

The Challenge of Housing for People with Mental Health and Substance Use Difficulties

By Zachariah Finley

One of the things I value most about my neighbourhood is its diversity. When I walk my dog in the evening, I can smell the different spices of South Asian, Chinese, and Italian dinners. In the park near my house, First Nations community members come together sometimes for drumming and singing. Kids of every ethnicity play in the playground, and small groups of picnickers speak to each other in a variety of languages. A few doors down from me, there is a building for social housing. On good days, I feel like I'm living in that "tapestry" I kept hearing about when I moved to Canada and was studying for my citizenship exam.

Being in the midst of this diversity is enlivening. It feels good to me to live in a place where people don't all look like me, speak the same language, or belong to the same income bracket. Sometimes, though, it is also heartbreaking. In the same park where children play and my neighbours sing and drum, there are tents at night in the summer, pitched by people who have no permanent home. Every once in a while, there is someone passed out on the sidewalk, and these days, I worry that they might have overdosed on opioids.

My neighbourhood is changing rapidly, and I wonder if it has already become less hospitable to people with mental health and substance use concerns than it was when we moved here. With rents skyrocketing, and a profound shortage of market rentals, let alone housing that can accommodate people with additional challenges, Vancouver seems in the midst of a serious housing crisis. As individuals with particular vulnerabilities, as well as strengths and resiliencies, people with mental health and substance use concerns may be harder hit by this crisis than most.

Despite these challenges, housing supports for people with substance use and mental health concerns do exist. This was highlighted in the recent family forum organized by the Vancouver Family Advisory Committee. In this issue of the Family Connections Newsletter, we examine some of the ways housing can be located.

Vancouver Family Advisory Committee News

The Family Connections Newsletter will now feature updates and information about projects and initiatives that The Vancouver Family Advisory Committee (FAC) is working on.

The Vancouver FAC is made up of a dedicated and passionate group of individuals who address new and ongoing issues related to family involvement in mental health and substance use in Vancouver including, but not limited to education, policy, and senior management initiatives.

The Vancouver FAC has long been dedicated to providing education opportunities for family members/ loved ones struggling with mental health and substance use issues. To date the FAC has organized 11 annual full-day family conferences. This year was the FAC's first half-day family forum. To see the valuable information shared at the Family Forum this year, please use the below links:

<http://www.spotlightonmentalhealth.com/vch-mental-health-housing/>

<http://www.spotlightonmentalhealth.com/bc-housing-more-tenancies-for-vulnerable-populations/>

Housing: What Are the Options?

By Vanessa Stinn

Update June 2017 by Isabella Mori

The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have little.

-Franklin D. Roosevelt

Housing options for individuals with mental illness are a major frustration for both those struggling with mental health concerns and family members alike. An analysis by the Mental Health Commission of Canada revealed that the health risks associated with homelessness can decrease an individual's life expectancy by 20 years and as many as 520,700 people living with mental illness are inadequately housed in Canada. When receiving feedback from those navigating the system, concerns generally centre on housing options not being widely publicized or available. Why is this? In Canada, we have adopted a "housing first" model to provide better support but it seems as though this perspective (as opposed to a recovery first model) has created an increased pressure on our housing options. The supply has not quite caught up with the demand. And will it ever? With some programs experiencing waitlists that can fill their entire tenant rosters it makes me wonder how we can focus on recovery when the prospect of finding supported housing is so adverse.

Generally, the search for subsidized housing starts with sourcing out an income if one is not currently available. When an individual has no other sources of income, Income Assistance, Disability or PPMB (Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers) funds are needed as many housing support programs do not pay the individual's rent in full. If you or your loved one does not have an income source it is advantageous to look into this with their care team, GP or using resources listed here.

Next, a conversation between the individual, the housing provider, and the care team (including the family!) is indicated around what level of support is required in order for the individual to live in a safe and secure way. Commonly, when applying to a housing program an application or intake session occurs with a mental health professional or service provider to consider what support would best serve.

Housing supports are roughly categorized into the following:

Licensed Community Homes and Group Homes: The homes are staffed 24 hours a day. Residents receive daily administration of medications and meals are provided. Daily Life skills are developed and the hope is to move onto more independent housing.

Transitional Housing: Temporary (up to three years), typically for people with challenges around homelessness. The idea is to bridge to permanent housing by offering structure, supervision, support, life skills, and sometimes education and training. It is meant to provide a safe, supportive environment where residents can begin to address the issues that led to difficulty around housing, and begin to rebuild their support network.

Enhanced Supported Apartments: The apartments are self-contained, subsidized suites in a designated apartment building. A mental health worker is on site 24 hours. Medications are administered by staff and there is usually one communal meal a day.

Supported Apartment Blocks: The apartments are self-contained, subsidized suites in a designated apartment building. A mental health worker is available on-site to tenants during posted office hours to provide support.

