experiences and insights to the discussion.

These data sources combined to provide powerful insights into how second stage shelters help survivors meet their individual goals, the wrap-around supports they offer, how they are structured, funding challenges, service delivery limitations, bricks and mortar, safety and security, staffing, and programming. Each section

of the report weaves together survey, interview, and focus group data to provide a rich, in-depth account of these shelters' life-saving work.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Second stage shelters are an integral aspect of the continuum of supports for IPV survivors, providing them with the time and space to heal, plan for the future, and achieve independence. Many second stage shelters operate from a feminist, trauma-informed, and survivor-centred philosophy. Survivors interviewed for this study shared that time, space, staff, programs, and the community and support networks they developed during their stay were integral to becoming self-sufficient and leading violence-free lives. For some survivors, it was the first time in their lives that they had felt safe and at "home," while others said that staying at the second stage shelter "saved their lives."

We cannot deny the affordable housing crisis in Canada and the barriers it creates for survivors to leave their abusers. For this reason, housing supports are a vital aspect of the programming many second stage shelters offer. These supports include helping residents look for housing, tenancy education, advocacy with landlords, and financial assistance.

While establishing housing is a crucial aspect of women rebuilding their lives and gaining independence, the results of this study demonstrate that housing is just one benefit of second stage shelters. Establishing safety, health and wellbeing, and economic independence, and developing an understanding of abuse to break the cycle of violence are also important goals for survivors. Second stage shelter wrap-around supports are available to survivors long after they have moved into permanent housing, as many shelters offer follow-up supports to ensure the success of graduated residents.

Frontline workers at second stage shelters are pivotal in assisting survivors to identify their short and long-term goals, develop self-care strategies, work on healthy relationships, and acquire new life skills. Programming and counselling are at the core of this transformative work. The number and types of programs vary from shelter to shelter, but the majority offer individual and group counselling, programs for children, and life skills programs. Children's programming is essential to the health and wellbeing of the family unit. Many second stage shelters provide legal and court support, but few have a legal support worker on-site. Legal supports are greatly needed by survivors to assist them with navigating family law, divorce, custody, and access visits, which for some can drag out for years following a separation.

The lack of sustainable funding for second stage shelters significantly impacts their ability to provide all the necessary programs and supports to keep survivors safe and moving towards independence. Many second stage shelters across Canada rely on fundraising to meet their operating costs. Second stage shelters in Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, and Ontario do not receive any sustainable provincial government funding. This has a particular impact on staffing as funding limitations restrict the number of staff that second stage shelters can hire. Overall, more staff are needed, especially specialized workers for children's programming, legal support, and housing support.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1. Second stage shelters are a unique type of transitional housing. They provide specialized wrap-around supports for IPV survivors, including expertise in gender-based violence, survivor-centred programming, counselling, housing-related support, and safety planning.**

- a. Support continues after residents have moved out; the majority (**85%**) of survey respondents indicated that former residents continue to access supports, services, and programs.

2. There are different models of second stage shelters in Canada, based on local needs, availability of resources, funding, and capacity of VAW organizations. Among the survey respondents:

- a. The majority (**75%**) were affiliated with a VAW emergency shelter.
- b. Over three-quarters (**79%**) were stand-alone buildings.
- c. The majority (**82%**) reported that their apartment units were self-contained (i.e. residents do not share a unit with anyone else).
- d. The majority (**83%**) owned their buildings, with **29%** having a forgivable loan with CMHC.

3. Service providers and current and former residents of second stage shelters emphasized the importance of having time and space to pause and plan for the next steps. This enables survivors to identify and achieve their short and long-term goals, acquire housing, begin the healing process, and live violence-free lives.

- a. The additional time afforded in second stage helps women avoid homelessness and secure permanent housing. Survey respondents indicated that **76%** of women leaving their shelter had secured permanent housing within the past year (n=64).

4. Survivors identified building community and networks of support as critical aspects of their healing journey. Living

independently but within a community of women with shared experiences helped women break the silence around abuse, feel less alone, and build new friendships.

5. Second stage shelters are integral to the continuum of supports for women and children fleeing violence. Yet, comprehensive and sustainable funding to do this life-saving work is a major challenge facing second stage shelters:

- a. While **71%** of survey respondents received some form of provincial or territorial funding, it was often inconsistent and partial funding that did not cover the operational budget (e.g. staff salaries).
- b. Second stage shelters in Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, and Ontario do not receive any sustainable provincial government funding. Only two provinces (Quebec and Alberta) get recurring core funding from their provincial governments.
- c. On-reserve First Nations shelters are at a particular disadvantage as the per-diem funding for Indigenous women in emergency shelters does not apply to second stage shelters.
- d. There is a pressing need for additional funding for legal support workers, additional children's programming, and to support and house women with precarious immigration status.
- e. Second stage shelters are more than bricks and mortar. There is an urgent need for new builds to have programming dollars attached.
- f. Service providers recognize the value of feedback and evaluation from survivors on the usefulness of their programs and services. However, evaluation fatigue, inconsistent evaluation models, and ineffective assessments from government funders do not help second stage shelters

improve their programs or services for survivors and create additional work and strain on already overburdened teams.

6. Frontline workers in second stage shelters are experts in gender-based violence and offer programs, counselling, and support for current and former residents. However, recruiting and maintaining quality staff is a challenge:

- a. The majority (**88%**) of survey respondents employ staff on-site.
- b. Second stage shelters reported an average of four full-time, two part-time, and five casual workers per shelter.
- c. The main types of workers are support workers, child and youth workers, administration/property assistants, executive directors, program supervisors, and administration/finance workers.
- d. Housing workers/advocates were identified as an important staff position in second stage shelters, yet only **26%** had the means to employ one.
- e. Many second stage shelters rely on fundraising to cover workers' salaries.
- f. Low salaries have resulted in high turnover and loss of staff.

stalked, and abused by their former partners long after the relationship has ended.⁴

- b. Research has demonstrated that separation is a significant risk factor for femicide and that "women are at the greatest risk of lethal violence within the first several months following their separation."⁵
- c. Second stage shelters provide safe and affordable housing with wrap-around IPV supports for women and children fleeing violence, thereby reducing the risk of future abuse, trauma, and femicide. Not investing in second stage housing as part of the continuum of supports for IPV survivors could result in the loss of women's lives.

2. The number of second stage shelters in rural, remote, and northern communities must be increased.

- a. There are limited second stage shelters in these regions due to the critical affordable housing shortage; additional costs to build in the North; fewer opportunities to partner with housing organizations; and barriers to local fundraising.

3. The number of second stage shelters in Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) communities must be increased across the country.

- a. Considering that Indigenous women and girls face higher rates of IPV and femicide in rural, remote and northern areas⁶ alongside fewer supports, there needs to be an increase in Indigenous second stage shelters in these areas in particular.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The number of second stage shelters for IPV survivors must be increased across Canada to prevent violence, abuse, and femicide:

- a. Abuse does not end following a separation. Many survivors continue to be harassed,

4. Sustainable, core operational funding for all second stage shelters is required, as are yearly increases in accordance with standard of living costs. This core recurrent funding must include:

- a. Funding to maintain quality staff with competitive salaries. This includes professional development and training opportunities.
- b. Programming dollars. Second stage shelters are more than bricks and mortar and provide specialized IPV supports for survivors of violence. Funding for new builds should have programming dollars attached to ensure that programming can be delivered consistently.
- c. Funding for ongoing repairs and building maintenance.

5. Funders must financially support the range of services that second stage shelters provide, including:

- a. Child and youth programs
- b. Housing specific supports
- c. Legal education and representation
- d. Designated units for women with precarious immigration status
- e. Follow-up supports for graduated residents
- f. Support for mental health and substance use issues, low-barrier, harm reduction, trauma-informed practices

6. Immediately increase social and affordable housing units while also increasing second stage shelters for IPV survivors who need more support.

- a. Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the National Housing Strategy's (NHS) allocation of affordable housing funding and new second stage housing builds for domestic violence (DV)/IPV survivors.
- b. Review and evaluate CMHC's Co-Investment Funding application and process for barriers that may hinder NHS goals to create more shelter spaces and units for DV/IPV survivors. Ensure that the application is accessible and attainable for shelters so that more second stage shelters can be built or renovated.
- c. CMHC co-investment funding must recognize and account for the specific needs of new second stage shelter builds, including larger units, trauma-informed design, and communal spaces.
- d. Ensure that the NHS meets the Universal Design Standard (25% of units are accessible) in second stage shelter builds.

7. Address the disconnects between VAW shelter/anti-violence sectors and government funders and establish collaboration and communication among them.

For government funders (municipal, provincial and territorial, and federal):

- a. The yet to be developed National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence and the National Housing Strategy must work together to address service and support gaps for IPV survivors.
- b. CMHC should conduct research to obtain national-level data on the social and affordable housing needs of IPV survivors.

- c. Recognize, include, and adequately fund the expertise of the VAW sector and second stage shelters in the continuum of supports for IPV survivors.
- d. Governments need to work with second stage shelters to develop better evaluation tools to improve services and respond to need. This must be guided by second stage shelters and/or their provincial and territorial associations alongside administrative funding dollars for doing this work.
- e. To accurately capture the real impacts of second stage shelters, qualitative methods (e.g. interviews and focus groups) with survivors are needed to measure the long-term effects of second stage shelters. Researchers who carry out this work must be well-versed in IPV and put measures in place to minimize potential harm as well as empower participants.⁷ This includes but is not limited to ongoing informed consent; allowing a support person to be present; contact information for follow-up support (e.g. counsellors); explaining the benefits of participating in the research; explaining the potential harm of participating in the interview; and maintaining confidentiality.⁸

4.6 We call upon all governments to immediately commence the construction of new housing and the provision of repairs for existing housing to meet the housing needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. This construction and provision of repairs must ensure that Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people have access to housing that is safe, appropriate to geographic and cultural needs, and available wherever they reside, whether in urban, rural, remote, or Indigenous communities.

4.7 We call upon all governments to support the establishment and long-term sustainable funding of Indigenous-led low-barrier shelters, safe spaces, transition homes, second-stage housing, and services for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people who are homeless, near homeless, dealing with food insecurity, or in poverty, and who are fleeing violence or have been subjected to sexualized violence and exploitation. All governments must ensure that shelters, transitional housing, second-stage housing, and services are appropriate to cultural needs, and available wherever Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people reside.

Collaboration Across Sectors:

- a. Provincial and territorial housing corporations that work with shelters should receive VAW 101 training and create a liaison staff position specifically for IPV housing interventions.
- b. WSC supports the MMIWG Inquiry Calls to Justice (4.6 and 4.7)⁹ for new housing to meet the needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people and long-term sustainable funding for a range of Indigenous-led supportive housing for IPV survivors:

- c. WSC supports the Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network's call for a diverse national advisory body that includes the women's homelessness sector and the VAW sector to guide and monitor policy responses to COVID-19.¹⁰ WSC recommends that this advisory body continues to work collaboratively on policy related to the intersection of VAW and women's homelessness beyond the pandemic.

INTRODUCTION



The first second stage shelter was established in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1972.¹¹ Munroe House was envisioned as a space to provide survivors with additional time and space to heal from trauma, develop their goals, and become independent. More second stage shelters opened up across Canada, with over 124 second stage shelters today.¹²

Second stage shelters are transitional supportive housing for survivors who are at high risk of danger post-separation and who need additional time and support to transition to lives free from violence. They are part of the continuum of supports for survivors of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV); often, residents of these shelters are referred there by Violence Against Women (VAW) emergency shelters. Second stage shelters are longer-term (6 months to 2 years), apartment-style residences providing programs and services for IPV survivors. There are a variety of models, such as apartment units in one building with some common areas (e.g. shared yard, laundry, common rooms) and “scattered sites” (i.e. units in several buildings, often in social and affordable housing complexes). There are also “mixed shelters” that combine short-term emergency stays with longer-term second stage units in the same facility. Residents pay rent, which is rent-g geared-to-income (RGI) and is also subsidized for those receiving social assistance.

There are significant research and policy gaps in understanding the work of second stage shelters/ transitional supportive housing for survivors of IPV.¹³ Although there have been two provincial studies (Quebec and Alberta) on second stage shelters, there has been no national analysis on the value and efficacy of second stage housing for IPV survivors. In 2017, Women’s Shelters Canada (WSC) conducted a national survey on VAW shelters, which included some information on second stage shelters. While the data gathered in the 2017 survey provided some foundational knowledge on second stage shelters, there was still little known about their different models,

programs, and supports, and how they gave survivors time and space to heal and plan their next steps. WSC also wanted to know, from the perspectives of survivors, how second stage shelters helped them, what they found most useful, and how staff helped them achieve their goals.

This study is the first of its kind in Canada to examine the spectrum of supports for survivors of IPV and how second stage shelters address and close housing gaps and break the cycle of abuse. Overwhelmingly, the results show that second stage shelters are more than affordable housing and a roof over one’s head – they provide wrap-around, IPV-specific interventions, programs, and support, as well as safety and a sense of community for survivors of IPV. Within them, survivors have an opportunity to heal, transform their lives, and develop long-term goals.

The purpose of this report is to fill the knowledge gap and advance our understanding of how second stage shelters address the safety and housing needs of women and children fleeing violence. This report provides data on the goals, purpose, programs, and structure of second stage shelters, as well as survivors’ perspectives on the usefulness of second stage shelters in assisting them in meeting their goals.

This report is structured in the following manner: introduction, methodology, literature review, results, and conclusion and recommendations. Weaving findings from interviews, focus groups,

and survey data collected in 2019-2020, the results section includes the goals and purposes of second stage shelters; their structure and models; wrap-around supports; funding; physical buildings; safety and security; program structures; staffing; and programs and services.

Definition: Second stage shelters are transitional supportive housing for IPV survivors who are at high risk of danger post-separation and who need additional time and support to heal from their trauma.

We recognize that there are different terms used to describe the work of second stage shelters. For this report, we use “second stage shelters” or “second stage” in place of transitional supportive housing or second stage housing.

METHODOLOGY



This study was designed using feminist participatory action-based research methods. A feminist methodology “centres the lives of women and other oppressed groups.”¹⁴ The study involved an evaluative component asking interviewees about their goals and whether or not second stage shelters were effectively meeting them. To do so, we drew on feminist evaluation to facilitate a process of learning to “enable participants to voice their different perspective[s] and to use the findings and knowledge emerging to support their visions of change.”¹⁵

This study on second stage shelters situates violence against women at the centre; this has shaped all aspects of the research design, questions, and analysis as well as our approach to interviews and collaboration with participating shelters. The project centres the lived experiences of survivors and is community-driven, collaborative, participatory, and action-oriented, with an overarching goal of creating social change.¹⁶

As a national network, WSC is not directly connected with the everyday work of second stage shelters. To ensure that the study captured the realities of the breadth of work that second stage shelters do, an advisory committee made up of second stage experts was established to help guide the study.

The data collection for this study took place before the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, some of the daily operations of second stage shelters may have altered. However, due to the self-contained nature of the units, the living arrangements of residents have likely not changed much. Programming and groups may have been altered to maintain physical distance and conform to public health regulations during the pandemic. We are confident that the results presented provide a timely in-depth overview of second stage shelters in Canada.

MIXED METHODS

Mixed methods research involves the collection, analysis, and integration of qualitative and quantitative data research.¹⁷ For this study, methods included a survey, interviews, and two focus groups. There are many advantages to mixed methods studies – the survey allowed us to gather a wide scope of data on second stage shelters. As an organization involved in advocacy to end gender-based violence that works with government stakeholders, we are aware that “[n]umbers plus words are a powerful combination in speaking to that segment of social policy decision makers.”¹⁸ Interviews allowed for deeper insights into the benefits of second stage shelters and ensured that the findings are grounded in participants’ experiences, specifically the voices of survivors. Combining these methods enables a more sophisticated understanding of second stage shelters where different aspects of the data provide further insights.¹⁹

Preliminary analysis of interview and survey data informed the questions for the focus groups and subsequent strategies for knowledge mobilization and advocacy. A limitation of the mixed methods model is that it often requires more resources, time, and staffing to analyze the additional layers of data.

SURVEY

As a starting point, the survey built on knowledge gathered from WSC's 2019 report, "Transitioning to a life free from violence: Second Stage Shelters in Canada"²⁰ and an extensive literature review. The literature review helped identify new areas to explore as well as information gaps that needed to be addressed.

The online survey, offered in French and English, was launched on October 3, 2019, and remained open until December 2, 2019. The survey was available to organizations that provide second stage housing, transitional housing, or a shelter that combines emergency shelter with second stage units (mixed shelter) to women and children fleeing violence. There is some overlap between organizations that exclusively serve women fleeing violence and those who support women experiencing homelessness, with some doing both. Organizations invited to participate in the survey could do so if they felt their mandate fit the scope of this study.

Overall, a personalized link to the survey was sent to 135 organizations that indicated that they provide these services (a higher number than the 124 reported by Statistics Canada because it included mixed shelters). The survey was designed to be completed by executive directors (EDs) or managers who oversee the daily activities of the second stage shelter.

Survey participants were recruited through WSC's network, along with assistance from provincial shelter associations and the advisory committee.

Using Qualtrics, an online survey platform, participants were sent a link to the survey. The questionnaire consisted of up to 77 questions and took 15-30 minutes to complete. Respondents could add comments to clarify their answers. Nineteen of these questions were open-ended. Respondents could download a copy of their responses once the survey was completed for their records. Overall, we received 97 responses to

the survey, representing a 72% response rate. Of those, ten were mixed shelters.

DATA ANALYSIS

The results in this report are primarily descriptive – we use unadjusted percentages to show the proportion of respondents endorsing a specific response (or, in some cases, multiple responses). Analysis was conducted using SPSS-26. Descriptive statistics and frequencies for all of the questions were computed. Open-ended answers (comments) were uploaded to NVivo and coded for themes. Word frequencies and relationships between words were also run.

LIMITATIONS

To ensure a manageable completion time for participants, we limited the number of questions asked. Some questions were not included that were in the 2017 survey (e.g. length of stay and capacity questions) to avoid repetition. As such, we draw on previous data to provide a full picture of second stage shelter services. It would have been ideal to collect up-to-date data on these questions.

INTERVIEWS

Between August 2019 and February 2020, WSC conducted 17 semi-structured interviews in British Columbia, the Yukon, Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador. We visited a range of communities, including urban, medium-sized cities, northern, and rural. The shelter we visited in the Yukon do not self-identify as an Indigenous shelter; however, the majority of their clientele are Indigenous.

We interviewed six current residents, six former residents, and five EDs.

Sampling methods were purposeful, meaning participants were identified in advance. The advisory committee identified potential regions for data collection and outreach was done in these communities. An email was sent to executive directors about the study with an invitation to

partner with WSC. Partnership included a tour of the facilities and organizing the interviews (finding participants, providing a space to conduct the interviews, and, in some cases, providing childcare). A \$200 honorarium was provided to each shelter in recognition of their time.

Every second stage shelter contacted agreed to participate and circulated a recruitment poster to identify survivors to participate in interviews. Criteria for participation included a) current or former residents of a second stage shelter or b) an executive director or manager of the second stage shelter.

This study did not go through an ethics review process as it was primarily evaluative. The “Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans” Article 2.5 notes that program evaluations do not fall within the scope of Research Ethics Board reviews.²¹

Efforts were made to maintain confidentiality. The following strategies were used throughout the data collection process: individual interviews were offered; the names of participants were not recorded on audio-files or transcripts; consent forms were kept in a locked cabinet separate from all other data collection documents; the audio recordings were stored on a password protected USB; and all written documentation was kept on a password protected USB accessible only to the researcher. Additionally, the informed consent process explained to participants how their identity would be protected, how direct quotations might be used, and the intent to share the findings publicly. This allowed participants to make informed decisions about what they wanted to disclose. Lastly, no identifying information about survivors is included in this report or any publications resulting from this study. Because EDs are public figures, they could choose how they would like to be referenced in the report – completely anonymous, with the region identified, or with their full name and shelter. For this reason, some EDs are named in the report while others are anonymous.

Survivors had the option of deciding where the interviews took place and if they wanted a support person present. All but three interviews took place in a common room or board room located in the second stage shelter. In one case, the researcher interviewed a former resident at her current residence at her request. In another instance, two former residents were interviewed at a third stage shelter where they currently resided, in a common area.

Interviews with participants ranged from 17 minutes to 2 hours, with an average time of one hour in length. With the consent of participants, interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Current and former residents received a \$50 honorarium to thank them for their time. On their consent forms, participants could request a copy of their transcript to review and identify any areas of omission from the final transcript.

Among the current and former residents interviewed, six were white and six were women of colour, three of which had precarious legal status. All were mothers with children of various ages.

ON-SITE VISITS

EDs and staff assisted with a tour of the facilities. All but one site included offices for staff and community spaces such as kitchens, lounges, movie viewing rooms, and laundry rooms. At one location, a two-bedroom apartment unit had been converted into an office space, counselling room, and a living room and kitchen that were communal and used for gatherings and house meetings. Each site was unique, with a different configuration of space and resources. Some shelters had been built and designed with shared spaces, while others were located in a purchased pre-existing building. A non-occupied unit was visited or, if there were no empty units, a viewing was scheduled with the consent of a resident.

In addition to on-site visits, the researcher held several informal interviews with various shelter staff, other residents, board members, and government housing representatives.

DATA ANALYSIS

Transcribed interviews were uploaded to NVivo for coding. The interview data were analyzed using grounded theory, a “pluralistic and flexible approach to data coding” that categorizes qualitative data to generate meaning.²² The codes identified specific overarching themes to help explain the results of the study.

LIMITATIONS

For a more comprehensive sample, it would have been ideal to conduct interviews in each province and territory as well as additional Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) communities (although there are very few second stage shelters in these communities). Due to resource limitations (e.g. funding, staff) and time constraints, we were unable to conduct these additional site visits. However, we are confident that the data we did collect provides essential insights and contributes to closing the knowledge gap on second stage shelters.

FOCUS GROUPS

The third component of the research involved two focus groups with service providers from second stage shelters, held in Ottawa on February 21, 2020. A call for participants was circulated in November 2019 to all second stage shelter contacts collected over the course of the study. Thirty-five applications were received and sixteen were selected. Specific outreach with Indigenous second stage shelters and francophone shelters enriched representation and diverse voices around the table.

WSC brought together sixteen participants from Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia.²³ Participants were

from rural, small, and urban shelters, and two Indigenous shelters (one urban and one located on a First Nations reserve). WSC covered the costs of travel and accommodations. Simultaneous interpretation was provided in English and French to give participants the opportunity to share in either official language.

Participants were separated into two groups of eight, one with simultaneous interpretation. Each focus group was two hours in length and covered four broad questions. Informed consent was provided by facilitators reading the consent form, which outlined the importance of confidentiality so that participants could share honestly and openly within the group. The focus group was audio-recorded and each group had a notetaker and a facilitator.

The focus group questions were based on the preliminary themes from interviews and survey comments and included: different second stage models; relationships with partners and funders; reporting pressures and evaluations; and research and knowledge mobilization moving forward.

DATA ANALYSIS

The focus groups were transcribed and coded in NVivo to identify specific overarching themes to add context to the results of the study. These findings are integrated throughout the report.

LIMITATIONS

It would have been ideal to have representation from every province and territory to capture all the different realities and contexts of delivering second stage programs in diverse communities. While we provided ample time to discuss the four questions, it was clear that participants could have used even more time to have these rich conversations. It is our hope that the establishment of the Community of Practice for second stage shelters will enable these important discussions and connections to continue.

LITERATURE REVIEW



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this literature review is to provide an overview of housing options for survivors of domestic violence (DV) and intimate partner violence. It has a specific focus on second stage shelters as an essential component of the continuum of housing supports for women and children fleeing violence.

After conducting an extensive literature review, it is clear that there is a significant research gap on second stage shelters in Canada and internationally. Currently, there are no academic studies specific to second stage shelters for IPV survivors that are national in scope.

This literature review synthesizes academic and grey literature (e.g. government, non-profit, and community-based research) in Canada, the United States (US), and Australia. The inclusion of grey literature acknowledges the significant contributions to research by community-based and anti-violence organizations, such as provincial/territorial associations for VAW shelters and transition houses, that work tirelessly to end gender-based violence.

The literature review recommends that housing policy interventions from various levels of government be multi-pronged and provide IPV survivors with numerous, flexible housing options and levels of support to meet their unique needs, including emergency VAW, second stage, and third stage shelters as well as Housing First.²⁴ A variety of models and options offer diverse support to survivors who have various needs and are at different stages of their healing journeys. These housing options are essential as there is a critical lack of safe and affordable housing across Canada. The literature points to survivor-centric flexible housing and funding models as emerging

promising practices that can meet survivors where they are at in their healing journey.

