

Date: Wednesday February 3, 2021

Time: 10:00am – 12:00pm

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89873307877>

Introduction of Forum Co-Chairs

- Mark Aston, TAEH Chair and Executive Director, Covenant House
- Ashleigh Dalton, Manager, Strategic Policy and Service Planning, SSHA

Land Recognition

- Kira shared a land recognition

Access to Health Services Framework for People Experiencing Homelessness

Angela Robertson, Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre

Stephanie Bell, Shelter Support and Housing Administration

Kan Cheung, Toronto Central Local Health Integrated Network (TC LHIN)

- The 2018 Health Services Framework was not fully implemented due to structure change across the system. COVID-19 has catalyzed its renewal. A steering committee has been developed to support its implementation.
- The framework has been approved by council as part of SSHA's Interim Shelter Recovery Plan.
- 3 subgroups are meeting regularly to streamline services in the shelter system primary care, harm reduction and mental health case management (see slide deck).
- Primary care has been the primary pillar however 2 additional pillars, harm reduction and mental health case management have been identified as a need for shelter sites and drop-in centres.
- Needs assessments will be conducted to identify gaps in harm reduction to support partners to bring in required resources.
- The harm reduction 10 Point Plan can help service providers identify service gaps.
- All shelter sites and drop-in programs need a connection to primary care providers. The long term goal is to set up a system so all existing and new sites are matched with a primary care provider.
- The OnBoard portal will be used to identify resources and map services in communities. This resource will allow for matching between support providers and primary care physicians. Future plans will identify how a similar model can be applied for harm reduction and mental health case management.
- All health care services should follow clients into housing from the shelter and drop in system.
- OnBoard may also be used in hospitals as a referral tool matching uninsured shelter and drop-in clients to a primary care physician.

- Next steps include continuing to build the model and adapt the 2018 framework, engagement to ensure sustainability not only in shelters but for clients moving through various homelessness services settings

Questions

1. How will harm reduction be implemented in this model?

There are still questions to identify how we can use this model to support clients when transitioning into housing and how the harm reduction gap gets filled. Harm reduction needs to be built into new housing models, the housing growth strategy and portable housing benefits. The modular housing model is a good example of how harm reduction is being embedded in housing models.

2. How can we include the youth sector into this work?

This will need to be explored further. Recommendation to connect with Karen Mann to ensure this specific youth focus does not get lost.

3. Does this work include Scarborough or are there future plans to include Scarborough?

The current focus is primarily in Toronto to test the model, once the primary model is developed other regions and geographical areas can be included in the plan.

Shelter Support and Housing Administration Updates (SSHA)

Vaccine Rollout - Bonnie Wakely, Manager, Homelessness Initiatives and Prevention Services

SSHA 2021-2025 Service Plan - Ashleigh Dalton, Manager, Strategic Policy and Service Planning

Vaccine Rollout for People Experiencing Homelessness

- Updates on vaccine rollout for people experiencing homelessness is changing quickly as the situation evolves.
- The City of Toronto and SSHA are working with the Ontario Health Teams to facilitate the vaccine rollout in Toronto for people experiencing homelessness.
- Unity Health facilitated a pilot vaccination clinic at Scarborough Village Residence. Two other sites were identified for the pilot, Native Men's Residence and Strathcona however, to date, due to vaccine shortage, the clinics have not taken place.
- The sites were selected in accordance with the Provincial ethical framework for vaccine rollout. Medical partners working with shelter clients provided health stratification data to identify which client groups were at risk of poor outcomes if infected with COVID-19.

- It is uncertain when vaccine rollout will begin again in shelters due to vaccine supply chain shortages. The City is using this time to plan to ensure we are prepared when vaccines are available.
- Service providers can engage with their shelter residents to prepare them for vaccination. Resources are being developed by Toronto Public Health, SSHA and community partners to prepare clients.
- <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-protect-yourself-others/covid-19-vaccines/>
- <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-reopening-recovery-rebuild/covid-19-reopening-guidelines-for-businesses-organizations/covid-19-guidance-homelessness-services-congregate-living-settings/>
- SSHA and TPH play a coordination role to ensure all shelters, drop-ins and encampments are connected to health teams with vaccine options.