Supported Independent Living (SIL) Housing Program: Individuals live independently in a subsidized market rental apartment. A community mental health outreach worker provides support on a regular basis.

Super SIL: Similar to the SIL Program but with a greater level of outreach support.

Independent Living: Self contained apartments with no practical support provided. However, individuals can receive support from their local mental health team or psychiatrist. Usually, individuals live in a private housing market provided place or with a housing organization and receive a subsidy to make housing more affordable.

What about the different organizations who provide support? The following is a list of organizations currently providing housing with mental health supports in the lower mainland. It is not exhaustive; there are also many smaller organizations (for example some churches) that provide housing.

MPA Society <http://www.mpa-society.org/programs-services/housing/supported-housing>

Coast Mental Health <http://www.coastmentalhealth.com/housing>

The Bloom Group <http://www.thebloomgroup.org/our-work/affordable-housing/>

RainCity Housing <http://www.raincityhousing.org/>

The Kettle Society http://www.thekettle.ca/?page_id=30

Portland Housing Society <http://411.ca/business/profile/12297019>

Katherine Sanford Housing Society <http://sanfordhs.ca/>

BC Housing <http://www.bchousing.org/Find>

Canadian Mental Health Association (Various Branches) <http://www.cmha.bc.ca/>

Mental Health Teams (Various Branches) http://www.vch.ca/403/7676/?program_id=10661

First United Church <http://firstunited.ca/what-we-do-type/housing/>

More can be found online at the Homeless Hub: <http://homelesshub.ca>

Even if the road to affordable and secure housing feels long I still advocate for my clients to get on a waitlist as soon as possible. Why? If we as service providers cannot demonstrate a need (such as a long waitlist) there will be no way for us to communicate to housing commissions just how greatly these services are required. Also, if an individual faces hardship usually priority is given on the waitlist and can mean that homelessness is eluded.

Best of luck to everyone in your housing pursuits!

(Vanessa Stinn is the former Housing Manager at the Pathways Clubhouse, CMHA Richmond Branch and currently Housing & Health Coordinator at a housing non-profit)

Finding “Hidden” Housing

By Isabella Mori

When we’re trying to help our loved ones find housing, there are the ways discussed in other articles here and during the housing conference. But I’m always wondering, is there more? Luckily, I had a chance to talk to Cameron, who tells us here his story about housing.

I had been living in an SRO [single room occupancy] hotel for the last 6 years. I wanted to have a more permanent place that allowed me to have a pet. A cat. Now BC Housing has two parts of their housing list. The first part is where you take codes for each building and put them in your application to BC Housing. And there is a very long wait to get a place. The second part of the list is where they list individual non-profits and co-ops. The application process for them is not centralized, and it’s a much shorter wait. However you have to apply to each one separately so it’s a lot of work. So I looked at that list and narrowed it down to the buildings that allowed pets. And I was persistent in applying to them.

To get the application forms to all the non-profits I was applying to I had to send a self addressed and stamped envelope to the non-profit/co-op directly, and wait for their reply. Then what I did was photocopy the blank forms as I received them, before filling the form in, and also photocopy the filled in form, so I had a spare and a record of my application. Every 6 months, I updated my application if there were changes or not. A key thing is I had a phone I could be reached at, and if the number changed I updated them to keep it current.

And finally after a year and a half, one phoned me for an interview. The interview went well, but they did not offer housing at that time. But a month later they phoned me and said they had a bachelor’s suite if I was still interested. I went and had a look at the suite, and was not too thrilled at first. However after they cleaned it up and repainted, it looked great, so I decided to take it. And I have been living there for the last 7 years and have a pet cat who I adore. They only allowed one pet per suite, so that was fine. Kiri is a great cat. She is a great match for me, and she’s independent. The cat rescue I adopted her from had her listed to be an only cat in the house as she had a history of not getting along with other cats. Which was fine with me.

So now I’m living in a cozy apartment with my wonderful cat Kiri!

The BC Housing Application is here: <https://housingapplication.bchousing.org/olf/faces/welcome> (you can also get a paper application if that’s your preference). You can also try the Supportive Housing Registry at 604 648-4270.

