

MEDICINE HAT COMMUNITY HOUSING SOCIETY

**HOMELESS & COMMUNITY
HOUSING DEPARTMENT**



**2007 – 2008
ANNUAL REPORT**

This annual report will cover the twelve month period from April 1 2007 to March 31 2008.

2006 – 2010 Priorities

Based on the outcome of the focus groups, public forum and questionnaire the Medicine Hat Community Housing Society commits to the following priorities:

Priority: With the continuation of the SCPI and the Alberta Homelessness Initiative, continue to financially support the existing homeless programs in Medicine Hat.

| Program | Federal HPS Funds | AB Homelessness Funds |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Salvation Army Family Support Centre | \$50,000 | \$0 |
| McMan Youth Inn Between Shelter | \$40,000 | \$0 |
| MHCHS Social Housing Outreach Program | \$88,695 | \$0 |

Priority: Work to increase services and resources at all points on the housing continuum.

| Program | AB Outreach Initiative Funds 2007- 2009 |
|--|---|
| Salvation Army Family Support Centre Outreach | \$310,488 |
| McMan Youth Inn Between Shelter Outreach | \$83,600 |
| McMan Street Youth Outreach | \$72,500 |
| MHCHS Social Housing Outreach Program | \$371,513 |
| Saamis Immigration Services Outreach | \$67,780 |
| Miywasin Society of Aboriginals Services Life Skills | \$24,146 |

- Partnered with the City of Medicine Hat, Classic Construction Ltd., and the Medicine Hat Real Estate Board Foundation to develop a proposal for an additional 50 units of affordable housing. The proposal was approved in late 2007.

Priority: Work to enhance community capacity by encouraging the collaboration, cooperation and coordination of services by community organizations and all levels of government.

- Participated in the Crisis Assistance Network including the Housing, Financial Administrator, Promotions and Food Distribution Committees.
- Participated in the Salvation Army Family Support Centre Advisory Committee.
- Established the Homeless & Community Housing Committee as a sub-committee of the Crisis Assistance Network and the Medicine Hat Community Housing Society

Priority: Work with existing service providers to increase publicity around homelessness and poverty and the services that are provided by community organizations.

- Continued to work with the Crisis Assistance Network Promotions Committee in making presentations to various community organizations and groups, using the Poverty and Homelessness in Medicine Hat video.

Priority: Work to enhance community capacity by encouraging partnerships between the private sector/individuals with community helping organizations.

- Continued our relationship with Classic Communities and the development of their affordable home ownership programs. This includes administering the subsidies for the units in these developments.

Priority: Work to influence change in government subsidized housing policy.

- This work was carried out by the social housing department of the Medicine Hat Community Housing Society as they have direct contact with government about these issues.

Priority: Work to influence governments to consider the interrelatedness of housing and social supports, encouraging the funding of both.

- Participated in the Seven Cities Committee which works to influence government policy and funding decisions.
- Participated in Seven Cities evaluation of Outreach Initiative programs.

2007 – 2008 HIGHLIGHTS

Salvation Army Family Support Centre

The eighth year of operation of this 30-bed adult and family homeless shelter proved to be the busiest. 1938 people were admitted to the shelter during the year. The number of different people served was 1,395 making the recidivism rate 28%.

| Category | 2007 - 2008 | 2006 – 2007 | change |
|---|-------------|-------------|----------|
| Admissions to shelter | 1,938 | 1,076 | +862 |
| Number of different people served | 1,395 | 697 | +698 |
| Rate of recidivism | 28% | 35% | -7% |
| Males as a percent of total admissions | 77% | 80% | -3% |
| Females as a percent of total admissions | 23% | 20% | +3% |
| Aboriginals as a percent of total admissions | 10% | 3% | +7% |
| Visible minorities as a percent of total admissions | 1% | 35% | -34% |
| Left shelter because found housing | 78% | 15% | +63% |
| Left shelter because found work | 45% | 18% | +27% |
| Left shelter because moved on to another locale | 21% | 20% | +1% |
| Total bed nights | 8,471 | 7,505 | +966 |
| Average stay per client | 7.3 days | 7 days | +.3 days |
| Meals supplied | 25,777 | 22,383 | +3,394 |