Questions

1. Will there be a secure, pre-registration process to vaccinate staff working in community based client facing settings?

This question refers to the Metro Toronto Convention Centre immunization clinic which operated for 2 days prior to closing due to vaccine shortage. The pilot was created to test the Province's registration system COVAX. The system has two parts, the back end holds the medical information, the front end is the booking system. One goal of the pilot was to test the booking process. There were challenges identified which will be escalated to the Province with recommendations.

2. Are city vaccine coordination efforts being discussed at regional coordination tables?

Yes, that is the intent. SSHA is working to ensure all regions of Toronto have an appropriate channel to provide vaccine in their local context. Engaging stakeholders is part of the plan to ensure sites are prepared for vaccine rollout.

3. What is the plan for shelter employees, can they be vaccinated at the same time as clients?

Yes, that is the intent. There may be a 'menu' option with some staff choosing to get immunized at their local sites and others travelling to an offsite clinic. During the Unity Health pilot, clients were vaccinated first, followed by staff. Plans were also made to have staff at local locations on standby in case there were additional doses of vaccine available to ensure minimum wastage.

4. The COVAX system presented barriers for our most vulnerable staff as they needed help using the system and/or did not have access to internet at home, how can we address this barrier?

This was an identified City concern as well, and feedback will be provided to the Province with recommendations to have a support line for staff to navigate the booking process or book an appointment via telephone.

5. What is the plan for housing support working, case managers and PSW working in the community with previous shelter residents?

Eligible staff members were identified using the Provincial ethical guidelines. Planning is currently underway for shelters, drop-ins and encampments. There is another group exploring vaccination plans for boarding, rooming and group homes, more information can be shared once there is more clarity.

6. Does 'shelter' include drop-in programs?

Planning for shelters is the first focus, followed by drop-ins and encampments

7. Will the residents at Scarborough Village Residence be able to get their second doses as scheduled given the shortage?

Yes, they are scheduled to receive their doses on Friday February 6, 2021.

8. Will vaccine prioritization consider program site vs. individual programs? A site may have a congregate setting that is similar in structure to a shelter but is funded differently and the site is also home to an OPS/CTS and a drop-in.

The Metro Toronto Convention Centre immunization clinic identified staff working within close proximity to homeless clients. To prepare for future vaccine options, service providers should consider who they would prioritize in their staffing groups. Proximity and interactions with clients is a helpful way to identify who may be prioritized when a vaccination opportunity is available. Availability of vaccine may impact those decisions.

SSHA 2021-2025 Service Plan

- The 2021-2025 service plan development process started in early 2020 however was paused due to COVID-19. SSHA has re-started the service plan development. The service plan will go to City Council in September 2021.
- The 2021-2025 service plan will build on SSHA's vision and mission and will align with Council approved directions including Housing TO 2020-2030 Action Plan, the City of Toronto Corporate Strategic Plan and the Interim Shelter Recovery Strategy.
- The service plan will inform the priorities in the next round of funding for grants program.
- The service plan will focus on pivoting to housing, shifting from emergency responses to longer term housing options amongst other key priorities.
- Stakeholder engagement processes will occur over the next few months and are key to the development of the service plan. A survey will be sent out in February 2021 followed by virtual engagement sessions. The survey and engagement sessions will include SSHA staff, sector partners, service providers and people with lived experience.

- Dedicated engagement sessions for services users and equity seeking groups will be scheduled. There will be an engagement session with the TAEH People with Lived Experience Caucus.
- Self-consultation kits will be developed as a method of engagement.
- For timelines on engagement and consultation processes please refer to the slide deck.

Questions:

1. Is there a plan to engage with the housing help centres?

Yes, the survey will be sent broadly including housing help centres. Invitations for engagement sessions will also be shared broadly. If there are specific groups that need to be represented, please inform us.