Other ways to find “hidden” housing:

Some of the organizations on this list are on the BC Housing list, others aren’t: http://app.vancouver.ca/NonMarketHousing_NET/SponsorSearch.aspx

Co-Op Housing: <https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/rental-housing/subsidized-housing>

SROs (Single Room Occupancy) are a last option for most; if you’re thinking about it, talking to these people might help: <https://dtescollaborative.org/>

Lastly, many churches have housing services that may not be on the Housing Registry – examples are United Church, Anglican Church, Baptist Church

The information here is not exhaustive. The biggest takeaway I had from researching housing is that it’s quite complex and bewildering. Please don’t hesitate to reach out for help if you find the same! One of the groups that can support you are the Peer Navigators <https://vancouver-fraser.cmha.bc.ca/programs-services/peer-navigator-peer-support/>

Accessing Mental Health Housing in the City of Vancouver through Vancouver Coastal Health

By Zachariah Finley

The preceding articles talk about many community agencies and other resources for locating housing for people with mental health and substance use concerns. What if your family member has a connection to Vancouver Coastal Health through a community, acute, or tertiary (longer-term, more intensive, often inpatient) service?

The previously mentioned community resources are still good possibilities, but it could also be helpful to know that Vancouver Coastal Health has a few teams that assist with housing in the City of Vancouver, under the umbrella of Mental Health and Substance Use Supported Housing. This includes the Mental Health Substance Use Supported Housing Team, the Housing First Placement Team, the Community Transition Team, and the Addiction Housing Team. These teams have different mandates, but your family member would be connected to the one that best meets their needs.

Clients are referred to Mental Health and Substance Use Supported Housing through their community, acute, or tertiary care providers. Clients must have been Vancouver residents for one year prior to the referral, must be active members of a mental health team; must be at least 19 years of age, and must “clinically require support in housing.” This last bit is tricky but it basically means that your family member’s need for housing has something to do with their mental health or substance use difficulties, and that the housing they require will be tailored to individuals with similar concerns.

What if your family member resides outside of the City of Vancouver, but within the Vancouver Coastal Health catchment? Talk to your family member’s case manager, social worker, or other VCH care provider who coordinates services for them. Some of these same sorts of resources are available, but they may be accessed a bit differently. Your family member’s coordinating worker can help connect you with resources outside of Vancouver.



Type of Housing	How are clients supported?	What do clients have to be able to do to be a good fit?	How many units do we have in Vancouver?
24-Hour Licensed Care Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities are staffed 24/7 • Meals, medications, and housekeeping is provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients have to be able to follow house rules • Clients have to be able to share a room, in most cases 	307 beds in 25 buildings
Staffed Group Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group homes are staffed Monday to Friday, 9-5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients need to be able to participate in household chores and meal prep. • Clients need to be able to manage medications with just a little help. 	26 beds in three homes
Enhanced Apartment Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients live in their own apartments • Rent is subsidized • Staff are on site 24/7 • A dinner meal is provided daily • Some assistance is available for medication and for problem-solving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients need to be able to manage living in their own apartment with 24 support • The need to manage their own eating, dressing, bathing, toileting, etc, <i>and</i> money management, preparing simple meals, basic shopping, etc. • Clients need to be able to accept medication administration 	255 units in nine buildings
Staffed Apartment Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients live in their own apartment • Rent is subsidized • Staff are on site Monday-Friday, 9-5 • Assistance is available for emotional support, guidance, and health and safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients need to be able to manage their activities of daily living (just like in the enhanced apartment buildings) • Clients need to be able to prepare their own food (no meals provided) • Clients need to be able to manage their own medications. 	357 units in 15 buildings
Supported Independent Living (SIL) Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients live in a market rental that is subsidized. • Outreach worker sees clients weekly at most; typically twice per month. • Clients become increasingly independent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients need to be able to manage their activities of daily living (just like in the enhanced apartment buildings) • Clients need to be able to prepare their own food (no meals provided) • Clients need to be able to manage their own medications. 	Approximately 435 units

The Family Connections Support Group

The Family Support and Involvement Team has a support group for family and friends of individuals with mental illness and/or substance use concerns.

The group is being held at the CIBC Centre for Patients and Families at the Jim Pattison Pavilion at VGH and is co-facilitated by a family member. We are very grateful to the CIBC Centre for Patients and Families for partnering with us on this exciting endeavor.

We aim to create a welcoming and supportive space in which family members can share their experiences with each other and feel supported and strengthened in their efforts to help their loved ones.

The group runs twice a month and family members are free to attend on a regular basis or drop in as needed. We hope that having the group on the VGH campus will make it easier for families to attend who are supporting a loved one at the Psychiatric Assessment Unit (PAU), Inpatient Psychiatry or Willow Pavilion, though all family members and supporters are welcome.

- DATE:** Every first Thursday and third Monday of the month
TIME: 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
PLACE: CIBC Center for Patients and Families at the Jim Pattison Pavilion, Vancouver General Hospital, 899 W. 12th Ave (behind the Information Center)

For questions or more information please contact:

Isabella.Mori@vch.ca, 604 290-3817 or

Zachariah.Finley@vch.ca, 604-313-1918



“We aim to create a welcoming and supportive space in which family members can share their experiences with each other and feel supported and strengthened”



BRINGING COGNITIVE REMEDIATION TO BRITISH COLUMBIA

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, October 14, 2017 | 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM
Paetzhold Education Centre | Vancouver General Hospital

People living with schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders often develop profound and disabling cognitive deficits. Even more than positive or negative symptoms, cognitive deficits can impair daily functioning and are a major factor in chronic disability and unemployment.*

Come learn more about these cognitive difficulties and about evidence-based cognitive remediation programs. Hear about an efficient strategy for training staff to deliver programs, and from people in B.C. working on related initiatives.