To better understand the continuum of supports and housing for IPV survivors, the literature review first contextualizes the connection between VAW, housing insecurity, and homelessness and how these intersecting systems of oppression shape various housing policy responses to women fleeing violence. Second, a brief overview of the types of housing supports available to IPV survivors fleeing violence explains the benefits and limitations of short, long, and permanent housing models. Third, a summary of the key themes of the evaluative studies on second stage housing is provided.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, HOUSING PRECARITY, AND HOMELESSNESS

IPV is a serious social problem in Canada, representing 30% of all police-reported crime.²⁵ According to the World Health Organization, intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence against women and “refers to behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm,

including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours.²⁶ In Canada, among the 96,000 victims of IPV who report to the police, women make up the majority (79%) of victims; IPV was also the most frequently reported type of violence experienced by women.²⁷ However, this is a vast underestimation as many victims do not report to the police.²⁸

INTERSECTIONALITY²⁹

Women fleeing IPV are not a homogenous group and have unique lived experiences based on their multiple and intersecting social locations across race, gender, ethnicity, class, ability, age, sexuality, and geographic location. Using an intersectional feminist lens illustrates the various ways that intersecting social locations may result in some women being disproportionately affected by IPV and how some women are systemically marginalized from accessing life-saving supports and consequently encounter additional barriers to leaving an abuser.³⁰

Low-income women living in poverty could become homeless if they leave their abuser.³¹ Faced with this uncertainty, some will stay to avoid potential violence associated with sleeping rough on the streets, particularly if they have children. Financial abuse may also compound their poverty and lead to challenges with rent arrears and poor credit history, making it difficult for low-income women to acquire new housing.³²

In Canada, Indigenous women are 2.7 times more likely to be victims of violence and six times more likely to be killed by a current or former partner than non-Indigenous Women.³³ In Canada's territories and the northern regions of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador, rates of violence against women are eight times higher than the national average.³⁴ Living in the territories is expensive, with few services for women fleeing violence. The lack of affordable housing and services contributes to violence against Indigenous women: "Colonization, patriarchy and the effects of intergenerational

trauma shape Indigenous women's experiences of homelessness and housing insecurity."³⁵ Further, women escaping an abuser may have to leave their community and family behind, which is an additional barrier as this is not always in the best interest of the women, nor the safest option since it displaces women and their children.³⁶

Statistics Canada estimates that 1 in 5 women live with a disability,³⁷ and research on victimization has found that women living with disabilities are at higher risk for IPV.³⁸ For example, a recent Statistics Canada report shows that women with disabilities reported an increased frequency of violent incidents compared to women who do not have a disability. They were more likely than men with disabilities to experience the most severe and serious forms of abuse from an intimate partner.³⁹ They also faced additional barriers to leaving, such as isolation, particularly if the perpetrator was a caregiver.⁴⁰

Recently, more attention has been given to the rates of IPV amongst two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual (2SLGBTQQIA) individuals and the challenges they face accessing various supports.⁴¹ However, due to fear of reporting and discrimination that may result from reporting, many 2SLGBTQQIA individuals do not report.⁴²

Immigrant and refugee women encounter unique challenges when they do not have access to information about their rights or culturally appropriate and safe supports in their community.⁴³ Due to isolation, immigrant and refugee women may lack informal support systems that could potentially provide them with short-term accommodations. Women with precarious status have limited access to public services, including social assistance and housing, and face the possibility of deportation.⁴⁴

WSC's 2019 report found that second stage shelters serve a diverse range of women fleeing violence including, but not limited to, Indigenous women (67%), immigrant and refugee women

(58%), racialized women (56%), 2SLGBTQQIA people (56%), older women (46%), women experiencing homelessness (41%), and women living with physical disabilities (23%).⁴⁵

WOMEN'S INVISIBLE HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING PRECARITY

Research has shown that IPV is a leading cause of women's homelessness in Canada and the US.⁴⁶ Canadian studies have found that women are the fastest-growing segment of homeless and at-risk populations,⁴⁷ and, in 2012, families headed by women were the fastest-growing demographic accessing homeless shelters.⁴⁸ Yet women's homelessness is often invisible, as many turn to informal support networks and stay with friends, family, or even a new partner to remain housed.⁴⁹ For some women, they may exchange shelter for sex or remain in violent situations to avoid living on the street, where there is a heightened risk for violence and exploitation.⁵⁰ The link between IPV and homelessness is evident; women who are fleeing violence, even if they are temporarily staying at a shelter, are essentially homeless.⁵¹

Some survivors will turn to women's homeless shelters for safety and support. However, studies show that many avoid homeless shelters even if they are segregated by gender due to safety concerns, as the locations are not confidential and the building may not have safety and security features.⁵² Other research has found that women will avoid homeless shelters because of concerns that child welfare authorities will be notified and their children may be apprehended.⁵³ For these safety reasons, women are often not "counted" as homeless in the Point-in-Time counts.⁵⁴ Thus, the extent of women's homelessness remains underestimated, impacting policy interventions such as Housing First.⁵⁵

Women escaping IPV are also at high risk for housing instability, which can result in homelessness. Housing instability refers to instances where women have a place to live; however, keeping their residence may be challenging for a multitude of reasons, including mental health concerns and financial issues.⁵⁶ Furthermore, studies have shown that housing

instability exacerbates mental health concerns such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety, which consequently affects women's ability to maintain their housing.⁵⁷

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, POVERTY, AND FINANCIAL BARRIERS TO LEAVING

IPV survivors often face considerable financial disadvantages when leaving a violent home.⁵⁸ As Zufferey et al. (2016) stress, "Following separation from a violent partner, women and their children are likely to experience significant income loss, financial hardship, and housing instability, particularly women who were at least partially financially dependent on their partners."⁵⁹ Immigrant women whose partners are also their sponsors and women living with disabilities reliant on partners who are also their caregivers are acutely vulnerable to economic loss following a separation.⁶⁰

Threats of financial insecurity, such as having to pay monetary penalties for ending leases early, may also prevent some women from leaving an unsafe home. Across the country, revisions to provincial and territorial Residential Tenancy Acts allow tenants experiencing domestic violence to end their tenancies early, without financial penalty and with a notice period of one month if they provide their landlord with proper third-party documentation (e.g. court order, certified professional statement, etc.).⁶¹ These policies vary and are inconsistent – New Brunswick, Nunavut, Prince Edward Island and the Yukon are without tenancy act provisions for those fleeing domestic violence.⁶² Where there are these provisions, documentation is not always available and poses a particular challenge for immigrant and refugee women to obtain as their abusers may keep immigration status and personal documents from them.⁶³

In addition to these financial barriers, economic abuse often occurs during and after ending a relationship and can have serious consequences for survivors trying to leave.⁶⁴ A 2015 report from the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS)

found that amongst women residing in second stage shelters, financial abuse was the third most common type of abuse they had experienced.⁶⁵ This type of abuse can take many forms, including preventing women from working or causing them to lose a job by harassing them at work until they are fired.⁶⁶

Financial abuse, such as preventing women from accessing their finances, can negatively impact rental applications as many survivors have poor rental histories and credit ratings due to rent arrears, late payments, evictions, and poor references from landlords.⁶⁷ Abusers may also cause disruptions that result in the police being called, or damage or destroy property to hinder victims from leaving.⁶⁸ Property damage caused by the abuser can adversely affect survivors' rental histories and further compromise their financial situations.

Discrimination IPV survivors face when trying to access housing, especially social housing, compounds the financial barriers to leaving. Numerous studies have documented that women who have fled violence and are experiencing homelessness, particularly those who are Indigenous, racialized, single parents, living with a disability, receiving social assistance, transgender, or two-spirit, face discrimination from landlords who refuse to rent to them.⁶⁹ A 2006 study conducted by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) found that landlords often and openly discriminated against women who were survivors of violence, with one-third of landlords "readily admit[ing] an unwillingness or hesitation to rent to a battered woman."⁷⁰

In summary, women fleeing violence are vulnerable to homelessness for several reasons such as poverty and financial barriers to secure new housing; the ongoing effects of economic abuse and sabotage even after the relationship has ended; and rental discrimination from landlords and social housing authorities. The lack of affordable and social housing, explored below, is also a significant barrier.

SCARCITY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND POLICY GAPS

The lack of affordable, safe, and appropriate housing is another significant – and potentially lethal – barrier for women who plan to leave an abuser.⁷¹ Women fleeing violence are most at risk when they leave an abuser. The Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee found that in 81% of the domestic homicide cases they reviewed, the couple was separated or in the process of separating.⁷²

Canada's affordable housing deficit is felt most acutely by women leaving violent partners, particularly women who are poor, single mothers, Indigenous, living with a disability, and/or living in rural and remote areas.⁷³ Immigrant and refugee women encounter additional challenges to accessing housing supports due to linguistic barriers and a lack of easily accessible, culturally appropriate services.⁷⁴

Women contend with multiple complex barriers when leaving an abuser and finding safe, affordable, and appropriate housing. To date, there are only a handful of government policies to meet the housing needs of IPV survivors – amendments to Residential Tenancy Acts, the Special Priority Status, and the Portable Housing Benefit.

As stated above, there have been amendments to Residential Tenancy Acts in parts of Canada to allow survivors to end tenancy agreements early. However, this has been inconsistently implemented across Canada, and some provinces and territories are still without these accommodations.⁷⁵

The Special Priority Status allows survivors to obtain housing more quickly, but the eligibility process can be cumbersome and may exclude some survivors. For example, documentation or "proof" of the abuse is requested, often from a third party (e.g. doctor, lawyer, police, etc.). However, this documentation is not always easy to obtain, and third parties can refuse to provide it.

In 2016, Ontario piloted the Portable Housing Benefit for Special Priority Program for survivors of domestic abuse or human trafficking. The goal was twofold: (1) to reduce the wait time to acquire rent-geared-to-income (RGI) social housing in the private housing market, and (2) to provide rental support linked to the individual or family rather than a specific social housing unit, providing survivors choice in where they live.⁷⁶ Additionally, a survivor who has separated from their abuser could remain in their unit and still receive the allowance for that unit. The program evolved with additional flexibility in 2018, allowing survivors who get approval to select either RGI housing or rental assistance in the form of the Portable Housing Benefit.⁷⁷ In 2020, the federal government, under the National Housing Strategy, created a joint investment with Ontario of \$1.4 billion under the first Canada Housing Benefit (Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit) to prioritize those with the most financial need on the social housing wait list.⁷⁸ While these policy shifts are welcomed, they are only available in Ontario; the special status and Portable Benefit are also reliant on available affordable housing stock, which is limited and hard to find in many communities.

THE CONTINUUM OF IPV AND HOUSING SUPPORTS FOR SURVIVORS

This section focuses on Canadian and international literature on various housing models designed to support women fleeing IPV, ranging from short-term emergency shelters to longer-term permanent supportive housing. This is not an exhaustive list; the purpose is to summarize the main housing models and programs that help women and their children transition towards safety, independence, and permanent housing. While VAW emergency and second stage shelters are more than a bed or an apartment unit, the

housing aspect of these different stages is the focus of this section.

In Canada, the continuum of supportive housing for IPV survivors is designed to provide different levels of safety, services, supports, and accommodations based on the survivor's individual needs. The intention is to offer wrap-around supports for survivors at different "stages" of their healing. Eligibility for second stage shelters varies regionally as some do not require survivors to have stayed at a VAW emergency shelter (i.e. completed the first stage) while others do. The majority of referrals come from VAW emergency shelters (see Figure 7, page 48).

It is important to note that not all women have the same access to VAW supports and interventions beyond VAW emergency shelters. For instance, IPV survivors in rural, remote, and northern communities lack options for women fleeing violence as there is virtually no affordable or social housing available, thus limiting the development of second and third stage housing as well as Housing First.

SHORT-TERM: EMERGENCY VAW SHELTERS

For almost fifty years, VAW shelters and transition houses provided refuge and support to women and children fleeing abuse.⁷⁹ They have grown significantly in number, with approximately 428 currently in operation in Canada, serving tens of thousands of women and children per year.⁸⁰

VAW emergency shelters provide short-term accommodation for women fleeing DV/IPV. These shelters differ considerably across Canada by region and geography, as well as between rural and urban, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous shelters. Funding for VAW shelters also varies, with shelters on First Nation reserves receiving significantly less funding than their provincially-funded counterparts.⁸¹

The majority of VAW emergency shelters operate in a communal environment, with residents having access to some common spaces (e.g. kitchen, quiet

rooms, laundry, living room, backyard). There are usually private bedrooms and sometimes private bathrooms. They provide women and their children with free accommodation and basic needs (e.g. food, clothing, and toiletries), as well as programming. Due to the heightened need for safety, the vast majority of VAW emergency shelters are staffed 24/7 and are equipped with various security measures and protocols to keep residents safe.⁸²

VAW emergency shelters offer a variety of support services for residents and non-residents alike such as individual and group counselling, children's programs, parenting classes, mental health and addiction services, nutritional classes and community kitchens, Indigenous programming, legal and housing services, support for immigrant and refugee women, men's programs (for those who have abused and those who have experienced abuse), and assistance with applications for jobs and education.⁸³ Supporting women to find housing is an essential aspect of the work done in emergency VAW shelters, with 90% providing this service.⁸⁴

Some VAW shelters are associated with a women's homeless shelter and provide services to both IPV survivors and women experiencing homelessness, suggesting some collaboration and overlap between these sectors. While they are different in terms of length of stay, programs and support offered, and safety and security measures, as Auffrey et al. (2017) note, "Both types of shelters were developed in response to different social problems and, only recently, has there been

recognition of potential overlap in clientele by looking at hidden homeless populations and considering prevention strategies."⁸⁵

Support Service Challenges:

Due to the short-term nature of VAW emergency shelters, coupled with the critical lack of affordable housing, many women are unable to find safe, affordable housing during their stay. For instance, in some provinces and territories, there is a one-month maximum stay at emergency shelters. Many shelters provide extensions, allowing women to remain longer, but this prevents new women fleeing abuse from moving in.⁸⁶ Unfortunately, this has resulted in women being turned away; for instance, on a snapshot day, 669 women and 236 accompanying children were turned away from shelters with a majority (82%) of shelters citing capacity issues as the main reason.⁸⁷

Other limitations include the challenges of communal living arrangements and the lack of privacy.⁸⁸ Many shelters have adopted or are exploring harm reduction and/or low-barrier alternatives to serve women with substance and mental health concerns.⁸⁹ However, some VAW emergency shelters struggle to meet the needs of survivors with significant substance and mental health concerns due to lack of space, staff expertise, funding, or training to ensure the safety of residents and staff.⁹⁰

Continuum of Supports for IPV Survivors



LONGER-TERM: SECOND STAGE SHELTERS AND HOUSING FIRST FOR IPV SURVIVORS

Second Stage Shelters

Second stage shelters, also known as second stage housing or transitional supportive housing, are a form of supportive transitional housing designed explicitly with the safety needs of IPV survivors in mind. Survivors seek out second stage shelters for safety and IPV-specific expertise and supports. Residents pay rent, which is either RGI and/or is subsidized by social assistance, except in the case of women with precarious status who do not have access to financial assistance. In either case, rent is no more than 30% of a resident's overall income. Many second stage shelters have staff available; however, this varies from staff on-site 24/7, to on-site only during business hours, to only being on call. A 2012 BC Housing report found that none of the second stage shelters they surveyed had staff on-site 24/7 and instead had arrangements with nearby VAW emergency shelters to respond to an immediate need for emotional support.⁹¹ Because safety is a key priority, many second stage shelters, particularly stand-alone buildings, are equipped with various security measures and protocols to keep residents safe.⁹²

The primary goal of second stage housing is to provide safety and housing stability with financial and emotional support, giving survivors the additional time needed to develop independence and self-sufficiency, thereby ending the cycle of abuse and preventing homelessness.⁹³ To help survivors achieve their goals, second stage shelters offer a variety of programs, either on- or off-site, and supports such as individual and group counselling, children's programs, life skills, referrals, and accompaniment to appointments.⁹⁴ Some second stage shelters offer follow-up supports for women who have moved into permanent housing for up to one year.⁹⁵

Support Service Challenges:

Due to the relative lack of standardization of second stage shelters and the varying regional and community needs, many have different policies

and practices. As such, some of the limitations outlined do not apply to all shelters.

Some researchers have argued that the lack of standardization in protocols is problematic as there is no way to adequately measure the effectiveness of programs that differ so significantly from region to region.⁹⁶ The lack of consistency has resulted in little consensus on what aspects of these programs are most beneficial to survivors and has made evaluative studies challenging.⁹⁷ However, referring to transitional housing programs for those experiencing homelessness, Novac et al. (2004) caution on comparing programs because the "objectives differ, [and] programs are unique and cannot be compared with each other. Since all programs aim to improve housing status, that aspect is comparable, although it may be measured in different ways."⁹⁸

Several studies have found that some residents struggle with some of the rules in second stage shelters.⁹⁹ For example, eligibility criteria that require participation in various programs to remain in the shelter were viewed by some as "disempowering survivors [and] limiting autonomy."¹⁰⁰ In a study by Clark, Wood, and Sullivan (2018a), interviews revealed that residents had challenges with rules related to safety, such as the banning of overnight guests, restrictions on visitors, and zero tolerance for drugs and alcohol. Residents also listed the lack of privacy and concerns about the programs not being long enough as limitations.¹⁰¹ Other studies have found that women perceived these rules as beneficial. For example, Fotherinham's (2014) study on homeless women's experiences in transitional housing (not IPV-specific) found that some women felt constrained by the rules, but they also recognized that the rules, coupled with the communal aspect of the transitional house, kept them safe.

Another limitation identified in the literature is the eligibility criteria to enter second stage shelters.¹⁰² While second stage shelters require some eligibility criteria, often specific to safety needs and danger

risk associated with post-separation violence, they do not usually require survivors to prove themselves ready to access second stage housing. If the potential resident has substance use or mental health challenges, often the requirement is that they can live independently and have community supports in place to complement the supports they will receive at the shelter.

Housing First for IPV Survivors

Since the 1990s, the Housing First (HF) model has emerged as a solution to housing those experiencing homelessness as quickly as possible and was recognized by the government of Canada as a proven approach to addressing homelessness in the *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy*.¹⁰³ HF is a federally funded program that is administered through community-level access points, where trained workers assess and evaluate needs to prioritize individuals and families for housing support services.¹⁰⁴ It is a rapid re-housing program that moves chronically homeless individuals into stable and long-term housing with supports attached to improve their quality of life while encouraging self-sufficiency.¹⁰⁵ The length of time of the program is generally one year, with the potential for extension if needed.

HF is a philosophy based on the understanding of housing as a fundamental human right that should be available to everyone and that people are better able to move forward with their lives if they are first housed.¹⁰⁶ The five core principles of HF include immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements; consumer choice and self-determination; recovery orientation; individualized and client-driven supports; and social and community integration.¹⁰⁷

In Canada, there have been some successful HF initiatives that are designed for IPV survivors who are at risk of homelessness. Discovery House Family Violence Prevention Society in Calgary, Alberta, is an integrated VAW shelter that provides community services for abused women and children, including an HF program.¹⁰⁸ London

Homes for Women in Ontario applies gender-specific, violence, and trauma-informed principles to ensure that women secure the housing they need to avoid homelessness.¹⁰⁹ Recently, Adsum for Women and Children in Halifax, Nova Scotia, launched Unlocking Hope: A Housing First Approach to Supporting Survivors of Family Violence. The new project is a trauma-informed housing first model for women and families who have experienced domestic violence.¹¹⁰

There are also successful HF projects for IPV survivors in the US. For example, in 2015, the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) developed a Domestic Violence Housing First (DVHF) pilot project to house survivors with "the freedom to choose how to best rebuild their lives."¹¹¹ The DVHF project is survivor-driven – women choose where they live and what, if any, programming and supports they need. The program allows for "flexible funding," which offers financial support based on the unique needs of each survivor. WSCADV conducted a longitudinal study (2016-2018) to measure the impacts of the flexible funding model; the results indicated many positive outcomes of the DVHF pilot project, including women and children feeling safer, stabilized, self-sufficient, "and empowered to create lives free from violence."¹¹² The vast majority (96%) of the pilot project participants remained stably housed after 18 months, and 97% reported increased safety for themselves and their children.¹¹³

Support Service Challenges:

There are several limitations to Housing First for IPV survivors. HF was mainly designed for men experiencing chronic homelessness with severe substance use and mental health concerns, with almost all evaluative studies focusing on men's experiences.¹¹⁴ Women staying in VAW shelters typically do not qualify for HF because they are not considered "chronically homeless."¹¹⁵ Consequently, HF policies have "paradoxically... compromised the housing security of women and other groups."¹¹⁶

The Service Prioritization Decision Assessment Tool (SPDAT), a triage assessment tool to determine the level of need and appropriate housing supports for individuals experiencing homelessness, has been criticized for not using a sufficient trauma and VAW danger assessment lens. As such, women who are referred to HF by anti-violence advocates and shelters do not score as high on need as those living with mental illness.¹¹⁷ Considering the research that has demonstrated the links between poverty, homelessness, and trauma,¹¹⁸ researchers and advocates argue that it is crucial for HF assessment tools to include sufficient trauma and danger assessment criteria.

Among VAW advocates, concerns around HF for IPV survivors relate primarily to their safety and the protection of personal data. Data collection is conducted through the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), which is a government tracking tool used to monitor the progress of individuals accessing housing programs such as HF.¹¹⁹ There are concerns around privacy and confidentiality for survivors, specifically the Point-in-Time counts that require surveyors to locate and interview homeless individuals within shelters.¹²⁰ For these reasons, some VAW shelters might opt out of data collection. Additionally, the HIFIS tool downplays the history of IPV in how it measures acuity and remains controversial in some regions. However, there are promising data sharing developments in Alberta where data gathering efforts have supported partnerships between VAW and housing service providers to determine appropriate housing services for families experiencing homelessness.¹²¹

The safety needs of survivors are also questionable as some apartment complexes are inappropriate for women who have fled violence and may be at risk for post-separation violence. For example, building entrances that are not secure and basement apartments with barred windows and no escape route could be dangerous.¹²² As Auffrey et al. (2017) note, “Women leaving abusive partners have unique and

heightened safety concerns when it comes to safe and secure housing, which may be experienced differently from others in the homeless serving sector.”

HF programs also rely on social and affordable housing stock that is difficult to find and often only an option for urban communities.

Because HF relies on rent subsidies, affordable housing is needed to ensure that residents can afford to live in their homes. There is also some risk for residents who do not have financial security, since losing their HF could compromise their progress and recovery.¹²³

Scattered site models may prevent community-building, which has been identified by survivors as a desired benefit of HF programs.¹²⁴

Housing First for survivors of violence is an important housing option. However, because there are so few HF IPV programs in Canada, it is unclear at this time how effective they are in meeting the physical and emotional safety needs of survivors. There have been no published evaluative studies of HF for IPV survivors in Canada.

LONG-TERM: THIRD STAGE HOUSING

Third stage shelters offer safe and affordable long-term housing with lengths of tenancy from 2-4 years. In some instances, women can stay until their children age out. After the allotted time frame is up, tenants can stay in the unit as long as they still qualify for social housing.¹²⁵ Third stage shelters are rare – there are five known third stage shelters in operation across Canada, the majority (4 of 5) of which are located in British Columbia. Little is known about third stage shelters aside from some general characteristics.¹²⁶

Programs differ provincially in terms of length of stay, range of clients (specialized needs, single mothers, etc.), and supports. As it is independent living, there is usually limited or no staff on-site, with support provided by outreach workers from other VAW shelters or anti-violence organizations.

Support Service Challenges:

The variation in safety features and on-site support may be a challenge for survivors who have complex trauma histories or are at a heightened risk for post-separation violence. As such, this form of housing would not be appropriate for everyone, especially those at high risk or who require additional supports.

EVALUATIVE STUDIES ON SECOND STAGE SHELTERS

Academics, policymakers, and anti-violence and homelessness advocates agree that VAW second stage shelters are a critical component of the continuum of supports for IPV survivors and an essential tool for combating gender-based violence.¹²⁷

While programming and approaches to service delivery differ, the overarching goal of second stage shelters “is to ensure that women are provided with housing stability and are able to live successfully in the community without returning to either homelessness or abuse.”¹²⁸ Correia and Melbin (2005) see second stage shelters as a “bridge to self-sufficiency and permanent housing,”¹²⁹ while Clark, Wood, and Sullivan (2018) found that they “afforded survivors time to begin healing from the trauma, put long-term security measures in place (e.g. legal protection orders, divorce, relocating), obtain new or better-paying employment, and save money for the future.”¹³⁰

Yet there is still a significant research and policy gap in understanding the scope of the work of second stage shelters.¹³¹ Although there have been two provincial studies on second stage shelters in Quebec and Alberta,¹³² there has been no national analysis on the value and efficacy of second stage housing for IPV survivors. One of the goals of WSC’s 2017 survey was to describe a national sample of second stage shelters in terms of their

general characteristics and the programs and services provided.¹³³ The findings from the 2017 survey were a stepping stone for this research study to better understand second stage shelters across Canada.

After conducting an extensive review of numerous databases and among grey literature in Canada and internationally, thirteen evaluative studies on second stage shelters met the criteria for review. Criteria included that the study was specific to second stage shelters, transitional housing for IPV survivors, or transitional housing for women experiencing homelessness, and included some evaluative method. This section explores the key themes from these evaluative studies. The four key themes consistent across the literature were the importance of safety, additional time, programs, and creating a sense of community.

