

ASDAC Shelter Working Group Final Report & Recommendations

Creation and Membership

The ASDAC Shelter Working Group was founded on November 9, 2011, following a review of the Extreme Weather Shelter plan, which included a presentation by service providers and a report on gaps and barriers by the BC/Yukon Association of Drug War Survivors, Abbotsford Chapter (See Appendix).

Meetings were held on (Minutes: See Appendix):

- November 15, 2011
- November 29, 2011
- December 29, 2011
- January 19, 2012
- February 3, 2012
- March 6, 2012 (This report serves as minutes for this meeting)

The meeting was open to all those interested and the invitation and minutes distribution list included the following people/agencies/organizations:

- People
 - Aislinn Ivey
 - Andrea Senft
 - Andy Kwak
 - Barry Shantz
 - Brian Gross
 - Christine Reid
 - Dave Murray
 - David Portesi
 - Deb Lowell
 - Dorothy Henneveld
 - Ed Lee
 - Erica Thomson
 - Gail Franklin
 - Gunus Dekhe
 - James Breckenridge
 - Janie Mackay
 - Jeanette Dillabough
 - Jodi Sturge
 - John Sutherland
 - Joni Rolleman
 - Kathy Doerksen
 - Kevin Small
 - Leah Reimer
 - Les Talvio
 - Lesley Braithwaithe
 - Michele Giordano
 - Michelle Gilbert
 - Pamela Willis
 - Reuben Koole
 - Rod Santiago
 - Ron van Wyk
 - Shane Wiens
 - Tony DeWaal
 - Ward Draper
- Agencies/Organizations
 - 5&2 Ministries
 - Abbotsford Community Services
 - Abbotsford Police Department
 - Abbotsford Restorative Justice and Advocacy Association
 - ASDAC

- BC/Yukon Association of Drug War Survivors
- City of Abbotsford
- Cyrus Centre
- Elizabeth Fry Society
- Fraser Health Authority
- Impact Youth Substance Use Services
- Raven’s Moon Resources
- Salvation Army
- Women’s Resource Society of the Fraser Valley

Those community and ASDAC members/agencies/organizations who attended one or more meetings are:

- People
 - Aislinn Ivey
 - Barry Shantz (6)
 - Brian Gross (6)
 - Christine Reid (2)
 - Dave Murray (2)
 - Dorothy Henneveld
 - Ed Lee
 - Erica Thompson
 - Gail Franklin
 - Gunus Dekhe (3)
 - James Breckenridge (3)
 - Janie MacKay
 - Joni Rolleman
 - Kathy Doerksen (3)
 - Kevin Small (3)
 - Leah Reimer (2)
 - Les Talvio
 - Michele Giordano (5)
 - Michelle Gilbert (2)
 - Norm Brixhe (3)
 - Pamela Willis (2)
 - Reuben Koole
 - Rod Santiago (5)
 - Ron Van Wyk (4)
 - Shane Weins (2)
 - Ward Draper (5)
- Agencies/Organizations (in official capacity)
 - 5&2 Ministries
 - Abbotsford Community Services
 - Abbotsford Police Department
 - ASDAC
 - BC/Yukon Association of Drug War Survivors
 - City of Abbotsford
 - Cyrus Centre
 - Elizabeth Fry Society
 - Impact Youth Substance Use Services
 - Raven’s Moon Resources
 - Women’s Resource Society of the Fraser Valley

Strategies and Results

The following 3 strategies were pursued with the following results, in the interest of reviewing existing and potential shelter (extreme weather, emergency, and non-fixed) options in the community for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and any barriers and gaps that might exist.

1. Identify possibilities that would allow those persons who do not want or are not able to access indoor shelter to have a safer and more secure way to stay outdoors.
 - a. A need for clear and accessible guidelines was identified for:
 - i. What might cause a camp to be taken down

