

# BREAKING <sup>the</sup> CYCLE of HOMELESSNESS

## Housing First with support services



The Province recognizes that housing with support services is the most effective approach to eliminating long-term homelessness. The Housing First approach provides homeless people with a place to live regardless of their personal problems. People need a roof over their heads before they can begin addressing their mental illnesses

and/or addictions. By providing a safe place to live, homeless people can then focus on seeking appropriate treatments.

While Housing First models vary, all share some common components:

- A focus on helping people find and retain housing as quickly as possible;
- There is no maximum time that a person may stay in their new home;
- Support services are offered to promote stability and well-being;
- Housing is not dependent on clients accessing support services.

## Facts & Stats

- Cost to the system for the average homeless person in B.C.: \$55,000 per year
- Cost to provide housing and supportive services for a homeless person: \$37,000 per year



HOUSING MATTERS



BC Housing

## Moving through the housing continuum

For over 25 years, Ronnie has battled drug and alcohol addictions. A mother of four, the young, soft-spoken woman has had to show great resolve in order to make her way in life. Today she is living in a family suite at a BC Housing site in east Vancouver. It's a far cry from a homeless stretch in the Downtown Eastside during which, she said, her behaviour was out of control. And, it's a much better situation for her than the nights she spent at emergency shelters.

It was an outreach worker with the Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services Society (VATJSS) who helped Ronnie find a permanent home. VATJSS, which receives funding through BC Housing's Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program, also assists Ronnie by providing groceries and helped her set up her new home.

Peer pressure and life events have taken their toll on Ronnie. Her former partner was an addict and it is hard for Ronnie to be with her family as some members are still active users. Her children have been in and out of care with the Ministry of Children and Family Development. Her oldest son lives with her brother; her 16-year-old daughter wants to go to day treatment; and her 14-year-old son is in a treatment centre in Mission. It is her youngest child, a two-year-old daughter, who keeps Ronnie going. She regained guardianship in September 2009 and

is determined to turn her life around this time for good.

Candid about her circumstances and how she arrived there, Ronnie is now aware that she controls the choices she makes. She has participated in BC Housing's and Vancouver Coastal Health's joint Addiction Recovery Program. Today she attends regular meetings, has a sponsor, started a child-friendly support group, and is a panel speaker for detox centres.

### Testimonial

"Helping people identify and plan around their challenges and linking them to needed services helps prevent them from becoming homeless again."

**~ Karen O'Shannacery,  
Executive Director, Lookout  
Emergency Aid Society**

[www.bchousing.org/breakingthecycle](http://www.bchousing.org/breakingthecycle)

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# HOUSING MATTERS