SAFETY

Unfortunately, leaving the abuser does not always guarantee that the violence will stop; for many, they will continue to be stalked and verbally and emotionally abused by their ex-partner. This is known as post-separation violence, and it is a serious issue for women fleeing violence. As such, “heightened safety concerns, which grow more urgent in this period, contribute to the absence of feeling safe no matter where women end up immediately after leaving.”¹³⁴ Studies have shown that women are most at risk for escalated violence and femicide after leaving an abuser.¹³⁵ Therefore, safety is fundamental to the mandate of second stage shelters. To achieve their goals of stability, heal from abuse, and achieve independence, survivors must first feel safe. Because survivors have fled violence, for them, safety is intrinsically connected to a sense of home and stability.¹³⁶ When survivors feel safe, they can then work on healing, planning next steps such as housing, employment or schooling, building community and a network of support, and other long-term goals.

The evidence suggests that survivors’ safety needs are sufficiently met in second stage shelters and are reported as one of the key benefits by

both shelter staff and survivors. In CMHC's 1997 evaluation of the Next Step Second Stage Housing (SSH) Program, survivors surveyed indicated that "personal safety was the single most important need met by second stage shelters...nearly 60% of women using SSH listed personal safety security as either the most important or the second most important reason they moved into Next Step or other SSH."¹³⁷ Similarly, in Melbin et al.'s (2003) evaluation of IPV transitional housing supports, interviews with survivors and staff revealed that safety was of critical importance and that women reported feeling safer in transition houses. Feelings of safety were created by the security system, ongoing safety planning with staff, and rules that prohibited perpetrators from visiting or being on the property, which for some women was the first time they had felt safe in years.¹³⁸

An evaluative study by Clark et al. (2018a) found that safety was one of the key benefits of transitional housing for IPV survivors. They also discovered that survivors who had ongoing and the most serious safety concerns were most likely to prefer the second stage shelter model, with its security measures and community environment enabling additional layers of safety.¹³⁹ Similarly, Webster's (2013) study involving interviews with residents and stakeholders found that transitional housing works best for families in need of more intensive support who are not ready to move into permanent housing. Speaking to this, Webster reminds us that the "variety and intensity of needs among survivors will vary...[A] client-driven approach to housing assistance...meet[s] women where they are and address[es] the issue that is presented."¹⁴⁰ In both studies, the authors note how residents negotiate the benefits and drawbacks of rules that were designed to keep them safe, as they can feel restrictive. To address these issues, the authors encourage a survivor-centric, trauma-informed, and voluntary model that places the needs of the survivor at the centre.

ADDITIONAL TIME

Across the literature, additional time was a central benefit for survivors, specifically more

time to address housing issues, foster healing and stabilization, develop trust with staff, participate in programs, and take advantage of new opportunities to cultivate a network of support and a sense of community. As Hoffart (2015) explains, second stage shelters offer a "safe, supportive environment where residents can overcome trauma and begin to address the issues that led to homelessness, or kept them homeless and to begin to rebuild their supportive network... they are also gender and culture-sensitive and child-friendly."¹⁴¹

Survivors of violence have few housing options when they decide to leave an abuser. There is a critical lack of affordable housing stock, long waitlists to access social and affordable housing, and private accommodation at market rent is often too expensive to be an option.¹⁴² Second stage housing helps fill the gap between emergency shelter and permanent housing, giving survivors time and support to save for first and last month's rent and access various housing supports.¹⁴³ Transitional supportive housing is of particular importance to women living in rural and remote areas as there are limited social and affordable housing options available.¹⁴⁴

The majority of the literature reviewed concluded that time to sufficiently access affordable housing and support was crucial for survivors to feel safe, work with staff to identify their goals, and have space to heal from trauma and time to cultivate independence.¹⁴⁵ In this instance, additional time results in better housing and healing outcomes for survivors. Mekolichick et al. (2008) emphasize:

Finally, time is a key factor in determining success. The longer families stay, the more they accomplish, the more success they experience. In short the data suggest that the... [transitional supportive housing] provides a safe place to process and rebuild, to learn that one can have multidimensional relationships with others, and to learn how to negotiate conflicts in those relationships.¹⁴⁶

Time is essential for women to achieve self-sufficiency and ultimately improves their chances of success, including remaining housed. The BC Society of Transition Houses' (2020) longitudinal community-based project on reducing barriers to affordable housing for women fleeing violence showed that the longer stay in second stage shelters improved women's affordable housing outcomes and thus avoided homelessness by up to 30%.¹⁴⁷ Correia and Melbin (2005) maintain that "a sustainable network of support and resources must be developed to transition to a life safe from abuse, and this takes time."¹⁴⁸ Moreover, additional time ultimately allows "survivors time to work on any barriers they face to securing permanent housing and to heal from the trauma they have experienced."¹⁴⁹ Wendt and Baker (2013) conducted a qualitative study involving in-depth interviews with Indigenous women in Australia on their perceptions and experiences of family violence transitional housing. One of their key findings was that the time women spent in safe and stable housing improved their feelings about their capacity, self-sufficiency, and overall sense of strength and confidence. These findings were echoed in Tanguy et al.'s (2017) Quebec study whereby women's overall confidence, agency, and self-esteem had improved during their stay.

The longer-term nature of second stage shelters allows survivors to develop trust and build relationships with shelter staff, which is central to healing and working towards shared goals.¹⁵⁰ For instance, Tanguy et al. (2017) found that residents appreciated the support they received from shelter staff, the availability of the staff, and their knowledge of other resources and supports in the community. Finally, interviews with women revealed that due to the longer duration of their stay, some were able to develop stronger relationships and more trust as they got to know the staff.¹⁵¹

In their evaluative study of transitional housing for homeless women, Kirkby and Mettler (2016) found that housing support staff were pivotal in "helping women identify and solve tenancy issues,

which if left unattended, may lead to eviction."¹⁵² These include payment plans for tenants who are in rental arrears, discussions about tenant rights and responsibilities, and mediation with landlords. They concluded that these housing supports had positive outcomes for survivors who were able to maintain their housing longer than ever before.¹⁵³

PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Programs are another key benefit of second stage shelters. Because women are staying longer, they have more opportunities to participate in a variety of programming, including those for children. Programs range significantly and are dependent on funding and staffing resources.¹⁵⁴ To remedy gaps, some second stage shelters affiliated with an umbrella organization providing anti-violence services such as a VAW emergency shelter or women's community centre may provide services at the partnering organization off-site.¹⁵⁵

Typical programs include individual and group counselling, life skills, safety planning, parenting programs, addiction services, safety planning regarding technology, and financial management classes.¹⁵⁶ Programs for children consist of referrals for children's services, school support, childcare, and counselling for children who witnessed or experienced violence. Outreach programs are also offered by some organizations for up to one year after a woman leaves the shelter.¹⁵⁷

In a qualitative study involving interviews with women residing in IPV transitional supportive housing (TSH), Clark et al. (2018) discovered that access to programs helped women connect to the supports they needed to heal and achieve independence. These included support groups, classes, and employment and educational opportunities. Mothers were particularly happy with the programs and support available for their children. The social aspect of programs helped survivors break through isolation and feel connected to a community of women working towards violence-free lives. Mekolichick et al. (2008) also found positive results in their study on

TSH in rural locations. They evaluated programs from both staff and resident perspectives. Data were drawn from self-assessments of needs via a questionnaire for residents on arrival (repeated at nine months after entering the program and upon exiting), facilitator assessments, and staff interviews. Findings showed that for women leaving the program, self-esteem increased by 13.5%, depressive symptoms decreased by 44.2%, and anxiety symptoms decreased by 14.5%. The support groups helped women with personal growth and feeling empowered, with many also finding the social aspects helpful in their healing.

Mandatory programs pose difficulties in measuring resident's perception of how effective they are in helping them meet their goals. Studies such as Melbin et al. (2003) show that women were grateful for the programs but would not have participated in the activities had they not been compulsory. Several authors caution against mandatory programs as programming should be flexible to meet the needs of survivors.¹⁵⁸

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

Much of the literature noted the benefits within second stage shelters of developing community among the residents, staff, and external support networks. Developing community is one of the unique aspects of second stage shelters that is lacking in other housing models such as Housing First. These benefits have been documented by Clark et al. (2018a), who found that the sense of community developed within IPV transitional housing was valuable for survivors because being around others experiencing similar struggles was therapeutic and fostered a supportive environment. Knowing that they are not alone and they are not to blame for the abuse they endured is pivotal in their healing journeys.¹⁵⁹

Similarly, Melbin et al. (2003) reported that "[t]he vast majority of the women mentioned the supportiveness of staff and/or other women as being the most important component of TSH. Whether through support groups or individual

interactions, it was the emotional support of others that helped keep women going."¹⁶⁰

Building community and support networks are especially critical for women in rural communities. For example, Mekolichick et al.'s (2008) research on transitional housing in rural communities found that second stage shelters help "combat social isolation by providing support groups and a broad support system where women can learn how to develop healthy friendships and social networks...[A] support group for survivors of IPV provided women with the opportunity to divulge sensitive, personal experiences with one another."¹⁶¹ Through these networks, women were able to receive referrals for additional support and legal seminars, find jobs, advance their education, and improve their critical thinking skills.

To encourage community building, communal and gathering spaces are integral when designing second stage housing. For instance, BC Housing suggests that communal areas be "consciously planned" into the design of second stage shelters, ideally on the ground level with ample amenity space including a kitchenette and gathering space for activities and group events.¹⁶²

DEFINING SUCCESS FOR IPV SURVIVORS

Due to the diverse service delivery among second stage shelters, there is an assortment of measures used to identify success for women who have transitioned into independent living. Some of the goals of second stage shelters/TSH are to provide safe, affordable housing, prevent homelessness, and give women options so that they do not return to their abuser. Therefore, many of the indicators of success are measured by economic and housing stability and meeting personal goals.¹⁶³

Economic stability involves maintaining housing once secured, increased income from employment or social assistance, and movement into paid work rather than relying on social assistance.¹⁶⁴ US studies show that TSH has a 70% success rate for women remaining free from violent relationships¹⁶⁵ and that the stability afforded by the time in TSH resulted in 88% of women

staying in stable public housing.¹⁶⁶ As Wendt and Baker (2013) stress, “The practical outcomes of stable, safe housing were augmented by feelings of strengthened confidence and self-efficacy.”¹⁶⁷ Personal goals include remaining free from violent relationships, not returning to an abuser, personal growth goals, independent living skills, increased self-esteem and confidence, and self-sufficiency.¹⁶⁸ Survivor-centric, trauma-informed, and culturally relevant practices that emphasize autonomy help empower survivors to plan and meet their personal goals.¹⁶⁹

However, success must be defined by survivors themselves rather than by expectations of program outcomes (or a funder’s outcomes), since healing and stability take time and require different strategies to meet women’s goals. For second stage shelters to adequately meet the unique needs of IPV survivors, the literature stresses that it is vital that services and supports are voluntary, survivor-centric, and trauma-informed, while prioritizing women’s safety.¹⁷⁰

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The importance of safety, time, programs, and community provided by second stage shelters/ TSH was a key theme across the literature. Future research must incorporate longitudinal studies that include qualitative components to ensure that survivors can share their reflections in meaningful ways to help shape future programs, policies, and approaches in second stage shelters. Researchers and funders must work in collaboration with second stage shelters to assess what should be evaluated, why, and how this will best serve second stage shelters and, more importantly, the survivors who reside in them. To conclude the literature review, some emerging promising practices are outlined.

EMERGING PROMISING PRACTICES

Building upon the best practice of flexible supports to meet survivors where they are at, the following identifies some emerging promising practices from the literature.

a. Flexible Housing Model

Many of the studies reviewed emphasized the need for flexible, survivor-centred services to meet women’s individual needs, which can maximize their success (remaining housed, not returning to an abuser, self-efficiency, etc.).¹⁷¹

An interesting example is the WSCADV’s Domestic Violence Housing First (DVHF) program in Washington State, which classifies the level of need for housing supports as light, medium, or high.¹⁷² The majority (62%) of survivors fell into the “light touch” category, meaning they had “simple, discrete needs that can be met quickly.”¹⁷³ In this case, the survivor does not necessarily require intensive programming and supports and should be able to opt-out of mandatory programs.

b. Flexible Funding Model

A 2018 longitudinal qualitative study by Bomsta and Sullivan explored survivors’ perspectives on flexible funding and how this impacted their children and their ability to maintain their housing.¹⁷⁴ Flexible funding refers to money that is given directly to the woman who can then determine, based on her own needs, how to spend it. They found that the majority (74%) of the flexible funds were spent on direct housing costs such as security deposits and rental arrears, whereas 26% were spent on other needs such as moving expenses, auto repairs, utility bills, childcare, storage units, and other expenses.¹⁷⁵ The results indicated that, six months after receiving the flexible funds, 95% of survivors were still housed and 41% remained in their original homes (some had relocated to a more affordable home or had moved for safety reasons), suggesting that the program has been successful in helping survivors remain housed.¹⁷⁶ This model also had positive

impacts on the children who, with the stability of remaining in their schools, daycares, and familiar neighbourhoods, reported being happier and less stressed.¹⁷⁷

This flexible funding model was also explored by the DVHF initiative in King County Region, Washington State.¹⁷⁸ Transportation assistance and moving costs accounted for the largest percentage of payments. Over half (51%) of survivors were able to stay in their own homes as a direct result of receiving flexible financial assistance.¹⁷⁹

c. Co-Location, Mixed Shelters, and VAW Hubs

Some VAW and anti-violence organizations and shelters are considering the benefits of co-locating shelters, including mixed shelters, and VAW hubs.¹⁸⁰ Mixed shelters include a VAW emergency shelter component and second stage housing units in one facility. There are 33 known mixed shelters in Canada.¹⁸¹ In a 2019 report documenting the housing needs of VAW shelters, BC Housing encouraged the co-location of emergency beds and second stage units in one building as it provides “economies of construction, staffing and offering opportunities for sharing certain facilities and services. This approach can enable residents to build on existing relationships with support staff as they move from the transition house into second stage housing.”¹⁸²

Additionally, Fotheringham and Turner (2018) argue that a community service hub for IPV survivors would bring “social and economic benefits while also improving the efficiency and effectiveness of local services...Hubs have emerged as innovative approaches to integrate responses to domestic violence in recent years.”¹⁸³ Hansen (2018) has also suggested a service hub that would promote system planning to streamline the delivery of services and prevention initiatives to end gender-based violence: “A formalized, comprehensive and integrated systems approach means creating hubs to bring together services

from other public systems to complement in-house supports to advance the anti-violence agenda.”¹⁸⁴

d. Collaboration Across Sectors

There is a pressing need for community organizations serving women at the intersection of IPV and homelessness to work collaboratively. As Bomsta and Sullivan (2018) note, “More IPV victim advocacy agencies are moving to provide more and deeper housing services to these families, and more housing agencies are coming to recognize that many of their families are dealing with violence.”¹⁸⁵ Considering the increasing need for VAW and anti-violence organizations to assist women in addressing housing barriers, it is beneficial for community housing, homelessness organizations, and VAW shelters to work together to develop solutions for housing IPV survivors.¹⁸⁶

In addition to community homeless agencies, VAW and anti-violence advocates must continue to build relationships with landlords, community stakeholders, and various housing authorities.¹⁸⁷ For example, landlords should work with local VAW advocates “for mutual benefit: the women will maintain her housing and avoid eviction while the landlord will be in compliance with housing protections,” ensuring that the tenant can remain while minimizing the potential rental revenue loss.¹⁸⁸

RESULTS



This mixed-methods study consisted of an online survey, semi-structured interviews with service providers and survivors, and two focus groups, between June 2019-February 2020. It is important to note that these findings are not prescriptive, meaning they are not suggesting what shelters should be doing or what the best practice is. Instead, they are indicative of what second stage shelters are currently doing given their circumstances. Quotations for survivors are anonymous, while executive directors could choose how to be identified.

SURVEY: WHO TOOK PART

Of the 135 second stage and mixed shelters sent the survey, we received data from 97, representing a 72% response rate. Overall, 85 of the respondents were from second stage shelters (stand-alone shelters, scattered sites, or a combination), and ten were from mixed shelters (Table 1).

POPULATION SIZE OF COMMUNITY

It is important to consider the regional differences among the provinces and territories, as well as between different sizes of communities and Indigenous and non-Indigenous shelters. This is because their local contexts impact the second stage shelter model, resources and funding, availability of affordable housing, and local partnerships with housing authorities.

The survey received responses from a range of population sizes, from major cities to small communities. Aside from two rural responses,

Table 1: Respondents by type of shelter and province/territory¹⁸⁹

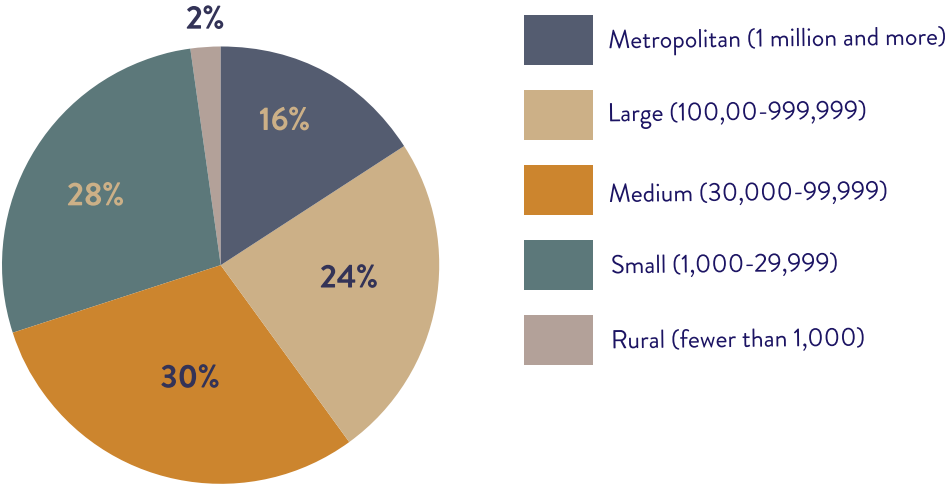
	Province/Territory												Total
	AB	BC	MB	NB	NL	NT	NS	ON	PE	QC	SK	YT ¹⁹⁰	
Stand alone second stage	9	14	0	3	3	1	4	25	1	16	2	0	78
Mixed shelter	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	2	10
Scattered sites	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Combination	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Other	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	14	17	2	4	5	2	4	25	1	19	2	2	97

there was a fairly even distribution amongst metropolitan, large, medium, and small population centres (Figure 1). Overall, the majority (70%) of second stage shelters were located in larger, urban population centres.

Women fleeing violence in rural, remote, and northern communities are particularly underserved as there is little to no affordable housing stock to facilitate second stage housing programs.¹⁹¹ The lack of affordable housing is compounded by regional-specific challenges such as inadequate and inconsistent funding, the high costs to transport building materials and fuel, and shortages of local skilled labour.¹⁹² Canada’s territories are underserved, with only one mixed and two second stage shelters across all three.¹⁹³ Nunavut remains the only province or territory in Canada without any second stage shelters. There are only five known second stage shelters on First Nations reserves, as most of the reserves are rural communities with virtually no affordable housing available; there is only one known second stage shelter in an Inuit community.¹⁹⁴

Among the survey respondents, ten were Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) second stage (n=6) and mixed shelters (n=4), which includes Indigenous or Indigenous-led shelters in urban centres. Among them, two were located on a First Nations reserve. First Nations second stage shelters located on-reserve face specific challenges due to expansive catchment areas in rural, remote, and northern regions, the ongoing effects of colonialism, and the heightened rate of violence against Indigenous women and girls.¹⁹⁵ They are also funded differently than shelters not located on-reserve, through federal dollars distributed by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) (see Funding section, page 38).

Figure 1: Population Size



GOALS AND PURPOSE OF SECOND STAGE HOUSING



Survey and interview data correspond to findings from the literature review in that safety, time, programs, and community provide the foundational base for IPV survivors to achieve their goals of independence and living violence-free lives.

While establishing housing is a crucial aspect of women rebuilding their lives and gaining independence, the results of this study demonstrate that housing is just one aspect of second stage shelters. Establishing safety, overall health and wellbeing, economic independence, and developing an understanding of abuse to break the cycle of violence were also important goals for survivors.

Executive Director (ED) survey respondents were asked to identify the goals of their second stage shelters for residents. Of the 91 responses, the top three identified were independence, safety, and long-term housing. Several also emphasized the importance of survivor-centred goals, meaning that survivors are actively

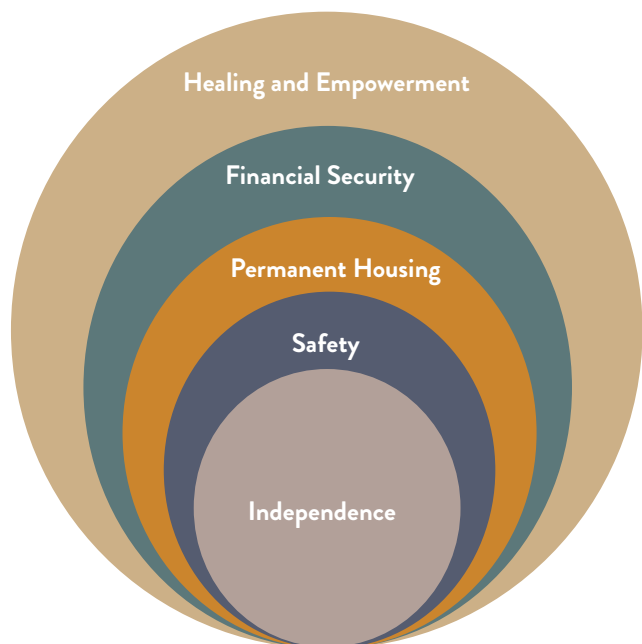
involved in determining their goals. As an Ontario respondent noted, “We base success on a woman's goals and her own definition of success. We internally define success based on our commitment to client-centred, anti-oppressive, and culturally safe practices.”

Sub-themes of independence included: working towards safe, long-term, and affordable housing; financial security/support (paid employment or financial assistance); enrolling in school; addressing mental health and substance use concerns; working towards obtaining access and custody for children apprehended by child welfare authorities; and safety (e.g. safety planning, not returning to an abuser, establishing healthy relationships, knowledge of abuse and violence). Increased self-esteem, confidence, and empowerment were also recognized as vital factors for survivors to be able to envision and achieve their goals.

Speaking to the transition residents experience in second stage shelters, survey respondents shared:

Some residents experience safety for the first time.
- survey respondent, British Columbia

We believe every person knows what is best for them; they are the expert on their own lives. We are here to help them do what is best for them. Initially, success might be just getting out of bed in the morning or attending programming. Later, it might mean going back to school, or gaining employment or affordable



housing. Every small step forward is a success. - *survey respondent, New Brunswick*

Women are often in crisis when they move in. Slowly the time is taken to put together a plan and ensure that the pieces are in place to begin healing. When they finally depart, the personal growth that has happened can be amazing. - *survey respondent, Prince Edward Island*

Residents are able to make healthy relationships, are able to secure freedom financially...and are able to transition to independent housing and independent living. - *survey respondent, Saskatchewan*

They are able to move out and thrive in the community. When they are facing difficulties, they will reach out to their established community supports. - *survey respondent, British Columbia*

They feel empowered and therefore are able to attain their goals...Getting through the challenges have made them stronger and they now know they can make it on their own. They are happier, able to set limits without feeling guilty, and don't allow anyone to dictate to them anymore. They are free to make their own choices and take full responsibility for them. - *survey respondent, Quebec*

In-person interviews with EDs expanded this understanding. The time needed to pause and plan next steps was emphasized, as well as connection, support, survivor-centric approaches, providing resources and tools, and helping empower women. Establishing safety and having expertise in IPV are also necessary to support survivors during a transition. When asked what the overall goals of second stage are, EDs answered:

Our goal is to give women a moment to catch their breath. We recognize that our first stage is six weeks, which is no time. That is a blink in the world of crisis response. So the second stage intention is to give people a chance to breathe...[and] figure out what they want to do. - *ED, Newfoundland and Labrador*

Our goal is to support the women and children who have left an abusive environment. To give them the tools and resources to break that cycle and to help them move forward for an independent life. - *Lynn, Armagh House, Ontario*

We have several goals. When it comes down to it, our mission is to provide specialized IPV support. Our goal is to help women recover their self-esteem and regain power over their own life, and all of our services revolve around this ideal. So this is our main focus, to diminish the consequences of domestic violence. Also part of our mission is about coming together and working towards social change. - *Arianne, Nouvelle-Étapa, Quebec*

Our philosophy is, we provide support for as long as a resident or ex-resident wants that support. It's choice-based...We've had ex-residents who've come back years later because something has happened and they need some support or they can come regularly; it's totally up to them. But, we want to be there...we already know their history and can jump right in with what they've identified as their need. - *Lisa, Munroe House, British Columbia*

The one-on-one connection with the women and engaging in the journey of supporting them in the goals and objectives that they need for their own safety, dignity, and self-sufficiency. - *Barb, Betty's Haven, Yukon*

EDs noted the importance of survivor-centric supports that are in-line with the needs of residents. Flexible and intuitive programming is essential as it is directed by the current group of residents. As the needs of residents change, or new women arrive and others leave, the programs change to meet their needs. One ED described this as "holistic, organic, and flexible" (Barb, Betty's Haven). This was put into practice by staff who hosted regular house meetings where a meal was provided alongside entertainment or activities for children. Here, residents had the opportunity to check-in with staff and other residents on what programs and supports they wanted available.