The Family Services component of the Family Support Centre was also very involved with those who are at risk of homelessness. These people find themselves unable to meet their financial demands with the income they have. As a result they approach the Salvation Army for one-time support.

| Category | 2007 - 2008 | 2006 – 2007 | change |
|--|-------------|-------------|----------|
| Accommodations & Security Deposits | \$9,463 | \$5,170 | \$4,293 |
| Medical needs | \$1,584 | \$1,397 | \$187 |
| Utilities | \$2,823 | \$850 | \$1,973 |
| Transportation | \$8,956 | \$2,097 | \$6,859 |
| Food vouchers and food supplies | \$38,695 | \$30,970 | \$7,725 |
| Household goods (furniture, kitchen supplies, etc) | \$3,506 | \$21,143 | \$17,637 |
| Number of people assisted by Family Services | 2,401 | 1,921 | 480 |

Social Housing Outreach Program

The Social Housing Outreach Program was created to assist in the delivery of services that address issues in social housing resident's lives that contribute to homelessness or increase the risk of homelessness. Outreach workers assist program participants in overcoming barriers to independence and self-sufficiency. The inherent logic behind the program's outputs is that as people increase their knowledge,

use more community services, develop skills and increase their coping mechanisms, their ability to deal with challenges in their lives increases and the risk of homelessness decreases.

| Category | 2007 – 2008 | 2006 – 2007 | change |
|---|-------------|-------------|--------|
| Number of people served | 374 | 255 | +119 |
| Males as a percent of total people served | 39% | 47% | -8% |
| Females as a percent of total people served | 61% | 53% | +8% |
| Aboriginals as a percent of total people served | 7% | 7% | Nil |
| Visible minorities as a percent of total served | 15% | 16% | -1% |

The Outreach Program employs two tools to evaluate participant progress as a result of program involvement. The Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) Tool was used to assess participant progress in meeting personal goals. At entry to the program, participants were required to set personal growth goals. At various points in the program the participant's progress in meeting each goal is assessed. Of the 374 people served by the program, 63 participants were evaluated with the GAS Tool. These 63 participants had established a total of 82 goals that were evaluated on a five point scale once during the program duration:

| Assessment | Score | Number of Goals | % of Goals |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-----------------|------------|
| Greatly below expected results | -2 | 16 | 19.5% |
| Below expected results | -1 | 11 | 13.4% |
| Achieved expected results | 0 | 37 | 45.1% |
| Exceeded expected results | 1 | 7 | 8.5% |
| Greatly exceeded expected results | 2 | 11 | 13.4% |

One hundred participant goals were reviewed twice. On the second assessment the goal was reviewed on a three point scale:

| Assessment | Score | Number of Goals | % of Goals |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-----------------|------------|
| Result was lower than prior review | -1 | 21 | 21.0% |
| Result was maintained at prior review | 0 | 25 | 25.0% |
| Result was greater than prior review | 1 | 54 | 54.0% |

The Goal Attainment Scaling Tool demonstrates that goal setting, an essential component of the Outreach Program, is taken seriously by program participants. Following the program logic, this should lead to greater independence and a reduction in the risk of homelessness.

A second scale was used to demonstrate participant progress as a result of program participation. This is the Massachusetts Family Self-Sufficiency Scales and Ladders Assessment. At entry to the program, participants are evaluated as to their position with regard to a number of factors. These include: housing, income management, employment, health, adult education and literacy, nutrition, transportation, etc. This rating forms a baseline from which future assessments are based.

