



CANADIAN MENTAL  
HEALTH ASSOCIATION  
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE  
POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE

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## **CMHA KELOWNA Willow Community Bridging Project Summary November 2007 – February 1, 2008**

The Willow Community Bridging Program opened for business on November 7<sup>th</sup> 2007 and closed January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008. Kara Keam, CMHA Outreach Coordinator, managed the Willow Project. CMHA Kelowna hired 6 full and part-time staff in order to create a presence at the Willow 24/7 for the duration of the project. A great deal of time was spent meeting with neighbours, RCMP, other community service providers to raise awareness, build confidence and create clarity on the referral and intake process.

In September 2007, CMHA Kelowna was approached by Westcorp Properties Inc. regarding the use of the Willow Inn over the winter months. Our initial meeting included representatives from the community and Interior Health so that we could brainstorm the opportunity. From the outset we felt that we had a unique opportunity to bring to life some ideas we had developed through our work doing outreach with homeless people in our community. CMHA then attempted to secure funding for this initiative through a variety of government agencies but was unsuccessful largely because this was uncharted territory and funding is not typically set up for spur of the moment innovations. Despite this, CMHA contacted the City of Kelowna for a grant to offset the property tax costs that Westcorp would have incurred over the three months. Once CMHA received approval for this, our organization made a decision to use our own funds to finance the project and work on securing funds once we were able to prove the program's effectiveness. We documented all aspects of the project and distributed this information throughout the community so we could learn from the experience.

The 38 individuals who came to the Willow Project were clear that this opportunity would only serve as a transition/bridge for a maximum of three months. We were clear in instructing clients that the effort they put into the program would be directly related to their success. The CMHA Outreach team worked extensively with clients in searching for accommodations and enhancing their support network. The Willow project provided the necessary stability in clients' lives so that they could spend the time to get aspects of their lives in order. One individual who lived on the street for several years was up every morning at 7am to work on his daily to-do list of things he was unable to handle while living in a tent. These included re-connecting with family, setting up medical appointments, filing tax returns, applying for disability benefits, getting a yearly bus pass, searching for housing and seeking employment. None of these are easily done when you have no fixed address and focused on daily survival.

We have countless stories of people's success and our organization has been transformed by this experience. In late February, BC Housing came forward with a one-time grant to offset the expenses incurred by CMHA Kelowna on this project. The following is a summary of what we learned.

## INFORMATION

Referred to program *	69
<b>Admitted to program</b>	<b>38</b>
Asked to leave program **	7
People who left program because unsuitable	5
Average duration of stay at Willow	35 days

<b>Housing</b>	
Clients housed as a result of entering Willow	22
stable housing in market housing - 16	
Temporary housing in treatment/recovery/supported housing programs – 3	
Returned to family – 1	
Temp. housed in motel while waiting for housing – 2	
Clients unable/unwilling to find housing	4
Clients who have maintained housing since leaving Willow	22
<b>Employment</b>	
Found employment since entering Willow	7 (1 full-time)
Aboriginal decent	12 (33%)
Men	32 (84%)
Women	6 (16%)
Age range	14 – 71 years

<b>Referral Source</b>	
Kelowna General Hospital	7
Outreach Urban Health IHA	16
CMHA Outreach	5
Acquired Brain Injury Program IHA	1
Mental Health Service IHA	2
Aboriginal Outreach (KFS or OKMCFS)	4
Alcohol & Drug Services IHA	2
Probation	1

\* 69 referrals were made to the program but not all were accepted due to high degree of needs, complex issues and a lack of appropriate staffing to address these needs. All 38 clients who did enter the Willow, were required to have a serious referral source, and a personal desire to do the work on making changes in their life necessary for finding and maintaining stable housing.

\*\* 7 people were asked to leave the Willow due to alcohol/drug use or fighting. We were able to keep track of all but 2. One person went to the Kelowna Gospel Mission, 2 were housed at the Lakeshore Inn Project and now have permanent housing, one has chosen to live back on the street but the community is monitoring him.

## KEY OUTCOMES & LEARNINGS

- Community Relationships – a project like this can transform a community when people/agencies/services work together.
- Additional Opportunities were created as a result of Willow – Lakeshore Inn (Kelowna Gospel Mission), Bedford Place
- Peer support and interaction has a lasting and positive impact on individuals.
- Need for transitional housing in our community – particularly when discharged from hospital. Several people with complex health and/or mental health concerns needed housing when discharged from hospital. Willow provided an environment conducive to people's wellness and provided a safe opportunity for second stage housing to be secured.
- People will rise to what is expected of them – common sense, rules and participation are



important.

- Short-term transitional model works in our community – need to have support of community, a strong values base and the ability to move people into long-term housing.
- 22 people who achieved stable housing while at the Willow have maintained it so far.

## DONATIONS

- “Always On” UPS Systems, Kelowna Vineyard Church, UBCO Recruiters, Orchard Valley Quilters, Tafco Developments, Interior Savings Credit Union, Westcorp Properties Inc, WASA Developments, Bank of Montreal-Bernard St. Branch employees fund, Recreation Inn, private citizens plus an enormous number of gifts-in-kind.

## FINANCIALS

	November	December	January 2008	TOTAL
<b>INCOME</b>				
Rent	\$ 4,551	\$ 7,140	\$ 6,760	\$ 18,477
City of Kelowna Grant	\$ 9,500	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 9,500
Donations	\$ 250	\$ 3,600	\$ 0	\$ 3,850
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 14,301</b>	<b>\$10,740</b>	<b>\$ 6,760</b>	<b>\$ 31,827</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
Wages 24/7 staffing	\$ 7,216	\$12,580	\$ 14,000	\$ 33,796
Supplies & Activites	\$ 500	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 4,500
Operational costs	\$ 2,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 8,000
Property Taxes offset	\$ 9,500	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 9,500
Start-up	\$ 1,700	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 1,700
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 20,916</b>	<b>\$ 18,580</b>	<b>\$ 17,000</b>	<b>\$ 57,496</b>
				<b>\$ (25,669)</b>

## GRATITUDE

The following ad was placed in the Kelowna Daily Courier and Capital News mid February as a public expression of gratitude by CMHA Kelowna.



for information contact:

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