While providing safe and affordable housing is a crucial component of second stage, the interviews and site visits demonstrated how it is much more than just an apartment – it is also a home, community, and connection where survivors have agency direct their healing and decide what is best for them.

CURRENT AND FORMER RESIDENTS OF SECOND STAGE SHELTERS SHARE THEIR GOALS

Current and former residents shared their goals while staying in second stage shelters and how staff helped them work towards achieving those goals. Developing self-sufficiency and confidence was a goal expressed by many survivors interviewed. This looked different for each survivor, depending on their own unique experiences and strengths.

For a current resident in Quebec, staying at the second stage shelter allowed her to relax and move past her fear, helping her find her strength for the next stage in her life: “This place gave me an opportunity to relax...I feel much more stable.”

A current resident in Ontario talked about how learning about her mental health and how to take care of herself was empowering and an important part of healing and becoming more independent: “They’ve already helped me identify triggers. They taught me what trauma bonding is...How to cope with my anxiety, how to do self-care, how to practice relaxation, how to take responsibility for my actions...Learning this has helped me.”

One way independence was encouraged was making some second stage programs choice-based rather than mandatory. This was crucial to women whose agency was denied by their abusers. As a current resident in Ontario shared, the staff “will help you. They will give you choices, which is very important. They don’t force you; they give you the options.” A former resident in the Yukon also shared that “they didn’t ever try to take the reins in your healing process, which was very empowering and helpful.”

After some learning and personal growth through programs offered at the shelter, a former Ontario resident gained a sense of inner strength and decided to return to her ex-partner. The staff supported her decision and helped her develop a safety plan, emphasizing that their door was always open and that staff were there for her should she need anything. This is reflective of how shelters honour the choices of survivors, which for some means reconciliation with their partners. She said, “There have been such big changes in me. I was so afraid even to speak up before and I used to be very scared. Now I would speak up if things are wrong. So these are the changes, the strength, I would say I got from here.”

Women identified career aspirations and education as a means to achieve independence, self-sufficiency, a sense of purpose, and economic stability. While some already worked, others had not had the opportunity and were looking forward to exploring new educational and career opportunities. For example, a current resident in Quebec commented, “Yes, their feedback is usually constructive; it motivates me to fulfill my dream. They validate all the efforts we put in...I love to cook and have people enjoy the food...It’s a pleasure.”

A current resident in BC shared how the violence she fled alongside her precarious status was a barrier to achieving her career aspirations: “I worry about my immigration...I’m wondering what’s next.” She studied fashion design in her home country, yet her dream of being a designer was on hold. Despite these challenges, she had not given up, saying, “I have really clear goals...I want to work in my industry and do my best.”

The support that a current resident of a Newfoundland and Labrador second stage shelter received helped her rebuild her confidence to pursue her own cabinet company:

When you meet these lovely ladies [staff], they listen... When I mentioned to her that I wanted to start my own kitchen cabinet company...she said ‘the sky’s the limit’...

And it's a self-esteem booster, just to have someone help you say, 'you're doing fine, keep going.' I love them. I just love this shelter.

Former residents of second stage also reflected on their goals while residing at the shelter. A Quebec former resident shared that it was a good experience because it helped her evolve and figure out her next steps:

You're re-evaluated and asked, have you made efforts to find a job or get welfare? Are you attending your meetings? And what about your journey? Are you opening up? Are you doing enough for the children? You take it in...It doesn't feel like a test; this is why you have this opportunity to be here, to evolve. If you happen to stagnate, they will be sure to give you a shake...It has allowed me to be able to afford certain things, to save a little, to figure out what I want to do in life, at this point... It has allowed me to accomplish what I set my sight on and to prepare the foundation for the future.

A Yukon former resident felt that she was given time and space to figure things out. Her goals were focused on her children and improving her mental health wellness:

The goals that I had were very encircled around my children. It was about parenting. So they helped me get a childcare subsidy so I could put my kids in daycare for a couple of months, while I was able to process my own emotional trauma, away from them... So I knew that they were well cared for.

These survivors had different goals of independence, which were encouraged and supported by the second stage shelter staff – from career and educational aspirations, reconciliation with ex-partners, and parenting, to healing and recovery. Time and space to do this work and plan how to achieve these goals were critical in transforming their lives.

WRAP-AROUND SUPPORTS

Survivors shared that time, space, safety, support, programs, community, housing, and independence were the most beneficial aspects of their experience at the second stage shelter. Many noted that the shelter and the support they received saved their lives and the lives of their children. Their insights were powerful.



CURRENT RESIDENTS:

They can offer a place even without status. In my situation, I'm very stuck because I can't work. I can't go back to Mexico because we have a lot of turbulence...I appreciate it so much....They [staff] do very good work; they are great people. - *British Columbia*

The housing and the support is there if you need to talk to somebody. The support during Christmas, the affordable homes, the security of the homes, and the lovely neighbourhood...It's just all-around wonderful. - *Newfoundland and Labrador*

That it is not short-term...You need enough time to be prepared to move onto the next step...It's two years, which is amazing. - *Ontario*

It's our safety, the reassurance and the staff and everybody here. The routines. Being able to think clearly. Community resources. They had a job search assistance program; they came in and helped us with our resumes and interviews. The counselling, an ear to simply listen. The overall support and the groups. Being able to be at peace and sleep peacefully. - *Ontario*

They make us feel like we are human beings. They make us feel like we are women, that we deserve to live... That we are self-sufficient and that we have a place in the community...As a single parent, we can provide everything for our kids. It's really difficult to be a single mother. I really had a journey...but...every time I fall, I pick myself up again. Every time I cry, I say that I can no longer do it, that's when I end up discovering I am strong enough to continue. That's what they do here. - *Quebec*

For me, it's being able to talk to someone about my personal stuff....Rather than driving myself crazy... they've helped me big time...It's a good program...they have every program to help you with your situation. - *Yukon*

FORMER RESIDENTS:

I mean, I'm alive, my children are alive. I think I can attribute that directly to the second stage housing. So that's huge. - *Yukon*

I think it was the knowledge from the support workers. If I didn't have them...I don't think I would have pulled through. With all those things like finances and getting myself independent. Reassuring me that I'm going to be safe. - *British Columbia*

I think that it was a safe environment...And I really can see how much I needed the extra support. - *British Columbia*

Below market value rent was excellent because it gave me the way to be able to tuck away little bits here and there...and the staff have been and continue to be absolutely amazing. - *Newfoundland and Labrador*

For me, it's like they [second stage shelters] have to exist and there have to be more spaces because the first stage shelters are full. - *Quebec*

This place helped me to become a different person... When you live in a situation where you are very dominated, insulted, humiliated, and you are so hopeless in life, you don't want to live anymore, then you decide, you come out... I didn't know where I'm

going to. I just made a decision, then I left. And then I came here. I felt love and then healing. So that's really made a difference. - *Ontario*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

EDs interviewed shared their perspectives on what were the most important aspects of second stage shelters, specifically safety, specialization in domestic violence, and wrap-around supports:

We can be that support system, and we can help with all of the wrap-around services that our programs have to offer so that women have emotional and financial supports and security. - *Lisa, Munroe House, British Columbia*

I'm going to speak to some of the evaluations we've received from the families. It's the wrap-around services, the continuous support after they've left Armagh. Safe and affordable housing...Time to find stability and goal planning...Security and feeling safe...In all of the evaluations we have received, all of them want to...be self-sufficient. - *Lynn, Armagh House, Ontario*

The one-on one-connection with the women and engaging in the journey of supporting them in the goals and objectives, that they see the need for their own safety and dignity and self-sufficiency. - *Barb, Betty's Haven, Yukon*

Second stage shelters offer us the opportunity to apply a gendered lens and a trauma-informed approach to long-term affordable housing. It gives women a chance to pause for a moment in her own space and decide what is right for her and her children...She can choose as much or as little contact with the transition house as she needs...I think the most helpful aspect of second stage shelters is the return of 'choice and time' to women who have had both of those things taken from them. - *ED, Newfoundland and Labrador*

We have the time to prepare. We say that the women have time to catch their breath. Because in first stage, it's crisis and then, in second stage, it's 'I catch my breath,' and then, 'what is my life now?' This is what makes the difference because if not...they might return to their partner. - *Arianne, Nouvelle-Étape, Quebec*

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE (MODEL)



Among survey respondents, the majority (80%) of second stage shelters were “stand-alone buildings,” 10% were mixed shelters (combining VAW emergency beds with second stage units), 4% were scattered sites, 3% were a combination, and 2% were other (see Figure 2). The “other” responses included a 6-unit communal living centre, a row of townhouses, a second stage located on the same property as an emergency shelter but in a separate building, and a secure floor in an apartment complex.

For this study, WSC visited four stand-alone second stage shelters and one second stage scattered site model. During these visits, we learned how the buildings were acquired and how the model used was decided. The differences in models are the result of localized contexts, availability of resources, and opportunities (funding, physical buildings, etc.) that arise with the municipality, region, umbrella organization, and other groups.

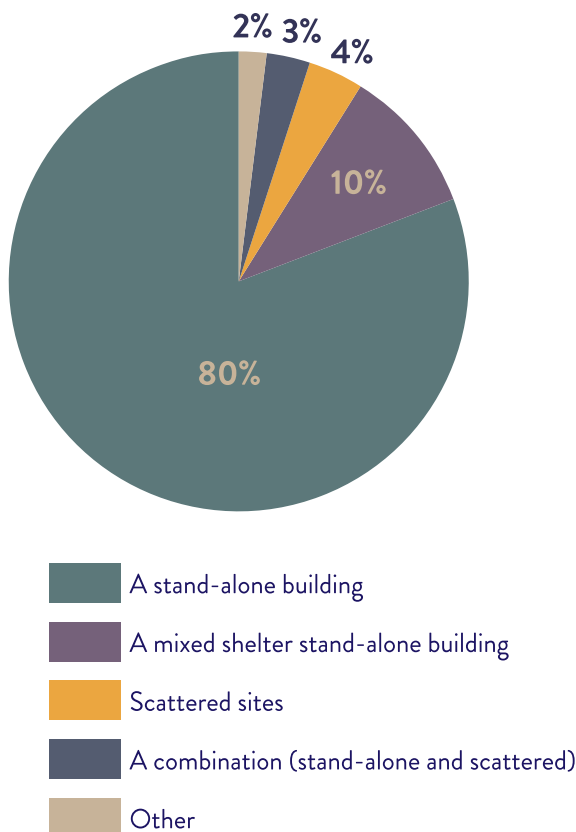
LINKS TO EMERGENCY VAW SHELTERS

All of the EDs interviewed shared how the development of second stage shelters was closely connected to VAW emergency shelters and other women’s organisations recognizing a need in their communities. Unsurprisingly, three-quarters (75%) of survey respondents were affiliated with a VAW emergency shelter, indicating that the majority are in some way connected to an existing shelter.

Often, an emergency VAW shelter or women’s centre had identified a need for second stage housing in the community, conducted a needs assessment alongside research, fundraised, and sought out property to build or purchase an existing structure. Establishing second stage shelters involves a combination of luck, timing, strong networks, and dedication and hard work from EDs, staff, and boards of directors. Commenting on the history of Munroe House, the oldest second stage shelter in Canada, Lisa noted:

Back in the 1970s, support workers in the Vancouver first stage transition house identified that there was a need for something more. Some women needed longer stays with more emotional and financial support to be able to successfully leave their abusive partners and live independently...And the YWCA stepped up and became a home for the project and started the first transition house in second stage in Canada in 1979 on this site.

Figure 2: Type of Second Stage Shelter (n=96)



Arianne of Nouvelle-Étape shared:

A women's drop-in centre noticed a lack of resources for women who are victims of domestic violence, as far as shelters and housing are concerned. They wrote several first and second stage shelter grant proposals, especially since we do not have first stage shelters in our area...We went to the CMHC and the SHQ [Société d'habitation du Québec] for funding. At the time, the city gave us the land for one dollar.

Some survey respondents commented that they only receive referrals from VAW emergency shelters, or that they prioritize these referrals. In Quebec, for instance, a referral from a VAW shelter (not necessarily directly affiliated – it can be any emergency shelter) is a pre-requisite to be considered for second stage.

In some instances, budgets, boards, and staff members might be shared between the two shelters, whereas in other cases, the organizations are entirely separate. One ED interviewed stressed that autonomous second stage shelters that are not connected to a VAW shelter nor part of a mixed shelter are at a particular disadvantage due to the lack of funding in some provinces and territories. Stand-alone second stage shelters do not have the same resources as those that are affiliated with or attached to a VAW shelter where staff, resources, crisis lines, and programming can be shared. Affiliated and umbrella organizations can also provide an additional layer of security in times of financial difficulties.

The connection to VAW emergency shelters corresponds to the model the organization uses. For example, the scattered second stage sites visited in Newfoundland and Labrador were directly connected to an emergency shelter that current and former residents could call for support or attend programming, space permitting. In contrast, the second stage shelter in the Yukon was next door to an emergency shelter, but had separate staffing and programming. The three other shelters we visited accepted referrals from emergency shelters but were not directly affiliated

with an actual VAW shelter. Even in a small sample of five, there was variation depending on the local context, resources, and needs of the community.

OWNERSHIP

Among survey respondents, the majority (83%) owned their buildings. For the 14 respondents who did not own their buildings, they had an arrangement with a partnering organization such as cooperative housing or a provincial/territorial affordable housing provider, a sublease (the shelter leases with the landlord and sublets to the resident), or another arrangement. Almost one-third (29%) reported having a forgivable loan or another agreement with CMHC to cover the mortgage.

EDs interviewed explained other ownership models and how buildings were obtained. For example, Munroe House was able to get a mortgage with the financial support of their umbrella organization (the YWCA). In the case of a second stage shelter in Newfoundland and Labrador, the military housing duplexes were sold to the shelter for one dollar from the municipality, leaving them with no mortgage and full ownership. Armagh House was initially bequeathed by a family to a local church, which then transferred it to a board of directors to transform it into transitional supportive housing.

The focus group also spurred discussion around alternative methods to shelter building ownership, with one participant explaining that they rent units from the city, which maintains them, while they provide the services and supports. Another participant had an arrangement with social services, which maintained the building. In both cases, collaborative relationships with housing partners and landlords were required to ensure the landlord was aware of the importance of safety and security for the residents.

FUNDING AND SECOND STAGE SHELTERS



In all of the data sources, second stage shelters described a variety of funding models and challenges. We asked survey respondents if they receive any type of government (federal or provincial) funding. This question did not specifically ask if that funding is core and recurrent, as only two provinces are known to have this arrangement. Quebec second stage shelters, for instance, receives 78% of their operational costs for a total of \$28,000 per unit. The majority (71%) of respondents reported that they receive some provincial and territorial government support.

Second stage shelters in Newfoundland and Labrador and Saskatchewan, and Ontario, do not receive any sustainable provincial government funding. Ontario second stage shelters lost their funding in 1995, when the Conservative provincial government terminated that financial support.¹⁹⁶ Of the Indigenous shelter respondents, four of the five (80%) did not receive any government funding compared to 25% of mainstream shelters (22 of 86), demonstrating a clear funding disadvantage for Indigenous shelters.

Among the respondents who received government funding, 71% of their overall budget consisted of that funding (n=43). Government funding covered a range of budget items with salaries (75%), programs (62%), and maintenance (49%) being the most frequently reported (Figure 3).

FUNDING GAPS AND CHALLENGES

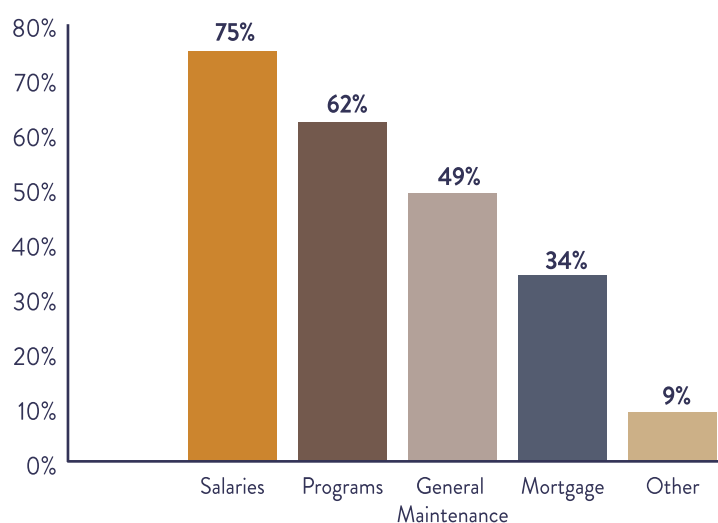
Survey comments overwhelmingly pointed to funding gaps, the need for additional funding, and issues of inconsistent or lack of funding (n=50). Many of these comments spoke explicitly to the need to hire more staff and to compensate existing staff adequately. These themes were consistent in the interviews with EDs and the focus groups.

Funding gaps, meaning that only certain aspects of shelter operations are covered by the funder, were

the most reported issue that second stage housing providers face. For example, the funding only covers the upkeep of the building itself but not staffing, or only one specific program or support is funded rather than all. This has a spillover effect, leading to resources being directed to apply for patchwork funding opportunities rather than being focused on survivors. Many shelters have to fundraise to stay open and staffed.

First Nations second stage shelters are at a particular disadvantage. One focus group participant from a First Nations second stage

Figure 3: What does your government funding cover? (n=65)



shelter explained that once survivors are transferred from emergency shelters to second stage, the per diem funding provided to the emergency shelter for that survivor does not transfer to the second stage shelter: "That's it, they don't give us any more." She also expressed frustration that the government funder only covers new builds, asking, "How are you going to sustain them?" Her shelter wanted to provide many more supports and services, "but they're not giving us anything else besides funding for the structure."

Several EDs interviewed noted the challenges of sustainable second stage funding. These shelters are not considered "crisis" or "emergency," and there's an assumption that women are safe if they have left an abuser. For example, as Barb (Betty's Haven, Yukon) who also manages an emergency shelter said:

I think there is more political pressure on us and we're spending more time trying to fight even more oppression within government. When emergency services take precedence over second stage, we start to lose ground and support...So that continuum of services and support that are going to ensure your success out in the community, both in housing rights and basic needs, is getting undermined.

Funding models and sustainability ranged significantly across the country; even the shelters who did receive government funding did not get 100% coverage. Second stage shelters in Quebec still struggle even though they receive some sustainable funding for their shelters (\$28,000 per unit). As Arianne of Nouvelle-Étape noted, "Yet again, funding remains the hurdle. I'm getting grants from other sources...I can't make ends meet with only the [government] funds for the program."

Shelters in Ontario noted a significant issue with the 1995 funding cuts, which they have still not recovered from. As two survey respondents from that province commented:

We lost our provincial funding in 1995...We are at the mercy of cuts at any time. We are very unsure of what the future holds.

It would be hard to imagine how stand-alone second stage programs could do much more than keep the heat and lights on based on the lack of funding to this important part of the service continuum for women and children fleeing violence.

Several British Columbia shelters reported that they don't receive any government funding, while others said that what they did receive was inadequate:

Our agency owns the duplexes. Unfortunately, we do not have any provincial or federal funding to operate programs and/or qualify for renovation/improvement funding. We rely on tenant rents, good management, and fundraising.

Alberta and Quebec are the only two provinces that receive recurring government funding for shelters (this does not apply to on-reserve shelters). Respondents from these provinces were thankful to have the funding, knowing that other shelters were not so fortunate. However, they also noted gaps and issues with the current funding models, particularly around staff salaries and human resources support:

The funding for the consolidation of second stage shelters obtained since 2018 is essential to the health of our organization and our human resources. Our difficulty in projecting the level of future recurrent funding weakens our commitment to our human resources, a commitment which is nonetheless paramount given the current labour shortage. - survey respondent, Quebec

We are grateful for the funding we receive. In an ideal situation, we would have funding for the rent-subsidized portion that the agency has to provide and to have a front line wage increase. Also, we worry that funding could be cut year to year for second stage shelters. - survey respondent, Alberta

Other survey respondents from the Prairies and Atlantic provinces noted how absent or partial funding impacts the programming, quality of support offered, and number and quality of staff.

We receive zero funding from the provincial government. The only funding we receive from the federal government is summer student funding and the odd grant. Without core operational funding, our entire program is at risk. Saskatchewan is one of the only provinces that does not fund their second stage shelters and this is a significant challenge for us. - *survey respondent, Saskatchewan*

Although we have adequate core funding for much of our programming, it does not allow us to hire the level and number of staff needed to best serve the populations who require our services. - *survey respondent, Manitoba*

We are very fortunate to receive assistance from the Newfoundland Housing Corporation for repairs, but we are funded by the rent we receive from our tenants. All expenses are paid through the income we take in. - *survey respondent, Newfoundland and Labrador*

We should have funding for salaries that are equivalent to the pay rates of employees of the government so that we can attract and retain great employees. - *survey respondent, Nova Scotia*

Interviews with EDs revealed that they have to find creative ways to secure funding to keep essential programs going. This often includes fundraising efforts, which are more manageable for larger urban shelters that are well-resourced or connected to a larger umbrella organization (e.g. the YWCA). Yet even in urban centres, one ED shared that they “feel stuck” because they are not “professional fundraisers and have had to learn along the way” (Lynn, Armagh House, Ontario).

Rural and remote shelters struggle with fundraising due to smaller populations, high costs of living, and financial limitations of economically challenged regions. Speaking to this, an ED interviewed from a second stage in a small

community serving rural Newfoundland and Labrador shared:

We get no more money to run our programming than...a shelter that operates in the middle of the city. We get less [than where] the residents can get the city bus and there's access to mental health services, homeless shelters, and all the other services that they need. We're the only residential program for women in this region.

REPORTING AND EVALUATION FATIGUE

Evaluation fatigue was an issue that interviewed EDs said they occasionally struggled with. They felt that their own program evaluations and exit interviews were important to ensure that they were meeting the needs of survivors. However, some expressed that funders requested excessive and unnecessary data that did not necessarily help them improve their programs or services. Lynn of Armagh House shared that the long-term impacts of second stage are what should be measured:

You can't put numbers on our value...We have nine apartments and we are supporting, on average, nineteen families a year. But don't go by these numbers – it's the impact that we have with that family unit, that's what matters. Not the number; it's the long term impact!

This sentiment was echoed by a focus group participant who commented that they had to keep reminding their funders of the reality of violence against women:

The problem with numbers is that we lose sight of the fact that there is a human being attached to every single one of those numbers...The government loses sight of that...Because if you take one woman into your second stage, and she stays alive, how is that measurable? Beyond the fact that you saved a life...But government funders, it's just, “show me the numbers, show me the numbers, show me the numbers.”

Several focus group participants said that the volume of evaluations and reporting was overwhelming and got in the way of daily service work. For small organizations, many were doing

this work “off the side of their desk” and “doing the best that they could.”

Focus group participants had different experiences with reporting, ranging from basic reporting on data related to turn-aways and occupancy to cumbersome evaluation tools. For example, one participant was concerned that their funders were imposing their own success indicators upon the shelter to “prove” that they were meeting targets. The evaluation tool they were given was long, overly complicated, and full of jargon. At the other end of the spectrum, shelters in Alberta were able to work with their provincial shelter association (ACWS) to develop an internal evaluation tool that streamlines the sharing of confidential data with funders – “We have an information sharing agreement where our funders are able to get the information. We send it to them on a monthly basis.”

All focus group participants were supportive of a feedback model where residents could reflect on the services and programs and suggest improvements or adjustments. However, they shared a variety of perspectives on how this could be done in the most beneficial way.

For one shelter that was well-resourced, they conducted regular evaluations and were able to do so in a way that helped inform their programs and services. Part of their success was their ability to shape the assessments in a meaningful way, which empowered the staff and organization as a whole:

It’s an evaluations framework and it’s very detailed. Every program, every intervention, is evaluated, measured, documented, and reported back. Not just to funders, but to our board, community, and stakeholders...No one likes documenting and more questionnaires...But for the staff to know that what they’re doing is working has really empowered them to feel that when they come to work every day, they’re making a difference.

Focus group participants offered solutions to mitigate reporting fatigue, including minimizing and streamlining assessments and designing

evaluations to show the effectiveness of second stage shelters in breaking the cycle of abuse. For example, one focus group participant shared:

We do loose measurements and the idea is that it also serves to communicate to the community, funders, and supporters...We’re doing it to make sure we’re delivering the best services for the women. And also, we see it as part of our role to leverage their [survivors’] voices... When I can take our outcomes and show what women are experiencing when they come in...and then we see that completely turned around by the time they leave, we can publish it in a report and present it to our funders...This is what women are experiencing, and we need places like ours to help them recover. And here’s what can help these families break the cycle of violence.