Keynote speakers:

Dr. Alice Medalia (Director, Lieber Recovery Clinic | Columbia University)

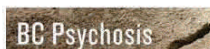
Dr. Christopher Bowie (Director, Cognitive & Psychotic Disorders Lab | Queen's University)

Medalia and Bowie are co-editors of the recently published anthology, *Cognitive Remediation to Improve Functional Outcomes* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

This conference will be of great interest to clinicians, families, consumers, mental health administrators and educators.

To R.S.V.P. and receive updates about the conference, please email Ben at events@bcss.org.

* Hurford, Irene M. Cognitive Remediation in Schizophrenia. *Psychiatric Times*, March 15, 2011.



Family Support Groups

Mood Disorders Association of BC – Mutual support groups for families of individuals living with a mood disorder. 2nd and 4th Tuesday each month, 7 - 9 p.m., Mount St. Joseph Hospital, 3080 Prince Edward St, Harvest Room A. Contact Mina Park @ mdafamilygroup@gmail.com

BC Schizophrenia Vancouver family support group - Support group for families who have a loved one living with mental illness. 2nd Wednesday of each month 6:30 – 8:30 pm at Vancouver Community College, Broadway Campus 1155 E Broadway, Vancouver, BC V5T 4V5 (Room g218). Contact Andrew at 604-754-7464

St Paul's Hospital Family Support Group- Support for families who have a loved one living with mental illness. Last Thursday of each month, 6-7:30pm. St Paul's Hospital, 1081 Burrard Street, Room # 451, 4th floor, Burrard Building. Please pre-register by calling 604-682-2344 local 62403

VCH Eating Disorder Program – Family Support Group – for friends and family members of individuals living with an eating disorder. 1st Wednesday of each month, 6 – 7:30 p.m., 3rd Floor, 2750 East Hastings, Vancouver. Contact Hella @ 604-675-2531 ext 20689.

Parents Forever – Support group for families of adult children living with addiction. Group meets every 2nd Friday at St. Mary's Kerrisdale, 2490 W 37th Ave., Vancouver. Contact Frances Kenny, 604-524-4230 or fkenny@uniserve.com

Pathways Clubhouse Chinese Family Support Group – Education sessions for Chinese families who have a loved one living with mental illness. 2nd Saturday of each month. 1 – 4:00 p.m., Room 345/50, 7000 Minoru Blvd, Richmond. Contact Bessie.wang@pathwaysclubhouse.com or 604-276-8834, ext 12.

Family Support Groups

GRASP Support Group – GRASP offers peer-led mutual support groups for families or individuals who have had a loved one die as a result of substance abuse or addiction.

2nd Thursday of each month, 7-9 p.m. at Gilmore Community School 50 South Gilmore Ave, Rm 207.

Please email graspvancouverarea@gmail.com to register.

Family Connections Support Group — Every first Thursday and third Monday of the month in the CIBC Center for Patients and Families at the Jim Pattison Pavilion, Vancouver General Hospital, 899 W. 12th Ave (behind the Information Center) For questions or more information please contact:

Isabella.Mori@vch.ca, 604 290-3817 or Zachariah.Finley@vch.ca, 604-714-3771

First Nations Talking Circle - Weekly Talking Circle co-ed group for adult family and client's interested in learning more about First Nations Culture, sharing, expressing thoughts, and experiencing traditional ceremonies. Every Wednesday from 10:00 at the Carnegie Community Centre. Third floor 401 Main Street/Hastings, Vancouver. Contact Perry Omeasoo @ 604-306-7474

SMART Recovery for Family and Friends - Self Management And Recovery Training (SMART) is Based on the concepts of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy & Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Science-based and practical self care, boundary setting and compassionate communication learning and tools.

Ravensong CHC 2450 Ontario Street, 1st floor 604-872-8441 Thursdays 6:00 – 7:00 pm

Three Bridges CHC 1290 Hornby Street, Rm 310 604-714-3480 Tuesdays: 6:30 – 8:00 pm

Please contact Oona at 604-714-3480.



The *Family Connections* newsletter is available electronically, direct to your email inbox each month. If you don't already receive *Family Connections* via email and would like to stay up-to-date about programs and services supporting families with a loved one with mental illness and/or addiction, sign up at www.spotlightonmentalhealth.com

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