The more critical factors for participants in the Outreach Program are housing (assessing affordability, housing options available, risk of homelessness, housing stability, and quality of housing); health (availability of coverage, affordability, quality of health, substance abuse, mental health); income management (income stability, debt, ability to budget, savings, credit rating); and employment (stability of employment, adequacy of income, benefit coverage, work skills).

The ability of program participants to progress in these areas was truly remarkable:

| Category | Result |
|---|--------|
| Housing: increase over baseline | 75.4% |
| Housing: same as baseline | 13.0% |
| Housing: lower than baseline | 11.6% |
| | |
| Health: increase over baseline | 49.3% |
| Health: same as baseline | 46.4% |
| Health: lower than baseline | 4.3% |
| | |
| Income & Employment: increase over baseline | 55.1% |
| Income & Employment: same as baseline | 30.4% |
| Income & Employment: lower than baseline | 14.5% |
| | |
| Resident Participation: increase over baseline | 66.7% |
| Resident Participation: same as baseline | 27.5% |
| Resident Participation: lower than baseline | 5.8% |

McMan Inn Between Youth Shelter

The Inn Between Youth Shelter operated by McMan Youth, Family and Community Services provides shelter to homeless and at-risk youth to the age of 18 years. The six bed facility provides four beds for children with Child Welfare Status and the other two beds are for homeless youth. This is a very efficient operation, enhanced by the contribution of funding and building by the Southeast Alberta Children and Family Services Authority.

| Category | 2007 – 2008 | 2006 – 2007 | change |
|---|-------------|-------------|--------|
| Number of people served | 54 | 61 | -7 |
| Males as a percent of total people served | 48.1% | 44.2% | +3.9% |
| Females as a percent of total people served | 51.9% | 55.8% | -3.9% |
| Aboriginals as a percent of total people served | 9% | 7.5% | +1.5% |
| Visible minorities as a percent of total served | 5% | 7.5% | -2.5% |

Outcomes:

- 54% Percent of total youth served returned to parents or family
- 76% Percent of “at-risk” youth returned to parents or family
- 23% Percent of youth who left shelter without a discharge plan
- 6% Percent of youth who entered the Child Welfare system
- 44% Recidivism rate

- 54% Percent of youth who completed an Action Plan while in shelter
- 26% Percent of youth who participated with their family in McMan’s parent/teen mediation

Affordable Housing Partnerships Initiative

The construction of 28 below market units commenced in 2006 and was completed in early 2007. The City of Medicine Hat provided the land and the Federal and Provincial Governments provided a grant under the Affordable Housing Partnerships Initiative. Classic Construction Ltd. was the contractor for this development aimed at low income individuals and families who are on the social housing waiting list. With this development the Medicine Hat Community Housing Society has endeavored to provide quality housing at a substantially less cost than market.

| Unit size | # of units | \$ Rent/month | Average \$ rent/month for a same sized unit in Medicine Hat Fall 2007 | % below the average rent/month for a same sized unit |
|---------------|------------|---------------|---|--|
| One bedroom | 9 | \$383 | \$560 | 31.6% |
| Two bedroom | 7 | \$466 | \$670 | 30.4% |
| Three bedroom | 12 | \$535 | \$766 | 30.2% |

The Homeless & Community Housing Department partnered with the City of Medicine Hat, Classic Construction Ltd. and the Medicine Hat Real Estate Board Foundation in developing a proposal for an additional 50 units of affordable housing. In the fall of 2007 the Government of Alberta announced grants totaling \$7,118,752 for this purpose. Construction of 25 two bedroom and 25 one bedroom accessible units is scheduled to begin mid-2008.