Changing the approach to evaluation was another solution offered by one focus group participant:

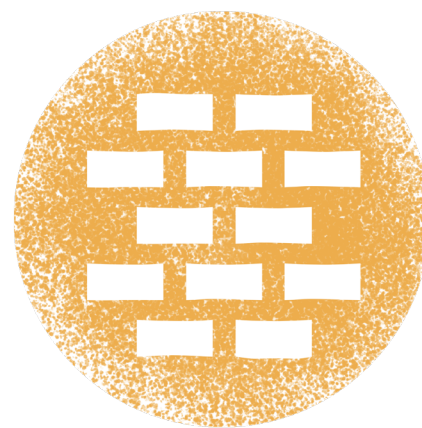
Perhaps we need to look at the abuser’s behaviours to see what the outcomes are for those programs. Because those outcomes will make our outcomes better as well. I think they look at the wrong programs.

Another participant shared a different approach, focusing on how many women avoided femicide because of second stage:

We have to also document the number of successes – the number of women who stayed with us and because they stayed with us they escaped femicide...we have to invert it [data] to a positive perspective, to valorize what we do and the results we achieve for these women every day.

PHYSICAL BUILDINGS AND UNITS

This next section summarizes findings from the survey and interviews regarding the age of shelter buildings, the number of units, furnishings provided to residents during and after their stay, and communal spaces.



AGE OF SECOND STAGE SHELTER BUILDINGS

Considering the wear and tear on shelters' physical buildings, we defined buildings that were ten years or older as "aging" facilities. Over half (56%, n=86) of the shelters were built in or before 2008, demonstrating that a number of second stage shelters are aging. The oldest shelter was constructed in 1979, with the newest in 2018. The most frequently reported build years were 2014 and 2018.

Second stage shelters visited had at least one accessible unit on the main floor of the building. During site visits, EDs shared that they wanted more accessible units for women living with physical disabilities. Previous data collected by WSC (2019) suggests that accessibility is a challenge in second stage shelters, particularly

in older buildings. For instance, 25% (n=68) of respondents reported that their shelter services were "generally accessible," 21% were "somewhat accessible," and over half (54%) were "difficult to access" for women who use a wheelchair or other mobility device.¹⁹⁷

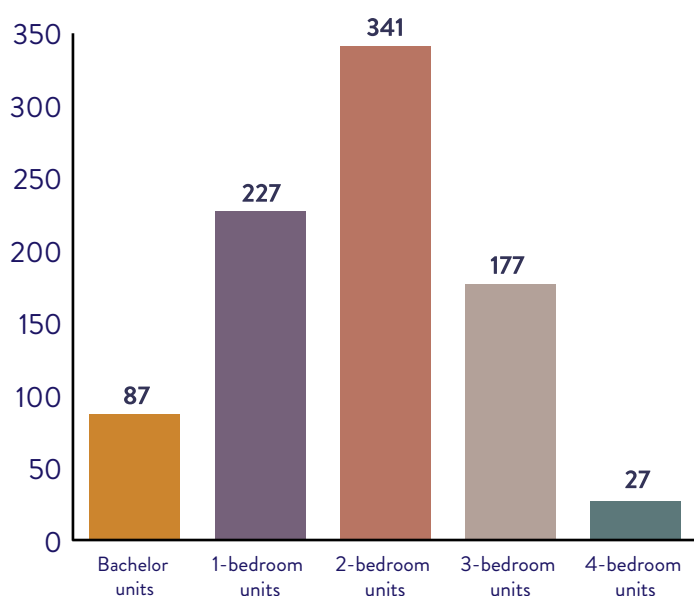
AVERAGE NUMBER OF UNITS

Survey data indicated that the overall average number of units was 11 (n=90), with a total of 885 reported units. Over one-third (34%, or 297 of 885) of these units were not funded. Figure 4 shows the total number of units reported, based on unit size. The most frequently reported size was a two-bedroom unit, followed by one-bedroom units. Larger units were less common among second stage shelters.

EDs reported that there was a need for a greater number of larger units to accommodate bigger families, but that it was a challenge to convince funders to approve larger apartment units. As Lisa from Munroe House (British Columbia) noted:

There's a push back when you want to build larger units...We have a higher standard for our unit sizes in our new builds than BC Housing standards require us to

Figure 4: Number of Bedrooms (sum)



have...recognizing that the women and children that are using our long-term housing have low incomes and are probably going to be home a lot more. So, we want the units slightly bigger; we want children to have their own bedrooms...Funders and architects strongly suggest that we could get more units if we build two-bedrooms with just a few three-bedrooms. We're saying we want two-, three-, and we really need some four-bedrooms.

The majority (82%) of units were self-contained (i.e. residents do not share with anyone else), 9% were shared (i.e. residents have a private room and share common areas and live communally), and 6% were a combination of self-contained and shared.

EDs interviewed said that communal living was not ideal for second stage and that previous attempts at implementing this model proved difficult for residents. The main reason for this was the need for women to have space to heal and build independence, which is one of the key distinctions from emergency shelters. As one ED shared:

If you had an analysis of VAW and how much power and control and oppression they've been under, and then you move them to a communal environment where they've had to keep that under control to the extent where it is uncomfortable, they can't...They don't have any time to heal and to unpack all that oppression and power and control that somebody has actively inflicted on them. - Barb, Betty's Haven, Yukon

Speaking of her experience, a former resident interviewed in the Yukon also felt that communal living at the emergency shelter was challenging, "especially for people with kids. Crisis sucks, period. And community living sucks, period. But community living when you have children and you're in crisis is just a recipe for total disaster."

FURNISHINGS AND COMMUNAL SPACE

Over three-quarters (78%) of survey respondents provide some furnishings for residents. Great care is taken to make residents feel at home. As one interviewee shared:

I care that a unit looks as perfect as we can get it when a family goes in. It is a reflection of how we care...If her space is clean, the furniture is clean, and it's pretty, I think that says something. So we try to keep it nice because your home is a big part of your wellness." - ED, Newfoundland and Labrador

At one of the sites visited, a garage on-site stored furniture donations collected from the community. When women were ready to move into permanent housing, they could look through the furnishings and choose items to bring to their new home. Some second stage shelters provide a hamper with start-up household items. Others allow residents to take the furnishings and household goods from their unit with them when they move out.

Almost all second stage shelters provide some kind of communal space. This includes backyards, laundry rooms, children's play areas, meeting spaces, and storage spaces (see Figure 5).

Four of the five second stage shelters visited have a communal space for entertaining, with a kitchen and living room space to host monthly house meetings, birthday parties, programming, and other special events. This is integral to establishing a sense of community and connection between the residents. Knowing they are not alone in their experience is critical to their healing process during their stay.

Several current and former residents interviewed shared that they supported each other and developed life-long friendships. A current second stage resident in Newfoundland and Labrador commented on the importance of friendship: "I like meeting the families. I've made some really good friends over the years."

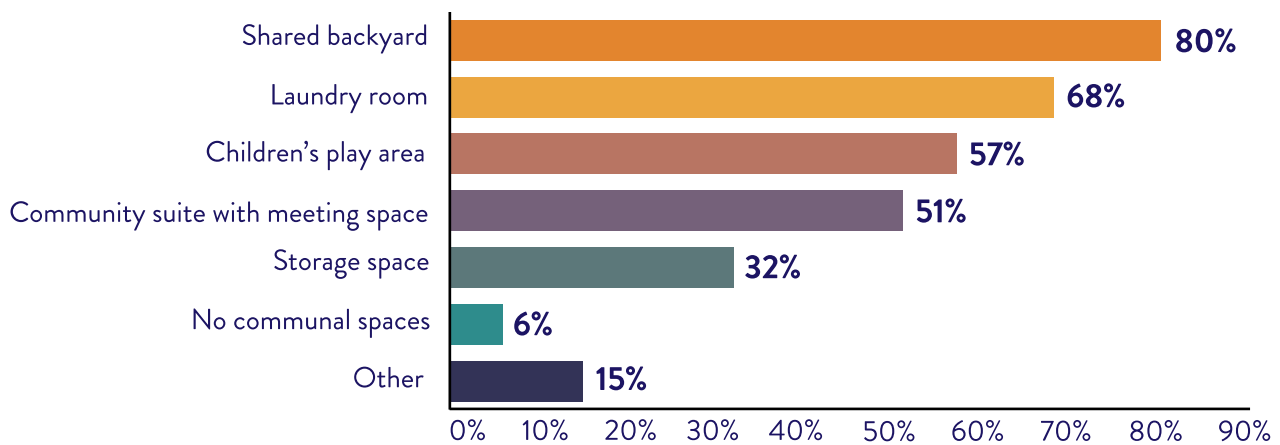
A former resident from BC shared that she felt safe and was able to create community at the second stage shelter:

It was really secure, which is great, especially because the safety aspect for us and our kids – it makes you feel good. It makes you feel very comfortable. The group

meetings have been amazing because when you do see the other moms in the community, it's nice...You can look out for each other. If you're in the playground and you know one of the other kids and they seem distressed...you can ask, 'are you okay'? So it's a really nice community feel.

A former resident in Ontario said that she appreciated the “community, support, and other kids...caring for each other and supporting each other...I became a different person when I lived in this place.” In Quebec, a current resident said she never wanted to leave because of the close friendships she formed: “We are very lucky surrounded by [friends]. I don't want to leave here; [I wish] we could stay for a lifetime.”

Figure 5: Communal Space in Second Stage Shelters



SAFETY AND SECURITY

Safety and security are essential aspects of second stage housing and are a primary mandate, which distinguishes second stage from other types of transitional housing. As Arianne of Nouvelle-Étape (Quebec) commented, “What sets us apart is the security we offer and the way we address violence post-separation. That genuinely is what we do.”



Figure 6 shows the different types of security features in second stage housing. Meetings to explain safety rules (84%), CCTV (78%), and security protocols (67%) were the most frequently reported. The majority of respondents had several or all of these security features at their shelter.

and that the emotional and psychological safety of residents are also paramount.

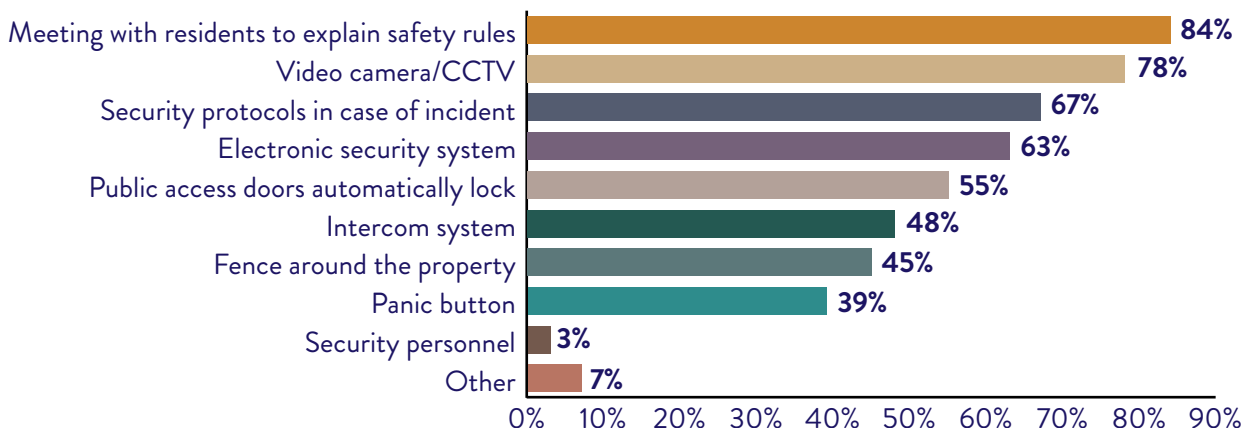
Second stage shelters in Quebec use another strategy to create safety for residents and workers. Applicants who are approved for second stage are relocated to a different neighbourhood as an additional safety measure. There are also downsides to this approach, as it can inadvertently isolate women from their communities and support networks. Relocation is not always feasible in rural, remote, and northern communities, as there’s often only one second stage shelter around. For example, second stage shelters in northern communities are usually in a central location and are public because anonymity is unattainable in smaller communities.

SAFETY PLANNING

Almost all (94%) of second stage shelters reported providing safety planning on-site for residents (see Figure 15, page 62). For many EDs interviewed, safety extended beyond the walls and time survivors spent in the second stage shelter. Safety planning was an ongoing and critical aspect of programming at all stages, from admission to when they had moved into permanent housing. For example, Barb from Betty’s Haven (Yukon) spoke to the challenges of social housing in her community and the importance of safety planning in “trying to create safety for them when they’re out of here.”

Focus group participants discussed how safety is more than just physical security in the building

Figure 6: Security Features in Second Stage Shelters



At Armagh House in Ontario, shelter staff work with mothers and children on safety planning. The Child and Youth Worker develops social-emotional learning programs for children focused on safety planning, mental wellness, emotional regulation, and decision making. Additionally, support workers collaborate with women to build “safety strategies and plans so that when they are out in the community, they have those plans in place” (Lynn).

Lisa from Munroe House (British Columbia) talked about how safety plans need to be collaborative and driven by survivors’ needs:

A safety plan is only as good as whether women are making a plan that actually works for them...If the plan doesn’t reflect the needs and wants of the person using it, it isn’t an effective safety plan. A safety plan is hearing their concerns...It might just be talking about safety and responding on a frequent basis in the moment... At the end of the day, it’s her plan...we need to have a model where we respect women’s choices 100%.

CURRENT AND FORMER RESIDENTS ON SAFETY

Interviews with current and former residents showed the need for safety and how crucial it was in establishing a sense of home and community, and in providing a foundation for healing. Many of the survivors we interviewed were high risk for lethality and had fled for their lives. For some, it was the first time that they had ever felt safe.

A former resident in BC shared:

Safety was massive for me personally because my former partner...will hunt me down...Hence the fact that he found us at the first place. I think that really caused my PTSD. I had massive anxiety and worried about him following us and that he could just turn up anytime...And I’ve had threats, so I was really nervous about that. I had a protection order...So feeling like there’s security in your area, that’s massive. The fact there’s double doors in the building is fantastic...And every level is locked to what your [key] fob is.

A current resident in small-town Newfoundland and Labrador found her neighbourhood family-friendly and said that she felt “absolutely safe. This is a solid home and, of course, there’s deadbolts front and back...All the windows are very secure.” The second stage duplexes are fitted with video camera doorbells that send a video of the visitor to the resident’s phone as an added layer of security. Similarly, a current resident in the Yukon said that she felt safe because “there’s cameras, locks, and somebody always working.”

The second stage shelter we visited in Ontario was appreciated for its location. A current resident commented, “The location is perfect. It’s not in a busy area. It’s hidden. Even if you drive by, you won’t notice this is a shelter. You wouldn’t even know.” A former resident shared that “the space made me feel safe. I could sleep; I could feel safe here.” Another current resident from that same shelter explained the ways that she felt safe:

The units are private and we have our own keys. We have a [key] fob for the front entrance. The front doors remain locked and closed all the time. Front door windows are bulletproof. That was huge for me because I went through a scenario where a fully loaded gun was put to my head...Staff are on-site Monday to Friday, 9-5, Wednesdays, 12-8. The house has an alarm system. We can page the staff at any point in the day or night in case of an emergency...and they’ve been available.

A current resident in a second stage shelter in Quebec noted the importance of safety for her and her child, and appreciated all the ways the shelter staff ensured it:

What was most important for me and my daughter was to be safe because we were living in a violent environment...It matters a great deal that nobody knows I’m here – the confidentiality. I speak to many women here; I know their names and how many children they have. That is particularly important as well...There are lots of security cameras in the building. We have a private garden just to ourselves, and the doors are always locked.

Residents shared how the building and staff made them feel safe, but also the safety planning on which they collaborated. A former resident of a second stage shelter in the Yukon said that staff helped her develop a safety plan when her ex-partner was in town to visit their children – “They were really good at identifying safeguards that I could put in place in order to help the kids still see him and facilitate that.” She was concerned that she would not be able to stick to her decision to remain separated and that he would convince her to return. Drawing on her safety plan, inner strength, and support from shelter staff, she maintained healthy boundaries for herself that were in line with her goals, thus breaking the cycle of violence.

Safety was essential for many survivors – many described it as “life-saving.” One woman shared that she is not sure where she would be today if it were not for the support she received from the second stage shelter:

I actually think about what would have happened if I hadn't gotten into second stage housing because I was in a place where I didn't really have a lot of options...I worry that had I gone with their biological father, even though I knew it wasn't a safe place for my kids and it wasn't a safe place for me, just because I didn't have any other options...And it's not just collateral damage for me but for my kids too...I don't know where my life would be right now, but I know it wouldn't be good. - *former resident, British Columbia*

Far too often, women fleeing violence have few options available to them. Second stage shelters are an essential, life-saving service. The safety and security that survivors experience at second stage shelters allows them to reflect, heal, and transform their lives. These transformative experiences are challenging to quantify, hence the importance of their stories and experiences in their own words.

STRUCTURE OF PROGRAM

This next section draws on survey and interview data to provide insight on admissions and intake processes, serving women with complex needs and precarious status, rental fees, the average length of stay, and the rules and guidelines in second stage housing.



ADMISSIONS AND INTAKE

The most frequently reported method for admissions to second stage housing was referrals from VAW emergency shelters (90%) followed by individual applications (63%). Almost half (46%) of the respondents admitted residents using all of the methods listed in Figure 7.

Admission differed significantly amongst the second stage shelters visited for the study. For example, Munroe House in British Columbia had a designated worker who processed applications via a centralized intake system and provided assistance to women from the community seeking housing. Applications were organized according to second stage criteria and then submitted to the senior property manager to determine fit according to family size and needs:

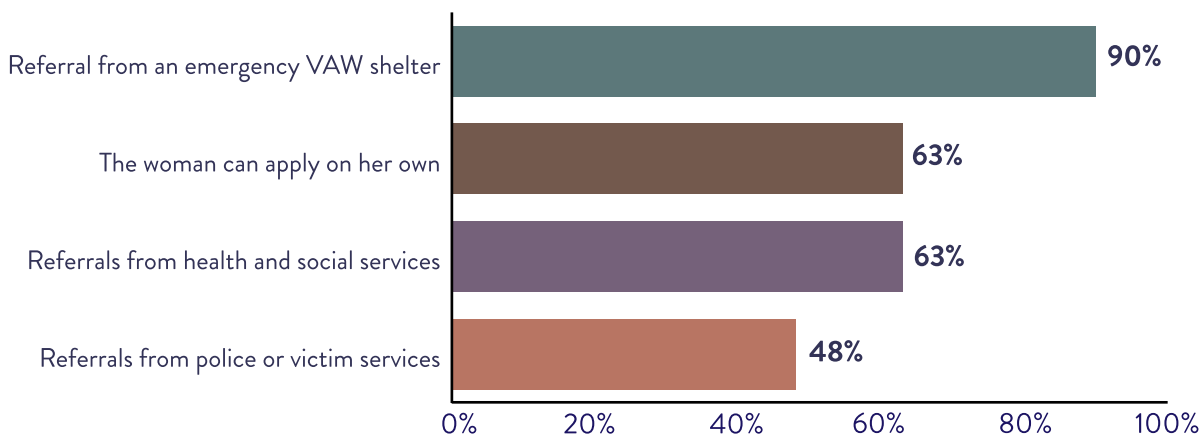
We have centralized our application system and have a property services assistant who can tell people about all of our housing options, how to apply, maintains the wait

list...and lets people know about other housing options... We thought it was really important that someone is giving that information in a consistent way and spending the time to let people know, even if they don't get in here, there are some other things they can do. - Lisa

While not practiced everywhere, residents of second stage shelters visited in Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Yukon must have first stayed at an emergency shelter before moving to the second stage program.

Women that come in at the emergency level can apply for second stage apartments. A committee sits down and takes a look at all the applications and assesses the safety risks of each candidate, the level of advocacy and/or barriers that they have in finding housing...We look at all the factors. - Barb, Betty's Haven, Yukon

Figure 7: How are residents admitted into the second stage shelter?



Security and risk within the neighbourhood was factored into the intake assessment at Nouvelle-Étape (Quebec) to ensure the safety of the woman, other residents, and staff:

As soon as we take in someone new, during the intake process, we ask: “What is your ex’s address? What is your old address? Where does he work, what area? Do you know someone in this region?” As soon as they answer yes, we check immediately. Other times, during an interview, they say, “my best friend, she lives right next door.” Dangerous men will try to get to them through their best friend’s place. - *Arianne*

The survey results show that the majority (75%) of shelters use a triage system or prioritized intake. Among the survey respondents who answered how they triage (n=56), levels of danger and risk were ranked highest (55%), followed by women with children (27%), and “other” (18%) (see Figure 8). Lethality and danger were critical factors as Lisa at Munroe House in British Columbia described: “If they identify that their partner has

made death threats and is actively seeking them, that’s going to get bumped up very high on the list.”

Regarding the age of male children accepted in second stage shelters, previous data collected by WSC indicated that 35% (n=58) of respondents did not have a maximum age for male children regarding admissions.¹⁹⁸ For the respondents that did have a maximum age for male children, the majority capped it at 18 years.

“Other” factors taken into consideration included: no other housing options (for example, precarious status); the length of time they spent in the VAW shelter; eligibility for rent assistance; if the shelter could accommodate the size of the family; the level of need for support; suitability for the program; and women with specific barriers and/or complex needs.

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

The majority (65%) of survey respondents reported that they practice harm reduction, and some were in the process of transitioning to a low-barrier model. Half of the respondents indicated that admissions for survivors with complex needs depended on the context and severity of their situation (see Figure 9).¹⁹⁹

Comments indicated that the women’s ability to live somewhat independently is a factor in determining fit, as second stage housing is independent housing with supports. Additional factors taken into account were behaviour, safety, the ability to participate in programming, whether outside supports and treatment had been put in place, and whether they were actively seeking treatment.

As one survey respondent noted, “We don’t ask about substance use issues or mental health in our application forms at intake, but do ask if they are able to live semi-independently and to care for their children and their unit on their own.

Figure 8: Triage Intake (n=56)

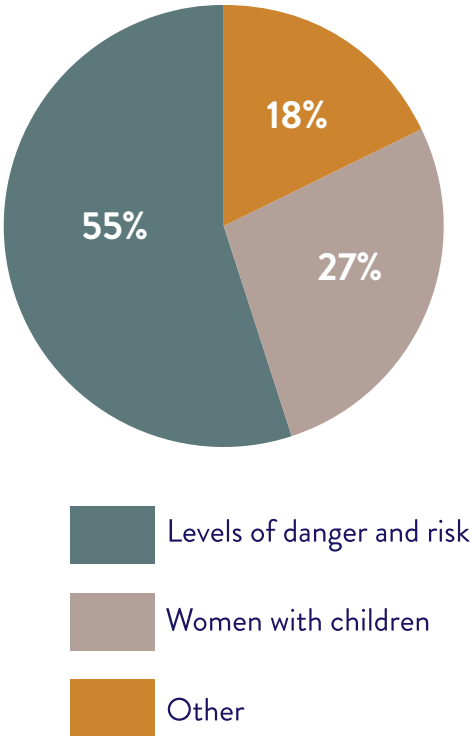
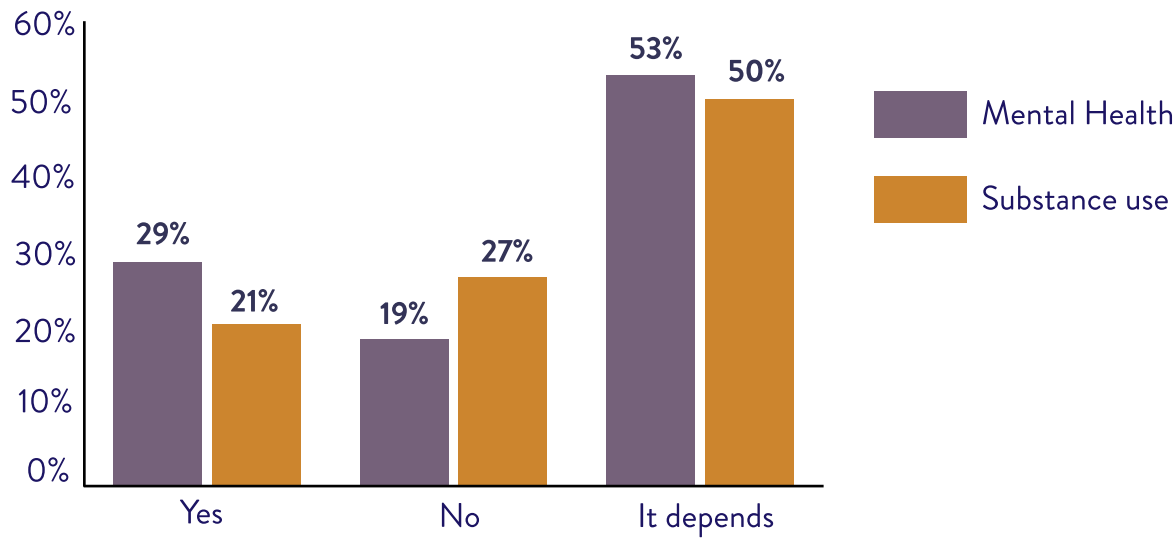


Figure 9: Do you admit women with significant mental health or substance use concerns?