2. Which stream of funding is included in the next grant funding opportunity?

The next grant funding opportunity is scheduled for Fall 2021 for projects that begin on April 1, 2022. Funding will be for a broad category of service types that will be informed by the service plan. Your engagement on the service plan is important to help identify the priorities for funding. Funding will be both provincial and federal funding. Projects are matched to funding on the backend rather than tying projects to specific funding streams. This allows flexibility to maximize funding from the federal or provincial governments.

3. We've seen that when warming centres open, they immediately fill up, and most shelters are full. People have been trying to keep warm in Union station, as the TTC (vehicles and stations) are basically the only indoor space people can access right now, but are now being kicked out after 15 minutes. SSHA indicated that the Winter Plan is scalable and they would make more space available as necessary. When can we expect SSHA to do this?

The Winter Response Plan originally released in October included a planned 340 shelter spaces and 220 supportive housing units, for a total of 560 spaces. We have opened an additional 120 shelter spaces in December and January, so there is now a total of 680 spaces in the winter plan. Our partners in Real Estate services continue to search for additional space, and we will continue to activate that as it becomes available. In addition we are also working with the Housing Secretariat and TAEH on the Emergency Housing plan approved in December. That includes the next phase of the Rapid Rehousing Initiative in TCHC that is underway with move-ins scheduled this week - more than 100 units will be filled this month.

4. Can the warming centres be opened 24/7?

The warming centres are open 24/7 when activated. They are currently activated when needed due to cold weather. When a warming centre closes, clients are able to stay until they are able to access a shelter bed.

5. How many warming centre are there?

There are 4 warming centres:

- 129 Peter St.
- 5800 Yonge St.
- Exhibition Place, Better Living Centre, 195 Princes' Blvd.
- Scarborough Civic Centre, 150 Borough Dr.

6. Due to the pandemic we're losing drop-ins so we don't have normal capacity, can the City consider opening the warming centres as an accommodation for the pandemic and decreased and day shelter spots?

SSHA is currently looking at all possibilities to identify what is needed.

7. Can the City look at what is happening in Edmonton as a model? They have opened the Convention Centre as a drop-in and shelter as part of their winter plan and response to COVID. This is in collaboration with Edmonton agencies.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7430748/edmonton-convention-centre-commonwealth-stadium-temporary-homeless-shelter/>

The Edmonton model has similarities to SSHA's winter plan, with the Better Living Centre incorporating more supports and IPAC measure in place. If there are additional learning opportunities, please let us know and SSHA will explore additional best practices.

Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH) Updates

Kira Heineck, Executive Lead, TAEH

- The Federal, Provincial and Municipal pre-budget processes are currently underway. TAEH has identified its 2021-2022 budgetary asks (see slide deck).
- Opportunities for service providers to engage in budget exercises and submissions are ongoing.
- TAEH will focus on 1 key ask of the Province: funding additional support services and rent supplements in 2021/2022 for people experiencing homelessness.
- TAEH will advocate for people on the frontlines who are also essential health care workers and continues to critique the end of the COVID wage supplements advocating for an increase in base line wages.
- TAEH will be deputing at on February 11, 2021 and will share the deputation with group members. Key messages will include support for the City to continue to invest in housing to end homelessness, championing the shift from emergency shelter to transitional and supporting housing.
- The final budget meeting is February 19, 2021. There are resources on the City website which has easy to use links to participate in the budget process such a exercise using the Ethelo software to create your own budget for the City.
- Federal pre-budget consultations have also launched with questionnaires available on their website for engagement.

Questions:

1. Would the recommendation to extend the eviction moratorium also apply to someone who is involved in illegal activities or domestic violence?

The request will be part of the budget submission with high level recommendations. The goal is to avoid a great increase in evictions for people into homelessness. Other issues would be negotiated or addressed at the municipal level or with service providers.

2. Does the recommendation to the Province to 'sustain existing supporting housing with a market-based rent supplement formula' look at raising long-standing rent supplements to a more current state?

Yes, I believe it does.

Other business/close

For future agenda items please contact Kira.

Next meeting – March 3, 2021