Outreach Initiative Pilot Projects

In 2007 – 2008 the Government of Alberta pledged \$1,000,000 to the Medicine Hat Community Housing Society for the purpose of funding programs that will get and keep people housed. Following a Request for Proposals process six outreach initiatives were funded. Each is part of a provincial initiative to evaluate the effectiveness of outreach services. A brief description of each of these programs follows:

Salvation Army Family Support Centre Community Worker Outreach Program

Working with residents of the Family Support Centre, Community Workers strive to increase the positive coping skills of clients and prevent future incidence of crisis due to unmet needs. The Community Workers' objectives have been to maintain and continue the strategies outlined in the action plan. Additionally, they work to increase client's community supports in order to minimize the possibility of a return to the shelter. Other objectives are to:

- increase the capacity of clients to live independently
- advocate on behalf of clients in order for them to receive the resources and assistance required preventing future crisis
- identify factors and develop a plan to support successful re-integration into the community
- collaborate with community agencies in order to achieve above goals and objectives.

McMan Inn Between Youth Shelter – Outreach Program

The Shelter Outreach Worker bridges the gaps in services provided to youth 12-17 years old, who do not have any kind of status or diagnosis (i.e. child welfare, mental health, etc). The Shelter Outreach worker works directly with the youth in developing an action plan. All significant family members and supports are involved when developing these plans and the main goal is to reunite the youth with their family, if suitable.

Youth who are currently or at risk of becoming homeless, and/or engaged in parent/teen conflict can receive services and support from the Shelter Outreach Worker. Parents who are having difficulty with their youth can receive support, information and participate in "Common Ground" mediation services.

The services provided by the Shelter Outreach Worker include, but are not limited to:

- "Common Ground" parent/teen mediation services
- one to one support and follow up for life skills training and coaching
- outreach and education to the community

- follow up and support provided to youth and parents when youth are discharged
- to support readiness and transition of youth in the shelter to stable or appropriate housing

The goals of the program are to increase the number of youth who return home to parents or appropriate housing, decrease the number of youth with unplanned discharges, reduce the recidivism rate and increase the number of families participating in Common Ground Mediation.

McMan Inn Between Youth Shelter – Outreach Worker

The Community Outreach Worker works directly with resistant, reluctant and at risk youth by going to where the youth actually are during optimum youth hours. This position identifies and focuses on working with youth who are unlikely candidates to receive services from other organizations due to being reluctant. The Community Outreach Worker works collaboratively with Children's Services, Mental Health and City Police to support parents in assisting these youth. Providing ongoing follow-up and support for youth and parents (i.e. Common Ground Mediation, 1:1 support and advocacy, life skills training and coaching, stabilizing support services as youth integrate back into their families or other stable housing arrangements).

The goals of the program are to better determine actual numbers of invisible and resistant homeless youth to develop a baseline from which to measure outcomes; to provide Common Ground Mediation services to all youth and families who are willing to participate; assist as many youth as possible to return home to their parents, extended family or some form of stable housing (i.e. Inn Between Youth Shelter).

MHCHS Social Housing Outreach Program

This project allows for the expansion of the existing Outreach Program services. The focus is on expanding services to support access and stability of housing placements for individuals and families in the 500+ rental units managed by Medicine Hat Community Housing Society. In addition, those same services to support access and stability of housing placements applies to individuals and families housed in the private market with the assistance of private rent subsidy programs administered by MHCHS. Outreach Program supports are provided to both singles and families within the framework of social housing, senior's housing, a Transitional Housing facility designed for singles and childless couples, and within the subsidized private market.

Saamis Immigration Services Association – Home For Life Program

This project is focused on housing immigrants and visible minorities in Medicine Hat. An outreach worker has been hired and is liaising with various agencies to identify clientele, to assist with the application process for available units in the private market, referring and supporting clients as they utilize other social housing service agencies and to providing ongoing support during the tenancy. Each new client receives assistance with negotiating the Canadian Culture and social contract to help maintain housing. Coordination of community support services and client follow-up and encouragement assist service users along the success path.

Miywasin Society of Aboriginal Services – Life Skills Program

At risk clients for homelessness are provided with skills and supports to help stabilize their housing situation. They attend a two hour session weekly for eight weeks where self-esteem, problem-solving and communication are addressed.