Interviews with EDs varied in their approach. Lisa from Munroe House (British Columbia) commented:

We're not discriminating against people because they have substance use issues or mental health issues. We are saying we need to support women leaving violence and those are issues that shouldn't be a barrier, particularly in second stage where people have their own units. We don't even ask about it in our application form. We ask, are you able to live semi-independently and if not, do you have supports that could help you?

Arianne from Nouvelle-Étape (Quebec) shared their approach based on previous lessons learned:

It is our objective to prevent their partner from finding them. They can suffer from that, feeling a bit restricted, but they can go outside, no problem. Here, they are not allowed to take drugs or alcohol, but they can go somewhere else. This is not an issue. However, serious drug or alcohol problems are not accepted. As far as mental health, it needs to be under control. For example, we would not accept someone whose schizophrenia was unchecked. Since we are not around 24/7, we have tried this, but it did not work out.

Barb from Betty's Haven (Yukon) recognized the limitations of housing women with severe substance and mental health concerns – the

space available in the shelter, the impact on other residents, and staff capacity to support survivors' complex needs.

If somebody had a couple of glasses of wine, we would talk to them and say it may trigger other women and children; is there anything else you could do? Same as if they were using cannabis. We understand harm reduction. I wouldn't say that we are zero tolerance. We are trying to manage the safety because we don't have spots where people can use and come in and not affect others; I wish we did.

Several focus group participants shared that they were using harm reduction and trauma-informed strategies in their shelters and reducing the rules on substance use to meet survivors where they are at in their recovery process. As one participant said, "We actually have very few rules in our second stage...it is really quite open around the different rules that we have." Another said, "We're a harm reduction agency, anti-oppressive, and feminist, so there's not a lot of rules around use. It's just about what that looks like for [the] safety of the program when you're at home."

RENTAL AGREEMENTS AND FEES

Many of the EDs interviewed emphasized the importance of creating a positive rental experience

for survivors that included an educational component to help build independence and confidence. For this reason, many use leases or rental agreements to give residents the opportunity to learn the process. An ED from Newfoundland and Labrador emphasized the importance of this:

We've always had a rental agreement because many of the women we see have never signed a lease. We wanted them to have that experience and understand what that can look like, feel in control of the situation, and build a positive rental experience...Many of the women have had their credit history destroyed, so no one would rent to them...If they can live with us for eighteen months and have a really positive experience and I can give a positive reference for them, that's a big help. That can change a reality.

The vast majority of second stage shelters collect rent from residents – only two survey respondents did not. Rental fees are calculated in multiple ways; often, a combination of methods is used (see Figure 10). The most frequently reported methods were rent geared to income (RGI) (56%) and social assistance/income supports (53%). In many instances, social assistance rental fees are set up as automatic payments that go directly to the shelter monthly.

Focus group participants provided some context to the “other” fee structures. For example, at one shelter, the provincial Housing Corporation covers

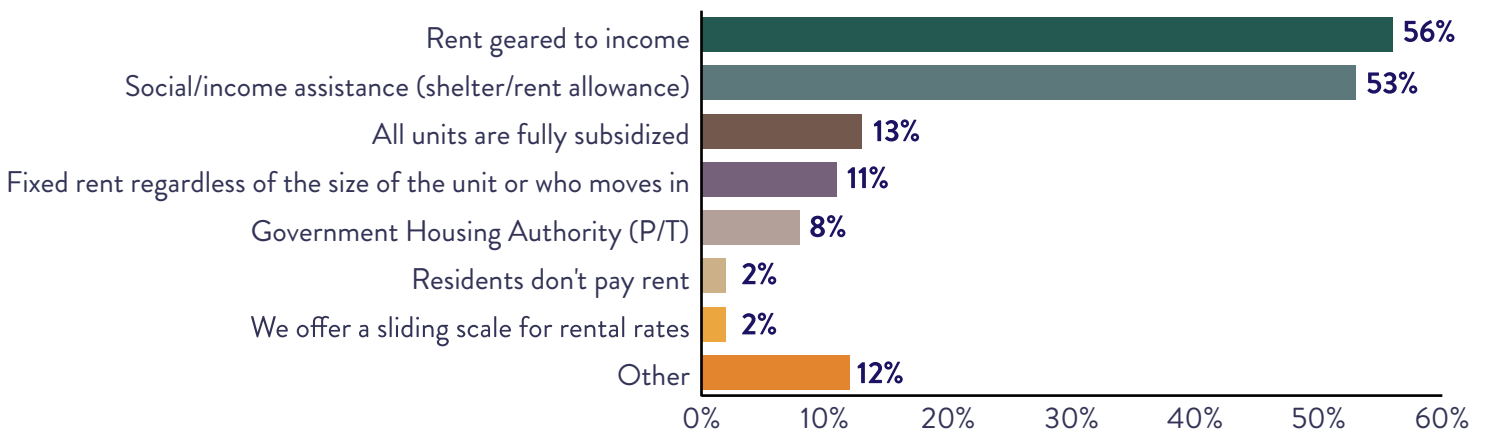
the rent when units are empty. In the case of a resident not making their rental payment, Housing will often cover the missed rent so that the shelter is not financially strained by missed payments. This was seen as a safety net for second stage shelters so that programming and staffing would not be compromised.

Over one-quarter (29%) of survey respondents reported that they make rental fee exceptions for certain circumstances; 45% do not and 22% said that it depends. EDs explained that exceptions are often related to women with precarious legal status who may not have access to social assistance or social housing support.

Some types of living situations are not covered by the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA), including emergency shelters/transition houses and second stage shelters/housing.²⁰⁰ Just under one-third (31%) reported that they follow the RTA, whereas others have Program Agreements. A Program Agreement outlines the purpose and expectations of second stage housing, which can include safety and participation rules that residents agree to before moving in. Under the RTA, for example, certain rules, such as preventing substance use on the property, cannot be enforced.

Across all the data collection, evictions were “rare.” In many places (e.g. Quebec and BC), the term “eviction” is not used as the tenancy is not under the RTA; rather, residents are asked to

Figure 10: How are rental fees calculated?



“leave” the program or their stay is “terminated.” Shelter staff prefer to work with the woman as much as possible to keep her housed and safe. Compromised safety towards herself or other residents (e.g. letting abusers on-site, breaking the confidentiality of the shelter location) and abuse towards their children or other residents were the main issues identified as potential grounds for asking a resident to leave the program. Staff worked with residents to prevent this outcome; housing coordinators were critical in helping develop good rental experiences, approaching all tenancy issues from a place of “eviction prevention.”

We see it as eviction prevention and work with them to support them...[providing an] understanding of expectations of tenancy softly with us, so that rebuilding their lives piece by piece can occur when they move out and there’s not a sense of shock. - *focus group participant*

In the rare event of a resident being asked to leave, some shelters will continue to support the woman and identify areas to work on to prevent future challenges.

One of the things that we also do is we encourage the women to work with their counsellor around their reason for eviction...And so if it’s an issue around rent, then how do they deal with their counsellors about using that as a life skills moment and how to build from that. - *focus group participant*

LENGTH OF STAY

This survey did not collect information on length of stay in second stage. Data from WSC’s 2019 report indicated an average stay of 15.2 months (1.3 years).²⁰¹ Interviews with EDs found that the length of stay is often dependent on each woman’s journey; extensions are sometimes granted because residents progress towards their goals and independence at different rates. Length of stay also depends on the availability of social and affordable housing in the community, which is often lacking, making it challenging to help

survivors find appropriate, safe, and affordable housing.

For women with precarious status, the length of stay is often longer because acquiring legal status takes time; therefore, they are often granted extensions for longer stays. Second stage shelters support women with precarious legal status in different ways. One model that stood out was Munroe House (British Columbia), which has two dedicated units specifically for women without legal status. Women can stay rent-free for nine months to get their income assistance and residency in order; if they need more time, they can apply for an extension. These units are not government-funded but are paid for through community donations and by the shelter itself.

RULES AND GUIDELINES

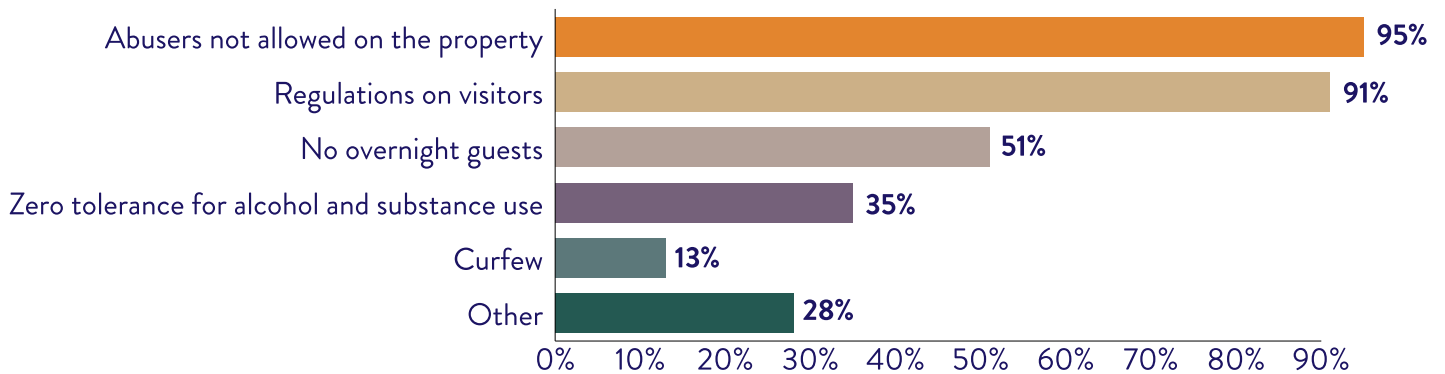
The vast majority (94%) of survey respondents indicated that they have rules or guidelines at their second stage shelter (see Figure 11). Many of these guidelines are in place for obvious safety reasons. Preventing abusers from accessing the property (95%) and regulations on visitors (91%) were the most frequently reported rules.

The majority (64%) of survey respondents indicated that residents must participate in programs as a condition of staying in the shelter. Many second stage shelters see their work as distinct from simply housing – the IPV-specific programs and supports are in place to help women meet their individual goals and break the cycle of abuse.

If a person doesn’t want to engage with the services, we encourage them to find ongoing housing sooner rather than later, as this supported living space is designed for those who make use of the supports in whatever form best suits their need. - *survey respondent, Prince Edward Island*

It is a balancing act between women being autonomous and being able to live independently, safety concerns, and the well being of other women and children in the

Figure 11: Rules at Second Stage Shelters (n=94)



program. We are a limited resource, so the engagement in services sets us apart from being a landlord and helps women move forward, which is why it is a necessary component of the second stage program. - survey respondent, Ontario

We have a lot of rules. In fact, the women have to sign an agreement that they will respect all the rules, whether it's to do all the meetings, to not miss a meeting. The women can only host three guests. - survey respondent, Alberta

In their comments, many survey respondents noted that some of the rules are flexible and “not set in stone.” The reason for this is because many shelters operate from a survivor-centric philosophy. They also shared that they regularly revisit the rules and identify areas that need revision. A few survey respondents and focus group participants said they were undergoing a process to become low-barrier as rules around substance use were no longer serving the shelter and residents in a way that reflected their evolving needs.

Regarding the communal aspect of second stage shelters, one survey respondent from the Northwest Territories shared that the rules “are set by the tenants as a group...We are flexible and try to meet individual needs. Our overall goal is safety for all residents.” An Ontario respondent commented, “We do have policies, but [we] understand that policies need to be flexible to

meet the needs of many. We try to take each individual into consideration when imposing rules.”

One-third (35%) of survey respondents reported that substance use is not permitted on-site. Comments showed that many are aware that it occurs off-site and that they focus on helping women seek treatment for substance abuse. As shelters move towards being low-barrier, these policies and practices evolve. The capacity to support substance use directly related to whether staff are trained to provide adequate supports from a harm reduction framework.

Interviews with EDs also confirmed a range of approaches to house rules; basic safety rules and program expectations were a common practice at the shelters visited.

CURRENT AND FORMER RESIDENTS ON RULES AND GUIDELINES

We asked current and former residents their thoughts about the rules where they stayed. For the most part, residents did not perceive the rules as overly restrictive. They felt that they were established for a reason, primarily their safety, such as not allowing abusers on-site, restrictions on visitors, and maintaining location confidentiality.²⁰²

Concerning safety rules, survivors shared:

Just as with the first stage, the second stage has rules to follow. However, we are much freer since there is more flexibility. We are empowered by having a home to live in. It's all based on confidentiality. It really is a priority not to break that trust, for me and the other residents. - *current resident, Quebec*

For our own safety, men can't be here. And I think it's good for us - *current resident, British Columbia*

There were basically two rules. Your abuser is not allowed near the property. If they find out that your abuser's been in the property, then you can be evicted. And no illegal drug use. So that was fine. - *former resident, Newfoundland and Labrador*

They have rules like no visitors allowed, no deep frying in the unit, which is important for safety...If you need to leave the shelter overnight, they need to know. The rules they have are logical and it makes it safe for everybody. I'm very happy there's no visitors allowed...I want this. Especially, for us. If you don't feel safe, you want to know who's coming in and out. - *current resident, Ontario*

I believe all the rules exist for a reason. It's just that when you're in the house, it can be...I think having the kids makes it that much harder. You know, not being able to give your address, nor having playdates, we need to keep it on the down low. It's not like you can say where you live or really explain why you don't have friends. - *former resident, Quebec*

Yes, definitely there are some rules that we cannot bring guests... But I'm okay with that. It's for the protection and security of all residents here. - *former resident, Ontario*

In addition to basic safety rules, shelters have tenancy rules that are part of regular rental agreements, such as paying rent on time, taking care of the unit, and respecting neighbours.

There were quite a few rules. Nothing unreasonable. You know, try not to paint your house a totally different colour and if you do, just ask for permission and then, of

course, when you're moving out, return all the colours to the original...The unit is for you and your immediate family; you can't take in a spouse or a partner. Animals had to be okayed by the administration...reasonable things like no parties, be courteous neighbours, and take care of the unit itself...very standard rules that are not hard to follow. - *current resident, Newfoundland and Labrador*

I didn't feel like there were too many rules...The rules mostly didn't apply to me because I was a stay at home mom with two kids and I don't drink or do drugs...I remember those being key points before I moved in, that I couldn't bring alcohol on the premises. - *former resident, Yukon*

Regarding the mandatory programming in second stage shelters, current residents shared:

They're reasonable...When I was working, it was hard for me to make it on time on Wednesday nights for mandatory group... I didn't want to know anybody. I didn't want to tell my story...I wasn't prepared to be around people. But now that I slowly started coming, slowly started talking to the other moms...We all share the same kind of pain. It's different for all of us, but it's the same pain, the same trauma. - *current resident, Ontario*

They like us to go to the programs, which I always do. And they have a house meeting and supper and they do yoga...You know, just good stuff for you. - *current resident, Yukon*

CHALLENGES

Interviewed EDs emphasized the importance of separating landlord responsibilities from the support aspects of the second stage shelter. They wanted to ensure that residents felt comfortable to approach staff for support and didn't want to complicate the supportive relationship by having staff enforce rental payments, evictions, cleaning units, etc. Every second stage shelter approached this differently, which was dependent on available resources and staff. Some had designated staff for specific responsibilities (such as a housing intake

person) and some hired outside help for particular tasks (e.g. cleaning and repairs).

Since this was mentioned as a pressure point among the EDs interviewed, we asked focus group participants to reflect on the tension between being a landlord and being a support for IPV survivors residing in second stage shelters. They shared different strategies. For example, several have a designated housing coordinator whose duties include housing and maintenance issues, landlord laws, etc. However, the combined skill set of housing and DV was not easy to find. To fill the gap, one focus group participant recruited a housing coordinator who had experience working for larger landlord companies and then trained her “in domestic violence, understanding trauma-informed practice, and the goals and priorities of the organization.”

Unfortunately, hiring a housing coordinator is not always feasible for shelters with fewer resources. As such, some have designated the ED or the financial coordinator to perform the housing and landlord duties, keeping support staff separate. While this work is “done off the side of the desk,” one focus group participant said that it is an option to ensure that “the person who is collecting their rent is not the person who is offering the counselling...there’s some pros and cons to that, obviously.” In one instance, there was only one staff member and she had to be both the support and the landlord, which was difficult.

Another approach was the Healing Program at a First Nations second stage shelter, which reduced tensions between being a landlord and a support system. The focus group participant shared that the healing that occurred at the shelter had positively shifted the dynamics between both the residents and support staff – “[It was] empowering our women, helping our families stick together... we’re all taking this journey together. I find that having a really good supervisor in the house is the key.”

STAFFING

In interviews with EDs, staffing was one of the biggest challenges facing their second stage shelters. This was primarily because of low salaries and high turnover due to the lack of funding specifically for staff positions, as well as the lack of recognition from funders of the depth of services, programs, and wrap-around supports and the vital role that staff play in supporting families recovering from violence. Inadequate funding leads to salaries that are not competitive with positions in similar fields, resulting in high turnover.



NUMBER OF STAFF

The majority (88%) of second stage shelters reported that they employed staff (including support staff, administration, and management) on-site (Figure 12). Half reported having staff on-site during business hours and on-call after hours. Of the survey respondents who had staff on-site, they reported an average of four full-time workers, two part-time workers, and five casual workers. Four of the five EDs interviewed said that they did not have enough staffing due to a lack of funding for positions.

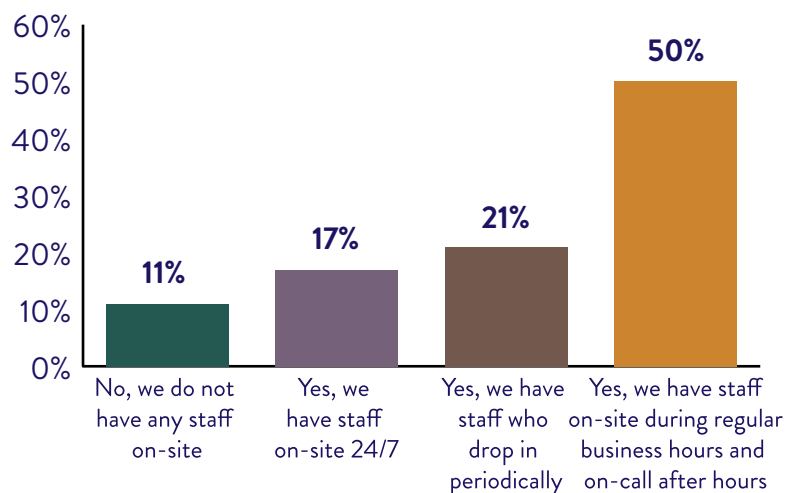
Almost all (10 of 11) second stage shelters that did not have any staffing on-site were affiliated with an emergency shelter or were part of a mixed shelter. A staff member from the emergency shelter is often assigned to work as a transitional housing

support worker. As such, many commented that they have a second stage manager or counsellor who works directly with the residents, meeting with them regularly. Moreover, residents can access programs, support, and the 24-hour crisis line at the emergency shelter. For example:

The second stage manager goes to the site to meet with the women once a month. The women in our units come to the transition house weekly to work with the manager on wellness plans, check-ins, updates, and support in whatever areas are needed at that time.
- survey respondent, British Columbia

Although we do not have staff on-site at the second stage units, the buildings are located on the same property as the emergency shelter, which is staffed 24/7. - survey respondent, Ontario

Figure 12: Do you have staff on-site?



STAFF AVAILABILITY

Staffing availability differed across second stage shelters. Half of survey respondents reported that staff are available during regular business hours and are on-call after hours (see Figure 12). This number was higher at the shelters visited for the study; all but one had multiple support staff on-site from 9 am-5 pm or 12 pm-8 pm, often with overlap. Some had workers on-call in the evenings for emergencies, while others had an evening worker on-site until 8 pm and sometimes later.

The frequency of interactions between staff and residents varied depending on the needs of residents and the availability of staff. The most frequently reported number of staff meetings with residents was 1-2 times per week on an individual basis (40%). Over one-third (36%) of respondents reported that the regularity depends on an individual survivor's needs. Part of the reason for infrequent contact is that women residing in second stage shelters are no longer in immediate crisis and are seeking more independence. This also changes throughout their time at the shelter, as women may need more frequent interactions at the start of their stay and fewer as time progresses.

The interview data suggest that interactions with staff occur more frequently than the survey results indicated. Interviews with EDs and residents revealed more regular contact with staff in informal ways (e.g. dropping by the on-site office, phone calls, etc.) and more formal settings, such as weekly programming, groups, or individual counselling. All but one of the shelters visited (which did not have staff on-site) had open-door policies where residents could meet with a support worker anytime or held specific hours for drop-ins.²⁰³

Former residents shared that staff were “always available” and that their support was appreciated and essential in growing their independence:

I needed the knowledge and resources to be able to become independent, as I am now. Everyone really pushed me. - *former resident, British Columbia*

Once a week we met...if I needed their assistance, I would just go to them and they would be there to help me...So I'm very thankful to them. They make this place what it is. - *former resident, Ontario*

I love the staff...Usually when my kids went to sleep, I would come downstairs with a baby monitor so that I could have one-on-one with the staff...They were always available to talk...A couple of them would just sit and sew and you could join them...It was really nice...They were so open and good at active listening, not judging, and helpful. - *former resident, Yukon*

A current resident in Quebec shared the life-saving work staff did to support her healing:

They are the ones who saved my life. They are the ones who [helped] me map out my life, who directed, and who guided. They were always at my side advising me... [and] directing me down the right path. I have a worker who does follow up with me. She is always at my side. I can call anytime I want.




TYPES OF WORKERS

Among the survey respondents who had paid staff, the majority (87%) employed support workers and counsellors (see Figure 13 and Table 2).

Support workers are the backbone of second stage shelters and crucial to their daily functioning and activities. Lisa from Munroe House (British Columbia) commented that support workers are available to help survivors in a variety of ways:

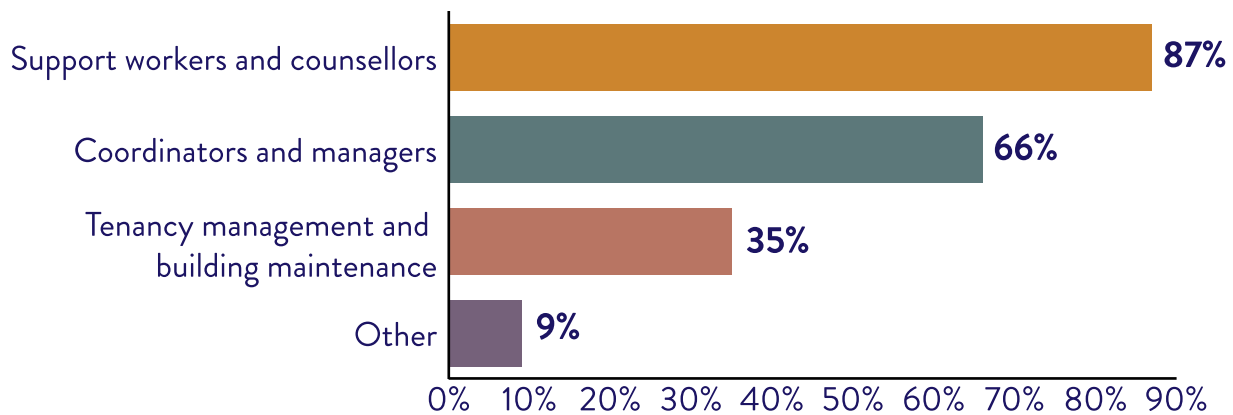
There's all sorts of things they do...we don't have mandatory meetings here; it is an open-door policy. So at any time, someone will come down to the office. They'll help fill out forms, look for housing, and safety planning.

Table 2: Main Types of Workers at Second Stage Shelters

	Worker Title	Responsibilities
	Support Worker	Bulk of the staff; provides support such as transitional support plans, counselling, safety planning, accompaniment to appointments, help finding housing; also oversees programming, makes referrals, manages donations, etc.
	Child and Youth Worker	Develops and facilitates all programming for children; in some places, they provide counselling, advocacy, and accompaniment.
	Administrative Property Services Assistant	First point of contact with the public; informs callers about housing options in the community (including second stage, how to apply, maintains waitlist, other administrative duties as assigned).
Management and Administration		
	Executive Director	Responsible for the day to day operation of the shelter; managing staff; applying for funding and overseeing budgets; program management, etc.
	Program Supervisor	Deliver, facilitate, manage, and oversee the programs; oversee direct service team, placement students, volunteers, etc.
	Administration/Financing	Usually the position is combined; oversees administrative duties and financial management of the budget.