- ii. What kind of measures would be taken to warn occupants of an impending take down
 - iii. Ensure the ejected occupant's safety and the safeguarding of their possessions
 - b. A grievance/review process for persons whose camps are taken down under questionable circumstances vis-à-vis the guidelines would then need to be established and communicated.
- 2. Explore ways that existing shelters in the community might be able to respond to some of the barriers that people who are seeking shelter report encountering:
 - a. Identify measures that can be taken both with persons seeking or wanting shelter and those providing services to those who are seeking shelter - with the aim to continually enhance trust, respect and understanding, and decrease stigma, fear and misunderstanding.
 - i. BCYADWS members reported, and staff from WRSFV corroborated, that they had been unsuccessful at obtaining from the Salvation Army:
 - 1. Written policies and procedures or client rights and responsibilities.
 - 2. Written documentation related to the reasons persons had been ejected from or denied access to the facility.
 - ii. A review of the B.C. Housing Guidelines for Emergency Shelters (See Appendix) was completed to determine what obligations organizations that receive Emergency Shelter monies have vis-à-vis having and communicating their policies and procedures. The most relevant items in the guidelines are:
 - 1. "Policies and procedures, and the rights and responsibilities of clients accessing services are to be clearly explained to clients upon admission."
 - 2. "Providers will adopt written policies and procedures regarding complaints and appeals and communicate these policies to residents."
 - 3. Essentially it appears that written policies are required to be provided and approved only to B.C. Housing, unless stated otherwise in those policies.
 - iii. ACS reported that some persons were ejected from extreme weather shelters this year – when temperatures were at their coldest.
 - 1. People with the most complex issues were sent (some after arriving initially at Salvation Army to seek shelter) to churches, where staff and volunteers on-hand felt unprepared to serve them. Concerns and ideas discussed included:
 - a. Concern that churches might stop contributing to extreme weather efforts.
 - b. Policies and enforcement was unclear or non-existent.
 - c. Better utilization of available, experienced supports, especially 5&2 Ministries could help with this situation.
 - d. Police visits had the effect of disrupting the environment.

- b. Build the capacity of existing drop-in and shelter programs to be open more (up to 24) hours – for extreme weather and ideally on an on-going basis – and identify opportunities to reduce other barriers.
 - i. B.C. Housing indicated they would fund 10 extreme weather beds at the Warm Zone for women who may be experiencing barriers elsewhere. Because the Warm Zone’s landlord did not agree to allow this use of the space, this option never materialized.
 - ii. A meeting was held between some attendees of the Shelter Working Group and the Salvation Army, but no ways to reduce barriers were identified in this meeting.
- 3. Identify possibilities for a low/no barrier men’s or co-ed drop-in centre to be open for extreme weather and ideally on an on-going basis.
 - a. 5&2 Ministries sought out rental spaces for a potential new drop-in centre. While there were potential spaces and the City was open to considering zoning variances for such a use, no funding for rent materialized.
 - b. 5&2 Ministries also looked at the possibility of a mobile lounge (bus), but again, funding would have been needed and did not materialize.
 - c. A suggestion was made that a business plan be developed for how a drop-in centre would be run so that stakeholders (city, police, BCYADWS, service providers, etc.) can start to conceptualize, work toward, and refine the vision for such an operation.

Recommendations

At the March 6, 2012 meeting, the working group concluded its mandate, which was to provide the following recommendations that ASDAC and the City:

1. Be involved in coordinating and monitoring ongoing collaborative efforts to move toward having 365-day, 24-hour low-barrier drop-in shelter services available in Abbotsford that can accommodate the particular needs of men, women and youth – including food, showers, sleeping quarters, and safe keeping of belongings.
2. Be involved in helping to ensure that options are available to help those seeking shelter in Abbotsford to move into longer-term housing and other support in the community – including:
 - a. Identifying homeless individuals who have frequent complications in the community and in services – with a focus on helping them to create their own support teams.
 - b. Learning from CLBC programs in Chilliwack that build a support team around chronically homeless individuals that wish to participate.
 - c. Coordinating with the Special Community Assistance Program (SCAP), which is directed at stabilizing the lives of up to 32 chronically homeless individuals in Abbotsford.
 - d. Pursuing a “housing first” approach in the private rental market by connecting landlords with non-profits willing to provide appropriate supportive services.
3. Help to convene key players in the community to assure those being discharged from hospitals, treatment centres, jails (federal and especially provincial) and other institutions in Abbotsford

have the information, resources, support, and transportation necessary to access shelter and/or housing services whenever they may be discharged from said institutions.

4. Help to coordinate the creation and ongoing updating of an informational packet (possibly coordinating with the Fraser Valley Regional District) for those seeking shelter services in Abbotsford and those service providers who may be advocating on their behalf, including as complete information as possible about:
 - a. Location, contact information and hours of services that might be of interest.
 - b. Policies, procedures, exclusion criteria, client rights and responsibilities, and grievance/review processes for all available services.
5. Periodically review and make recommendations for revisions to City policies to continually improve shelter and housing options for those vulnerable and marginalized populations (especially persons who use or have used drugs) who are seeking housing options in Abbotsford, such as:
 - a. Business license requirements for recovery houses
 - b. Business license requirements for boarding houses
 - c. Any other regulatory procedures, bylaws and enforcement mechanisms that might help to ensure these vulnerable people will be safe from predatory practices
 - d. Policies, procedures, bylaws, communications, and enforcement mechanisms related to non-fixed shelters (tents, squatting, mobile shelters, etc.)
6. Reconstitute the ASDAC Shelter Working Group, as necessary, advising on criteria for membership to ensure, as best as possible, that all stakeholders (service providers and those seeking services) have a voice at the table.
7. Report periodically (at least quarterly) on progress made on each of these recommendations, especially to identified groups of those seeking shelter and advocating on behalf of those seeking shelter.