Note: The information in this table was gathered from interviews with EDs of second stage shelters.

Figure 13: What types of workers do you employ? (n=86)



Lynn from Armagh House (Ontario) also explained the variety of tasks that staff perform:

Their main responsibility is transitional support plans, safety plans, community resourcing, finding and maintaining housing, assisting the women in advocating for themselves. So giving them a voice...Short and long term goals and what they look like. It could be housing, employment, education, understanding the cycle of abuse...budgeting and securing financial assistance... [and] accompanying women for family and criminal court.

A survey respondent from Alberta mentioned the expertise of second stage shelter workers:

Recognizing that second stage shelters do so much more beyond the work within the shelter. Having expertise in the justice system, housing, education, employment, etc. is difficult to find in one person.

Among the second stage shelters visited, most contracted out for building maintenance and repairs, renovations, and deep cleaning of apartments after a resident moves out. EDs shared that this is part of their strategy to keep support workers from having landlord duties, ensuring that residents feel comfortable approaching staff during and after their stay.

STAFFING GAPS AND CHALLENGES

The lack of funding for staffing was a primary concern for second stage shelters as it affected

their capacity to support survivors, provide programming, and help residents find permanent housing.

Among the EDs interviewed for the study, all but one said that they needed more staff and wanted to provide more competitive salaries, retirement plans, and more robust professional development funds to retain high-quality staff. Survey respondents expressed similar sentiments:

The lack of staffing is critical to how we support the families in the house. Funding is the primary concern.
- survey respondent, British Columbia

We spend more on staffing than our budget allows... Staffing is driven by safety needs. - survey respondent, Northwest Territories

Both interviewed EDs and survey respondents expressed concerns about having to fundraise to cover staffing costs at their shelter:

When I talk about resources, it is funding for appropriate staffing...we're not 100% funded by any governing body and we have to fundraise any shortfall.
- Lynn, Armagh House, Ontario

We do not have core operational funding. As such, our staff salaries are paid for by grants and donations. This is not a secure form of funding and the potential for staffing cuts at any time is a risk. - survey respondent, Saskatchewan

Without adequate financial support from government funders, resulting in reliance on fundraising for salaries, many second stage shelters struggle to maintain competitive wages to attract and retain skilled workers. Two EDs on opposite ends of the country – in the Yukon and Quebec – expressed frustration over the labour shortages and high turnover in the sector. One said that she had never seen such a scarcity of workers in twenty years.

Due to the absence of sustainable funding for staffing across the country, survey comments and interviews with EDs pointed to an unfortunate trend: shelters hire and train support workers who later leave for similar positions in government departments with better salaries and benefits. Barb from Betty's Haven described her frustration of losing good staff to government jobs:

So we're a training ground. There's a lot of NGOs that are; it's not just us. When the government took over the emergency shelter housing, most of their staff were all our best staff from the NGOs.

Many second stage shelters we visited rely on volunteers and placement students to help cover some of the workload. However, this is not ideal and can create more work for overstretched teams in terms of supervision. Additionally, Arianne at Nouvelle-Étape shared that the work is complex and requires a firm knowledge of many overlapping sectors and issues:

When looking into domestic violence at large, we think, "she could get out of there," yet barriers are getting in the way. Women have to live with these numerous complexities, now more than ever. Shelter workers sometimes tell me they are puzzled by a given situation...You need to understand youth protection. You need to have a handle on the civil court, the criminal court, immigration and its ramifications. It can be about the survivor's health issues.

Many felt that support workers do life-saving work requiring skill and expertise in VAW and that this

should be recognized by funders and adequately compensated accordingly.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Survey results and interviews demonstrated that second stage shelters provide a wide range of programs and services to survivors of domestic violence (see Figures 14 and 15). From individual and group counselling to helping women navigate various social services and legal systems, second stage shelters support women in building a strong foundation to achieve their goals of independence and safety.



PROGRAMS

Individual counselling (86%), group counselling (70%), programs for children (68%), and life skills programs (61%) were the most frequently reported programs available on-site. Partnering organizations and referrals are used when the shelter is unable to provide specific support on-site. These partnerships are crucial to the continuity of programming. As one survey respondent from Ontario noted, “We have been very fortunate to partner with incredible non-profits and social service agencies to provide workshops and activities for our clients.”

Second stage shelters are more than just a roof over one’s head. One ED described the programs and supports offered as the “heart and soul” of the organization:

It is the programs and services that help them gain the confidence and skills that will empower them to succeed independently. The house and the apartments are the backbone of the organization and the work we do. The programs and support are the heart and soul - Lynn, Armagh House, Ontario

Interviews captured the diversity of programming, which varied according to what the current residents identified as a need or interest, as well as available resources, staff, or volunteers to make it happen. Additional programs noted from comments and interviews included:

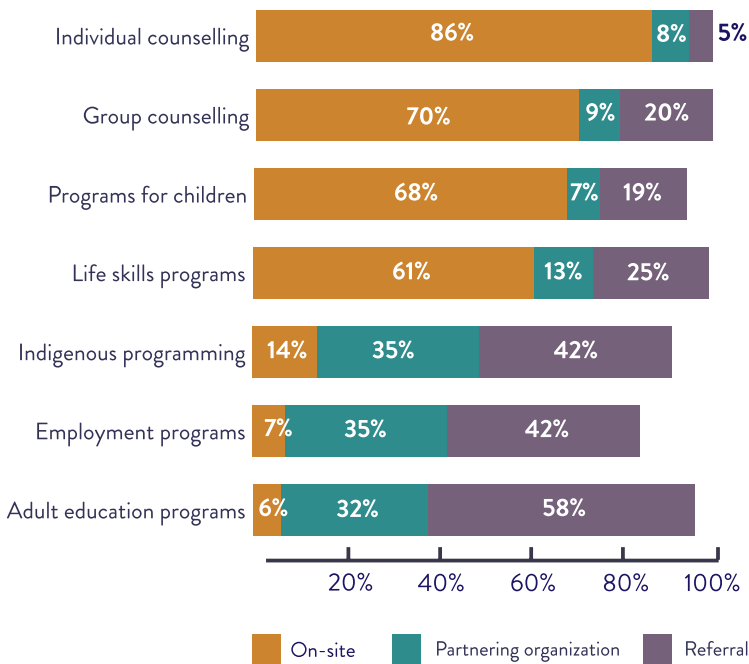
- Legal education
- Career empowerment
- Healthy relationships
- Art therapy
- Breaking the cycle of abuse
- Wellness activities (e.g. reiki and yoga)
- Music lessons
- Social activities outside the shelter
- Community kitchens
- Finances and budgeting
- Japanese outreach

CHILDREN’S PROGRAMMING

The majority (68%) of survey respondents provide programs for children. On-site visits found that these programs take a variety of forms. For example, Munroe House in BC offers a PEACE program²⁰⁴ that includes art therapy, one-on-one time with a therapist, and the occasional group for children ages 3-19. Armagh House provides several programs for a variety of ages, including SOS Home Alone Safety for Kids, art therapy, and reading with therapy dogs. Through the Community Action Program for Children, a government-funded initiative, Nouvelle-Étape provides child health and development activities on-site.

In all instances, the child and youth worker was seen as an essential part of the team, providing much-needed support to children residing at the shelter.

Figure 14: What are the programs offered at your second stage shelter?



SERVICES

In addition to programs, many second stage shelters offer a variety of services. Safety planning (94%), help applying for housing (70%), and court support (70%) were the most frequently reported services available on-site (see Figure 15).

LEGAL SUPPORTS

Almost one-third (32%) of survey respondents reported that they provide legal support on-site at their second stage shelters. The majority (70%) also provide court support to residents to accompany them to their hearings. Only one of the shelters visited had a family lawyer on staff. Lisa from Munroe House explained the role of the family lawyer on-site and how it is funded:

We have a family law lawyer on staff and they continue to do legal education and workshops. One of the popular ones is communicating with your ex because you often have to around the children...The lawyer also provides full representation to women who have experienced violence who have a family law case and who don't qualify for legal aid or their legal aid hours have run out...Sometimes throwing money at a problem can solve it and, in this case, we self-fund this

position...I can see the positive difference it makes when a woman is represented by somebody with unlimited hours.

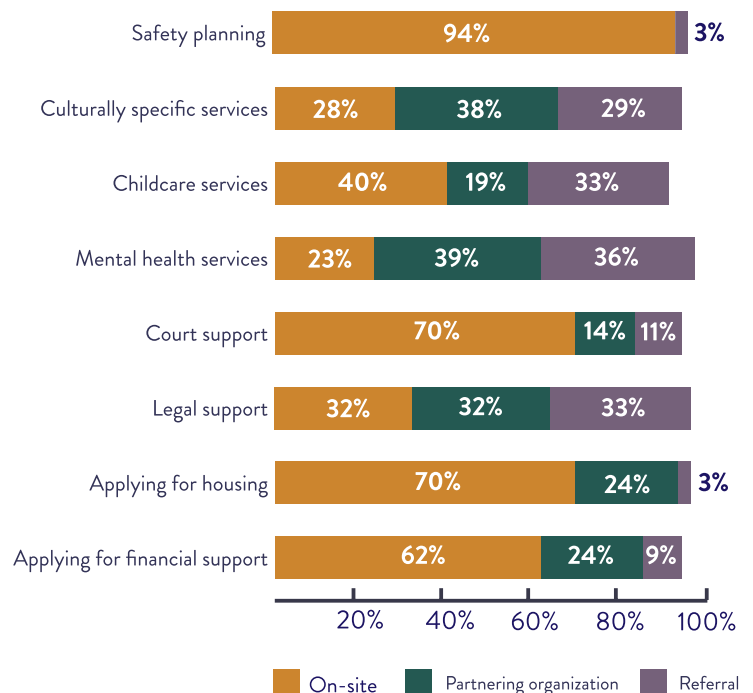
A second stage shelter in Quebec developed a legal program to support women navigating various legal systems, which was integral for survivors who find the court system stressful:

All of the legal procedures are supported. We have developed a legal program that is really important, because what they are living is complex. So, civil, criminal, immigration – because we have a lot of immigrant families – we help them so that they have a better understanding of their rights so they know how to prepare themselves for court. - *Arianne, Nouvelle-Étpe*

A former resident of the same shelter recalled how reassuring it was to have legal accompaniment:

Because you know that you will be in front of your abuser. But then, you have someone who is saying "don't worry, I'm here. He won't approach you" ...it's someone you can trust. I would say, if I hadn't had that... I think I would have just not gone to court.

Figure 15: What services are provided at your second stage shelter?



Other EDs pointed to the critical need for this support and found alternative ways to obtain it via community partnerships, which was consistent with the survey data (32% worked with partnering organizations, Figure 14). Barb of Betty's Haven shared that they were in desperate need of immigration lawyers to assist their residents with precarious status. She also pointed out the gaps in legal supports due to the lack of lawyers with VAW training in the North; some would not visit remote communities. Virtual legal clinics are options for rural and remote communities, with such programs occurring in Ontario and British Columbia.²⁰⁵

Among the survivors interviewed, many shared that dealing with legal issues – from custody, divorce, and restraining orders to immigration – was a priority. For women going through long custody battles, they could reach out for support from the staff at second stage shelters, even after they had moved into their own housing (see page 65). A current resident of a second stage shelter in Ontario whose legal matters were being dragged out in court for many years, and were complicated by her immigration status, was thankful for the ongoing support:

My goal is to finish my court case. This is my dream...I have four different court cases...they [staff] always tell me...we're not going to leave you alone until this ends.

WSC interviewed two current residents with precarious status and one former resident who had precarious status during her stay at the second stage shelter. They shared that the time, support, and waived rental fees were crucial to helping them gain their legal status and get back on their feet. Many feared deportation and potential violence in their home countries from their abusers and/or their extended families. Several said that the second stage shelter “saved their lives.”

A current resident in Quebec shared that she has suffered greatly but was thankful to finally be able to relax and finalize her immigration application:

I have suffered a lot. But when I got here, I finally relaxed...Soon, when my situation becomes more stable, they [staff] will help with all the legwork, like the paperwork for housing, the equivalence for my diploma, and everything else.

A former resident in BC with precarious status at the time of her stay recalled the importance of the assistance she received for her immigration status:

Especially because I am an immigrant and I left my partner, who was my spousal sponsor. I had that panic of what am I going to do? I have no status...because my son is from Canada, that complicated things because he has to stay here until we go through court. It was such a relief that I was in a place that specifically had supports for immigration...I'd been trying to process my immigration for so long by myself. I got denied. I tried to reapply...I was discouraged...But when I talked to the support workers...they were very reassuring... Having my own apartment made me feel like I could be independent and I could get back on my feet.

HOUSING SUPPORTS

Support staff working in second stage shelters are well aware of the challenges survivors face in trying to find safe, affordable, and appropriate housing for their families. Among survey respondents, 97% indicated that affordable housing was “always” or “sometimes” hard to find in their community.

To assist survivors in finding permanent and safe housing, the majority (70%) of survey respondents reported providing housing supports for residents, with 26% having a dedicated worker (housing coordinator/advocate) whose specific role was to help survivors find housing. Focus group participants confirmed that this is a critical position at their shelters:

The housing advocate is an activist, essentially. Negotiating with landlords if it's in the community, making sure the tenants' rights are being adhered to, and managing relationships.

Housing support includes helping residents look for affordable housing (91%), tenancy education (73%), advocacy with landlords (63%), other financial assistance (31%), and rental assistance (16%) (see Figure 16).

Comments and interviews found that “other” housing supports include help with applications, providing emotional support, navigating social housing, accompaniment to appointments, and safety planning.

Current and former residents shared the many ways that staff worked hard to find them housing, even in the context of the affordable housing crisis across Canada. Finding safe, affordable, and appropriate housing was a long-term goal expressed by current and former residents of second stage. A former resident in BC shared that housing was “certainly the biggest thing...and they were really good about that...They worked really hard to get me housing before giving birth, which was so amazing and really helpful.”

As Figure 17 illustrates, second stage shelters coordinate with a variety of community groups and individuals to support survivors looking for safe, affordable housing. Building relationships with community housing organizations is a big part of the work done by housing support workers. The majority (60%) work with non-profit housing organizations, followed by 35% with homelessness

serving organizations. Only seven survey respondents reported that they did not work with any of the groups listed in Figure 17.

We know that second stage housing is much more than just an apartment unit – staff create wrap-around supports to ensure women are successfully housed. In the last year, survey respondents indicated that 76% of women leaving their shelter had secured permanent housing (n=64).

An Alberta survey respondent shared the positive feedback they received from past residents: “The client’s feedback was very positive that the program was helpful. We get frequent referrals from former clients to friends and family to our program.” Similarly, a respondent from Ontario said, “Our program has been extremely successful. It started small but has made a significant difference for the women accessing the transition house.”

FOLLOW-UP SUPPORTS

Second stage shelters surveyed and interviewed indicated that they continue to support survivors even after they have moved into permanent housing to ensure that they can maintain that housing. The majority (85%) of survey respondents indicated that former residents can continue to access supports, services, and programs after

Figure 16: Types of Housing Supports

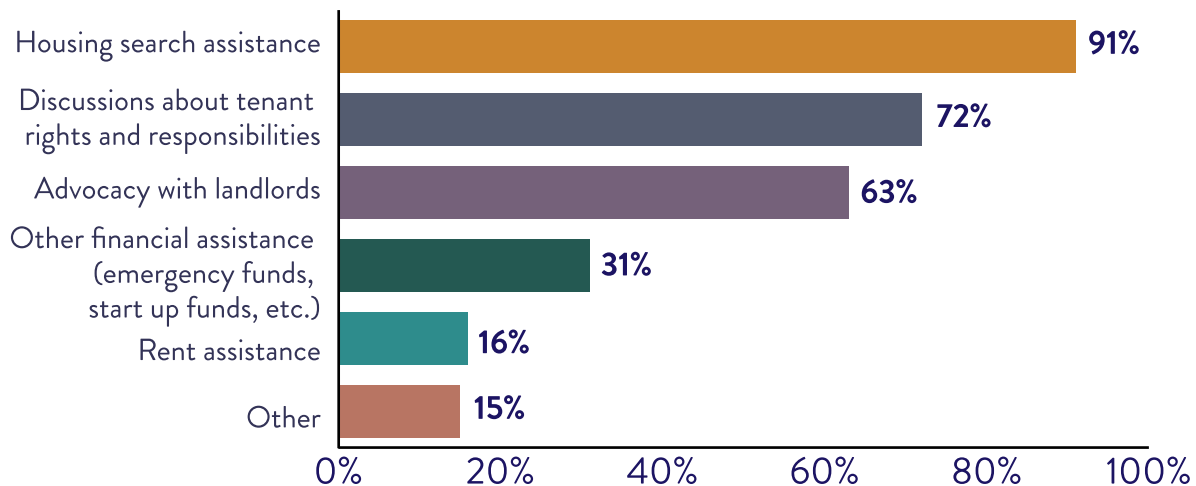
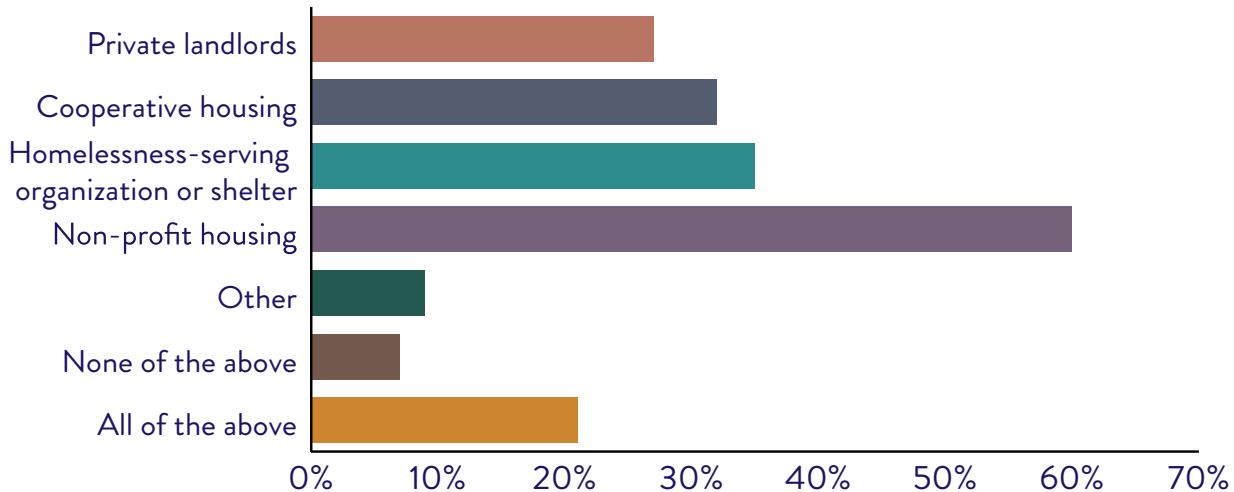


Figure 17: Do you work with the following groups to help survivors find housing?



they move out. This speaks to the wrap-around philosophy of second stage housing for IPV survivors.

Speaking to this, an ED interviewed in Newfoundland and Labrador shared:

They have access to the same support that any of our ex-residents would, which is access to the crisis line and the [emergency] shelter. They can call the shelter and talk to staff about anything and everything that they need support on. When we have programming or an event coming up, they would be on the list of people we would contact to let them know.

Survey respondents commented on follow-up supports:

We will assist all past residents with issues arising if they wish us to assist them. - *survey respondent, Ontario*

We welcome outreach clients back for emotional and practical support as needed. - *survey respondent, British Columbia*

We also offer post-shelter follow-up with a social worker, which is focused on maintaining what has been learned and can also be updated, depending on the needs, through occasional home visits or support. - *survey respondent, Quebec*

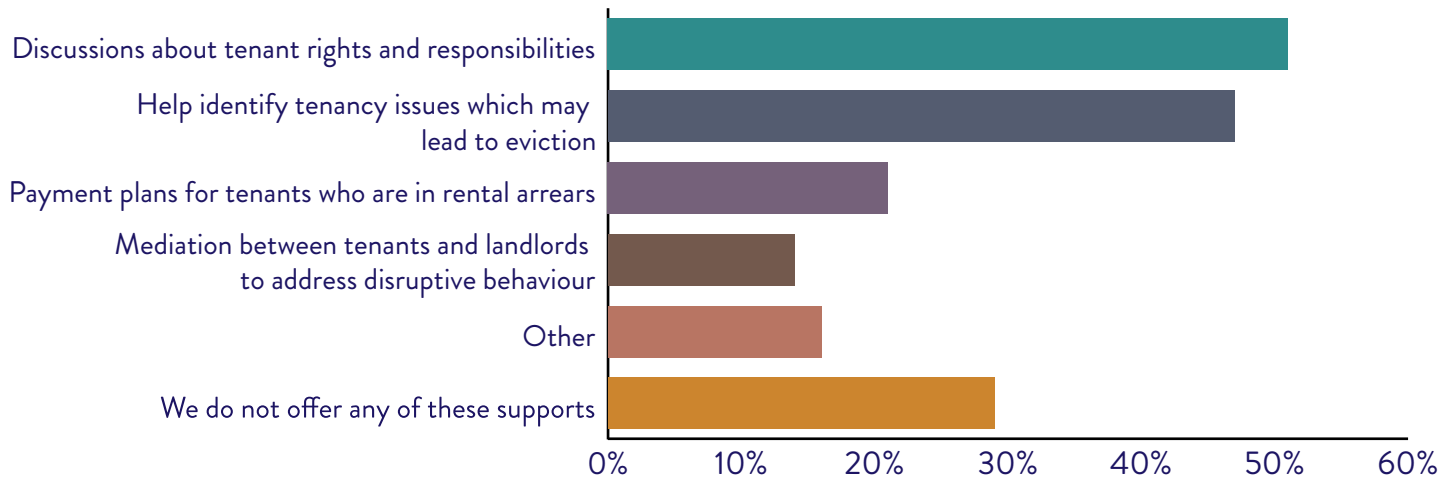
At Munroe House, former residents are welcome to participate and continue with programs they were already enrolled in. For example, Lisa explained that children can continue to participate in the PEACE Program for as long as they need.

At Armagh House, follow-up services were specifically for legal matters:

After the families leave Armagh, they can continue to contact us for any follow-up supports and we continue to work with the families, especially if it is related to their legal matters. The legal system takes so long to finalize custody access...let's support them to the end and celebrate that success with them [rather than] referring them to another agency in the community... We know their situation, they feel comfortable with us, and we know their story. Retelling their story to a new person can be retraumatizing for them. - *Lynn*

The survey asked about specific housing supports offered to former residents. The most commonly reported were discussions about tenant rights and responsibilities (51%) and helping women identify tenancy issues that may lead to an eviction (47%) (see Figure 18). Other responses included providing furniture for new accommodations, nutrition enhancement, working with service providers, assistance with housing applications, and continued outreach support.

Figure 18: Follow-up housing supports for residents who have moved into permanent housing



Over one-quarter (29%) do not provide any follow-up housing supports for former residents, largely due to staffing and financial limitations. In their comments, they stressed the need for these services but, as a Saskatchewan respondent noted, “Unfortunately, we do not have the staff to continue working with residents after they leave.”

PROGRAM GAPS AND CHALLENGES

Both interviews and survey data found that due to financial limitations, some second stage shelters are unable to have full-time staff for all of their programs. In certain shelters, specific programs can only be offered some of the time as they are reliant on external grants:

Due to limited capacity and funding, the programs are not consistent as they are proposal-driven. - *survey respondent, Yukon*

We could do so much more with sustainable funding. - *survey respondent, Ontario*

We need to do better at serving our Indigenous families and have programming specific to this population. - *survey respondent, Alberta*

The programs are being re-evaluated this year, but we notice the need is increasing and we will need to limit access to certain services. - *survey respondent, Quebec*

An interviewed Newfoundland and Labrador ED stressed the importance of sustainable funding for programs:

We need funding that is consistent and guaranteed. I'm not interested in program funding that I have to apply for every year, because who has time to do that?...I don't think that's the way forward, to create programming based on year-to-year funding.

Another area identified as a limitation was mental health supports. Less than one-quarter (23%) of survey respondents can provide these supports on-site. In their comments, many said that while they wanted to provide mental health supports for residents, they did not have the capacity: “We lack professional paid staff to offer the level of mental health and/or addiction support and treatment that is needed” (survey respondent, Manitoba).

Lastly, childcare was also identified as a service gap. Less than half (40%) of survey respondents reported providing childcare services on-site (see Figure 15, page 62). However, this was not reflected in the on-site visits, as none of the shelters visited had childcare services on-site. To address this gap, one shelter was able to partner with their umbrella organization for childcare so that mothers could access drop-in childcare on occasion while they attended appointments. Many saw the need and wanted to have childcare on-

site for mothers but could not because of a lack of staffing, space, and funding. They also noted that the process of applying for a childcare licencing was a significant barrier.

CONCLUSION



Second stage shelters are an essential part of the continuum of supports for IPV survivors. They provide safe and affordable housing for women and their children, with IPV-trained workers offering supports and programming to assist them as they transition to a life free from violence. What distinguishes second stage from other forms of transitional housing is the emphasis on safety, IPV expertise, and wrap-around supports for survivors at every stage of their healing journeys.

The results of this study demonstrate that the primary goals of second stage are providing tools and supports to assist survivors in becoming independent, establishing safety, and preparing for long-term housing. The transformative aspects of second stage shelters were emphasized by former and current residents, as well as executive directors, as one of the most significant outcomes of second stage. Space and time afforded by second stage shelters enabled this vital work to occur.

Second stage shelters provide a wide range of programming that varies across Canada and within regions and communities. Programming is at the heart of what second stage shelters do – groups, individual counselling, programs for children, legal education, and wellness activities, among others, offer a foundation for survivors to create safety within themselves and their homes. Choice and autonomy are emphasized in programs that are survivor-centric. While programming is mandatory at some second stage shelters, many meet survivors where they are at and find ways to facilitate their healing and meet their needs. An approach to programming that is “holistic, organic, and flexible” is essential, as each survivor has their own challenges, needs, and goals.

Programs, particularly groups, have a positive impact on residents and facilitate community. Current and former residents said that connecting with other survivors and building community around shared experiences was a significant component of their healing and ability to develop inner resiliency. Knowing they were not alone

and breaking the silence around abuse expanded their inner strength to continue working towards self-sufficiency. This also aided in developing a network of support within and beyond the second stage shelter. As former residents shared, these connections often continued long after they had moved on.

The results of this study also demonstrate the importance of second stage shelter workers and that their experience, expertise, and skills are indispensable. Staff provide emotional support, counselling, programs, referrals, and knowledge on systems navigation, among other forms of support, day or night. Due to financial limitations, it is a challenge to keep quality support workers – an issue that many service providers commented could be remedied with sustainable core funding.

Many of the findings from the survey and interview data resonate and expanded upon the key themes found in the literature review of safety, programs, additional time, and community. The results indicate that second stage shelters provide a life-saving service for IPV survivors to secure not only long-term housing but also long-term security measures such as relocation, divorce, custody, and protection orders. The time afforded in second stage allows survivors to envision their goals and work towards them, whether that is continuing their education or pursuing a new career path.

LOOKING FORWARD

In February 2020, WSC organized two focus groups and a community of practice for second

stage shelters. This was the first pan-Canadian event that brought together 16 second stage experts from different regions of the country. The purpose of the focus groups was to discuss the study's preliminary findings and provide a forum to build capacity, identify promising practices, share resources, and build a second stage shelter community of practice that would continue beyond the two-day meeting. The recommendations that follow build on their insights.

Overwhelmingly, the data from the survey, interviews, and focus groups suggest that the most significant barrier facing second stage shelters is the absence of adequate core and sustainable funding. Insufficient or non-existent funding impacts all aspects of second stage shelters, from the model, programs, and services to the staffing and available follow-up supports. The wrap-around supports that so many second stage shelters strive to provide for IPV survivors are compromised when funding is inadequate. Across all data sources, it is clear that despite these challenges, second stage shelters are doing their best and continue to provide IPV supports for survivors.

Interviews and focus group participants were asked to envision what second stage could look like if funding wasn't an issue. Many said they would do "so much more" if they could. These include expanding the child and youth program and including childcare on-site; full free stays for women with precarious status; language interpretation; having a family lawyer on-site or on retainer; outreach and housing support workers; career empowerment programs; trauma-informed feminist design for new builds; regional networks for second stage shelters; and transportation in rural, remote, and northern regions.

The following recommendations would help bring these visions to life and provide better support, services, programs, and space for more survivors to heal, break the cycle of violence, and prevent women's homelessness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. The number of second stage shelters for IPV survivors must be increased across Canada to prevent violence, abuse, and femicide:**
 - a. Abuse does not end following a separation. Many survivors continue to be harassed, stalked, and abused by their former partners long after the relationship has ended.²⁰⁶
 - b. Research has demonstrated that separation is a significant risk factor for femicide and that "women are at the greatest risk of lethal violence within the first several months following their separation."²⁰⁷
 - c. Second stage shelters provide safe and affordable housing with wrap-around IPV supports for women and children fleeing violence, thereby reducing the risk of future abuse, trauma, and femicide. Not investing in second stage housing as part of the continuum of supports for IPV survivors could result in the loss of women's lives.
- 2. The number of second stage shelters in rural, remote, and northern communities must be increased.**
 - a. There are limited second stage shelters in these regions due to the critical affordable housing shortage; additional costs to build in the North; fewer opportunities to partner with housing organizations; and barriers to local fundraising.
- 3. The number of second stage shelters in Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) communities must be increased across the country.**
 - a. Considering that Indigenous women and girls face higher rates of IPV and femicide

in rural, remote and northern areas²⁰⁸ alongside fewer supports, there needs to be an increase in Indigenous second stage shelters in these areas in particular.

4. Sustainable, core operational funding for all second stage shelters is required, as are yearly increases in accordance with standard of living costs. This core recurrent funding must include:

- a. Funding to maintain quality staff with competitive salaries. This includes professional development and training opportunities.
- b. Programming dollars. Second stage shelters are more than bricks and mortar and provide specialized IPV supports for survivors of violence. Funding for new builds should have programming dollars attached to ensure that programming can be delivered consistently.
- c. Funding for ongoing repairs and building maintenance.

5. Funders must financially support the range of services that second stage shelters provide, including:

- a. Child and youth programs
- b. Housing specific supports
- c. Legal education and representation
- d. Designated units for women with precarious immigration status
- e. Follow-up supports for graduated residents
- f. Support for mental health and substance use issues, low-barrier, harm reduction, trauma-informed practices

6. Immediately increase social and affordable housing units while also increasing second stage shelters for IPV survivors who need more support.

- a. Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the National Housing Strategy's (NHS) allocation of affordable housing funding and new second stage housing builds for DV/IPV survivors.
- b. Review and evaluate CMHC's Co-Investment Funding application and process for barriers that may hinder NHS goals to create more shelter spaces and units for DV/IPV survivors. Ensure that the application is accessible and attainable for shelters so that more second stage shelters can be built or renovated.
- c. CMHC co-investment funding must recognize and account for the specific needs of new second stage shelter builds, including larger units, trauma-informed design, and communal spaces.
- d. Ensure that the NHS meets the Universal Design Standard (25% of units are accessible) in second stage shelter builds.

7. Address the disconnects between VAW shelter/anti-violence sectors and government funders and establish collaboration and communication among them.

For government funders (municipal, provincial and territorial, and federal):

- a. The yet to be developed National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence and the National Housing Strategy must work together to address service and support gaps for IPV survivors.
- b. CMHC should conduct research to obtain

national-level data on the social and affordable housing needs of IPV survivors.

- c. Recognize, include, and adequately fund the expertise of the VAW sector and second stage shelters in the continuum of supports for IPV survivors.
- d. Governments need to work with second stage shelters to develop better evaluation tools to improve services and respond to need. This must be guided by second stage shelters and/or their provincial and territorial associations alongside administrative funding dollars for doing this work.
- e. To accurately capture the real impacts of second stage shelters, qualitative methods (e.g. interviews and focus groups) with survivors are needed to measure the long-term effects of second stage shelters. Researchers who carry out this work must be well-versed in IPV and put measures in place to minimize potential harm as well as empower participants.²⁰⁹ This includes but is not limited to ongoing informed consent; allowing a support person to be present; contact information for follow-up support (e.g. counsellors); explaining the benefits of participating in the research; explaining the potential harm of participating in the interview; and maintaining confidentiality.²¹⁰

Collaboration Across Sectors:

- a. Provincial and territorial housing corporations that work with shelters should receive VAW 101 training and create a liaison staff position specifically for IPV housing interventions.
- b. WSC supports the MMIWG Inquiry Calls to Justice (4.6 and 4.7)²¹¹ for new housing to meet the needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people and long-

term sustainable funding for a range of Indigenous-led supportive housing for IPV survivors:

4.6 We call upon all governments to immediately commence the construction of new housing and the provision of repairs for existing housing to meet the housing needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. This construction and provision of repairs must ensure that Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people have access to housing that is safe, appropriate to geographic and cultural needs, and available wherever they reside, whether in urban, rural, remote, or Indigenous communities.

4.7 We call upon all governments to support the establishment and long-term sustainable funding of Indigenous-led low-barrier shelters, safe spaces, transition homes, second-stage housing, and services for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people who are homeless, near homeless, dealing with food insecurity, or in poverty, and who are fleeing violence or have been subjected to sexualized violence and exploitation. All governments must ensure that shelters, transitional housing, second-stage housing, and services are appropriate to cultural needs, and available wherever Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people reside.

- c. WSC supports the Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network's call for a diverse national advisory body that includes the women's homelessness sector and the VAW sector to guide and monitor policy responses to COVID-19.²¹² WSC recommends that this advisory body continues to work collaboratively on policy related to the intersection of VAW and women's homelessness beyond the pandemic.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Moreau (2019).
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- ³ Maki (2019b).
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- ¹⁶ Paradis & Mosher (2012); Reid & Gillberg (2014).
- ¹⁷ Leech (2012).
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- ¹⁹ Williams & Moser (2019).
- ²⁰ Maki (2019b).
- ²¹ Canada (2018: 18).
- ²² Williams & Moser (2019).
- ²³ Thank you to the focus group participants who shared their time and expertise with us: Jennifer Gladue (Neepinse Family Healing Centre, Alberta); Browyn Young (Sherielle Manor, British Columbia); Chloé Deraiche (Maison Flora Tristan, Quebec); Kimberley Plante (L'Égide, Quebec); Julie DeMarchi (Musk Quat Transition House, Ontario); Heather Byrne (Alice House, Nova Scotia); Alyson Pizzezy (Liberty Lane, New Brunswick); Joy Johnson-Green (Sonshine Centre, Alberta); Olivia Jim (Spirit Way, British Columbia); Sarah Louie (Cadence, British Columbia); Tammy Daigle (Crossroads for Women, New Brunswick); Sandy Watson-Moyles (Three Oaks, Ontario); Mariela Arango (L'Inter-Elles, Quebec); Nancy Gough (Maison d'aide, Quebec); and Arianne Hopkins (Nouvelle-Étape, Quebec).
- ²⁴ Baker, Billhardt, Warren, Rollins, & Glass (2010); Clark et al. (2018a); Fotheringham, Walsh, & Burrowes (2014); Hoffart (2015); Tutty, Ogden, Giurgiu, Weaver-Dunlop, Damant, Thurston, Berman, Gill, Hampton, Jackson, Ursel, Delany, Harrison, Silverston, White, Dunbar, Goard, Ali, & Solerno (2009).

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- ²⁶ World Health Organization (2017).
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- ⁴⁴ Mattoo (2017).
- ⁴⁵ This is not the groups they could or would serve, but the groups of women they had knowingly served in the past who self-disclose (Maki 2019b: 28).
- ⁴⁶ Auffrey et al. (2017); Baker et al. (2010); Burnett, Ford-Gilboe, Berman, Wathen, & Ward-Griffin (2016); Huey & Broll (2018); Jategaonkar & Ponic (2011); Kirkby & Mettler (2016); O'Campo, Daoud, Hamilton-Write & Dunn (2016); Pavao, Alvarez, Baumrind, Induni, & Kimerling (2007); Ponic et al. (2011); Ponic & Jategaonkar (2010); Tutty (2015); Tutty et al. (2009); Van BerKum & Oudshoorn (2015); Webster (2013).
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- ⁵⁰ Kirkby & Mettler (2016: 114).
- ⁵¹ Tutty et al. (2009).

- ⁵² Drabble & McInnes (2017); Kirkby & Mettler (2016); YWCA Canada (2016).
- ⁵³ Drabble & McInnes (2017); Tutty et al. (2015).
- ⁵⁴ Point-in-Time count of homelessness is coordinated in communities across Canada through the Government of Canada's Homeless Partnering Strategy. It measures sheltered and unsheltered homeless people who are "sleeping rough" to provide a snapshot of the rates of homelessness in a given community (Canada 2018a).
- ⁵⁵ Kirkby & Mettler (2016); Mosher & Homes for Women (2013). For a comprehensive overview of women's homelessness in Canada see Schwan, Versteegh, Perri, Caplan, Baig, Dej, Jenkinson, Brais, Eiboff, & Pahlevan Chaleshtari (2020).
- ⁵⁶ O'Campo et al. (2016); Rollins, Glass, Perrin, Billardt, Clough, Barnes, Hanson, & Bloom (2012).
- ⁵⁷ Rollins et al. (2012).
- ⁵⁸ Zufferey et al. (2016).
- ⁵⁹ Zufferey et al. (2016: 466).
- ⁶⁰ Thurston et al. (2013); DAWN Canada (2019).
- ⁶¹ Women's Shelters Canada (2018); Gander & Johannson (2014).
- ⁶² Women's Shelters Canada (2018: 11-13).
- ⁶³ Burnett, Ford-Giboe, Berman, Ward-Griffin, & Wathen (2015); Thurston et al. (2013).
- ⁶⁴ Dessie, Wood, & Sullivan (2013).
- ⁶⁵ Hoffart (2015: 22).
- ⁶⁶ Hoffart (2015); Melbin, Sullivan, & Cain (2003); O'Connor (2006).
- ⁶⁷ Bomsta & Sullivan (2018).
- ⁶⁸ Bomsta & Sullivan (2018: 371).
- ⁶⁹ Auffrey et al. (2017); Barata & Stewart (2006); Gotthilf & Stavem (2015); Hulchanski (2004); NWAC (2019); Ontario Human Rights Commission (2008); Ponc & Jategaonkar (2010); Tutty et al. (2009).
- ⁷⁰ Barata & Stewart (2006: 45).
- ⁷¹ Burnett et al. (2016); Burnett et al (2015); Mosher & Homes for Women (2013); Noble (2015); Ponc et al. (2011); Tutty et al. (2009).
- ⁷² Western University Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women & Children.
- ⁷³ NWAC (2019); Women's Shelters Canada (2015).
- ⁷⁴ Thurston et al. (2013).
- ⁷⁵ WSC (2019).
- ⁷⁶ Ontario (2016); Portable Housing Benefit; Maki (2017).
- ⁷⁷ Portable Housing Benefit.
- ⁷⁸ Ontario (2019).
- ⁷⁹ Tutty (2015).
- ⁸⁰ Moreau (2019).

- ⁸¹ Johnson (2011).
- ⁸² Maki (2019a); Tutty (2015); Burnett et al. (2016).
- ⁸³ Maki (2019a); Tutty (2015); Burnett et al. (2016).
- ⁸⁴ Maki (2019a: 46).
- ⁸⁵ Auffrey et al. (2017: 253).
- ⁸⁶ Maki (2019a).
- ⁸⁷ Moreau (2019).
- ⁸⁸ Fotheringham & Turner (2018).
- ⁸⁹ Open Doors Project.
- ⁹⁰ Maki (2019a).
- ⁹¹ BC Housing (2012: 3).
- ⁹² Maki (2019b).
- ⁹³ Auffrey et al. (2017); BC Housing (2012); Correia & Melbin (2005); Hoffart (2015); Melbin, Sullivan, & Cain (2003); Tanguy et al. (2017).
- ⁹⁴ Hoffart (2015); Maki (2019b).
- ⁹⁵ Auffrey et al. (2017).
- ⁹⁶ Mekolichick, Davis, & Choulnard (2008); Melbin et al. (2003); Novac, Brown, & Bourbonnais (2004; 2009).
- ⁹⁷ Mekolichick et al. (2008).
- ⁹⁸ Novac et al. (2004 :6).
- ⁹⁹ Clark et al. (2018a, 2018b); Melbin et al. (2003); Tanguy et al. (2017).
- ¹⁰⁰ Clark et al. (2018a: 10).
- ¹⁰¹ Clark et al. (2018a).
- ¹⁰² There are distinctions between second stage shelters and transitional housing in the homelessness sector that have historically utilized a “housing readiness approach.” This model has received criticism for requiring residents to address mental health and substance use behaviours before they are offered housing. Today, Housing First harm reduction approaches are replacing housing readiness models (Novac et al. 2009; Sullivan & Olsen 2016; Gaetz et al. 2013).
- ¹⁰³ Canada (2019b).
- ¹⁰⁴ Canada (2020).
- ¹⁰⁵ Canada (2019b).
- ¹⁰⁶ Gaetz et al. (2013).
- ¹⁰⁷ Homeless Hub.
- ¹⁰⁸ Discovery House Calgary.
- ¹⁰⁹ Homes for Women London.
- ¹¹⁰ Ziafati (2020).

- ¹¹¹ Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) (2015a: 14; 2015b).
- ¹¹² WSCADV (2018).
- ¹¹³ WSCADV (2015a).
- ¹¹⁴ Auffrey et al. (2017); Fotheringham (2014); Mosher & Homes for Women (2013); Noble (2014).
- ¹¹⁵ Drabble & McInnes (2017).
- ¹¹⁶ Paradis (2018: 8).
- ¹¹⁷ ACWS (2015); Auffrey et a. (2017: 254); Drabble & McInnes (2017); Mosher & Homes for Women (2013).
- ¹¹⁸ Bassuk et al. (2014); Hoffart (2015); Kirkby & Mettler (2016); Novac et al. (2009); Sullivan, López-Zerón, Bomsta, & Menard (2019); Tutty et al. (2009); Van Berkum & Oudshoorn (2015); Webster (2013).
- ¹¹⁹ Duchesne, Rothwell, Ohana, & Grenier (2016).
- ¹²⁰ Canada (2019a).
- ¹²¹ Hoffart (2015: 18).
- ¹²² Mosher & Homes for Women (2013).
- ¹²³ Auffrey et al. (2017: 254).
- ¹²⁴ Hibbs (2019).
- ¹²⁵ Tutty et al. (2008: 44).
- ¹²⁶ Ibid.
- ¹²⁷ BC Housing (2012); CMHC (2018); Correia & Melbin (2005); Hoffart (2015); Mekolichick et al. (2008); Melbin et al. (2003); SPR Associates (1997); Webster (2018).
- ¹²⁸ Auffrey et al. (2014: 250).
- ¹²⁹ Correia & Melbin (2005: 3).
- ¹³⁰ Clark et al. (2018a: 9).
- ¹³¹ Baker et al. (2009); Clark et al. (2018a; 2018b); Dessie et al. (2018); Mekolichick et al. (2008); Sullivan et al. (2019); Tutty et al. (2009); Novac et al. (2009).
- ¹³² ACWS (2017); Tanguy et al. (2017).
- ¹³³ Maki (2019b).
- ¹³⁴ O'Campo et al. (2016: 9).
- ¹³⁵ Dauvergne & Johnson (2001); Dawson et al. (2018); ACWS (2017); Tanguy et al. (2017).
- ¹³⁶ Bomsta & Sullivan (2018).
- ¹³⁷ SPR Associates (1997: 15).
- ¹³⁸ Mebin et al. (2003: 451).
- ¹³⁹ Clark et al. (2018a; 2018b).
- ¹⁴⁰ Webster (2013: 23).

- ¹⁴¹ Hoffart (2015: 14).
- ¹⁴² Baker et al. (2009).
- ¹⁴³ Baker et al. (2009); Hoffart (2015); Tanguy et al. (2017).
- ¹⁴⁴ Mekolichick et al. (2008); Melbin et al. (2003).
- ¹⁴⁵ Baker et al. (2009); BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) (2019a); Correia & Melbin (2005); Mekolichick et al. (2008); Melbin et al. (2003); Tanguy et al. (2017).
- ¹⁴⁶ Mekolichick et al. (2008: 44).
- ¹⁴⁷ BCSTH (2020).
- ¹⁴⁸ Correia & Melbin (2005:4).
- ¹⁴⁹ Clark et al. (2018b:1).
- ¹⁵⁰ ACWS (2017); Dauvergne & Johnson (2001); Hoffart (2015); Tanguy et al. (2017).
- ¹⁵¹ Tanguy et al. (2017: 28).
- ¹⁵² Kirkby & Mettler (2016:120).
- ¹⁵³ Kirkby & Mettler (2016: 124).
- ¹⁵⁴ Maki (2019b).
- ¹⁵⁵ Baker et al. (2009).
- ¹⁵⁶ Maki (2019b); Clark et al. (2018); Hoffart (2015).
- ¹⁵⁷ Auffrey et al. (2017).
- ¹⁵⁸ Mekolichick et al. (2008); Melbin et al. (2003); Webster (2013); Clark et al. (2018a).
- ¹⁵⁹ Tanguy et al. (2017).
- ¹⁶⁰ Melbin et al. (2003: 453).
- ¹⁶¹ Mekolichick et al. (2008: 37).
- ¹⁶² BC Housing (2019: 37).
- ¹⁶³ Auffrey et al. (2017); Hoffart (2015); Mekolichick et al. (2008); Novac et al. (2004; 2009); SPR Associates (1997); Tanguy et al. (2017).
- ¹⁶⁴ Novac et al. (2004).
- ¹⁶⁵ Mekolichick et al. (2008).
- ¹⁶⁶ Wendt & Baker (2013).
- ¹⁶⁷ Wendt & Baker (2013: 523).
- ¹⁶⁸ Auffrey et al. (2017); Hoffart (2015); Nnawulezi et al. (2018); Novac et al. (2009); Tanguy et al. (2017).
- ¹⁶⁹ Melbin et al. (2003); Nnawulezi et al. (2018).
- ¹⁷⁰ Fotheringham & Turner (2018); Hoffart (2015); Kirkby & Mettler (2016); Melbin et al. (2003); Mosher & Homes for Women (2013); Nnawulezi et al. (2018); Sullivan & Olsen (2016); Sullivan et al. (2019); Van Berkum & Oudshoorn (2015); Webster (2013); WSCADV (2015a).

- ¹⁷¹ Baker et al. (2010); Fotheringham & Turner (2018); Hoffart (2015); Kirkby & Mettler (2016); Melbin et al. (2003); Sullivan & Olsen (2016); Tutty et al. (2009); Van Berkum & Oudshoorn (2015); Webster (2013).
- ¹⁷² Strategic Prevention Solutions. (2011); Webster (2013).
- ¹⁷³ Strategic Prevention Solutions (2011: 11).
- ¹⁷⁴ Bomsta & Sullivan (2018).
- ¹⁷⁵ Bomsta & Sullivan (2018: 374).
- ¹⁷⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁸ WSCADV (2018).
- ¹⁷⁹ WSCADV (2018: 4).
- ¹⁸⁰ BC Housing (2019); Fotheringham & Turner (2018); Hansen (2018).
- ¹⁸¹ WSC shelter database.
- ¹⁸² BC Housing (2019).
- ¹⁸³ Fotheringham & Turner (2018: 2).
- ¹⁸⁴ Hansen (2018: 4-5).
- ¹⁸⁵ Bomsta & Sullivan (2018: 377); Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance.
- ¹⁸⁶ DeCandia, Beach, & Clervil (2013).
- ¹⁸⁷ Sullivan et al. (2019).
- ¹⁸⁸ Webster (2013: 24).
- ¹⁸⁹ “N” refers to the number of responses to a particular question. Throughout the report n=97 unless otherwise specified.
- ¹⁹⁰ One of these mixed shelters serves women experiencing homelessness who may also be fleeing violence; the other is VAW-specific.
- ¹⁹¹ Canada (2019c).
- ¹⁹² Ibid.
- ¹⁹³ Maki (2019b).
- ¹⁹⁴ Personal correspondence with the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence.
- ¹⁹⁵ Boyce (2014); Maxwell (2020).
- ¹⁹⁶ Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (1996).
- ¹⁹⁷ Maki (2019b: 16).
- ¹⁹⁸ WSC 2017/2018 Comprehensive Survey.
- ¹⁹⁹ Trauma and violence-informed approaches recognize the impact of trauma on survivors as well as the ongoing experiences of past and ongoing violence “as the cause of the trauma, and avoids seeing the problem as residing only in an individual’s psychological state” (Ponic, Varcoe, & Smutylo [2018]). This allows service providers, such as shelters, to recognize how services may trigger or further harm individuals and make efforts to reduce potential harm and limit exposure to ongoing violence. This creates a positive service experience using “universal trauma precautions” (Ponic, Varcoe, & Smutylo [2018]).

²⁰⁰ Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre.

²⁰¹ Maki (2019b: 34).

²⁰² Also see Fotheringham (2014).

²⁰³ The shelter that did not have a drop-in policy did not have staff on-site – they worked remotely, met regularly to check in on residents, and were available by phone if needed.

²⁰⁴ BCSTH (2017).

²⁰⁵ Luke's Place Virtual Legal Clinic (2020); Rise Women's Legal Centre.

²⁰⁶ Dawson et al. (2018).

²⁰⁷ Dawson et al. (2018: 40).

²⁰⁸ Boyce (2014); Inquiry MMIWG (2019).

²⁰⁹ OCTEVAW (2013).

²¹⁰ DeVault, M. & G Glenda. (2012).

²¹¹ Inquiry MMIWG. (2019).

²¹² Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network (2020).

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