

The John Howard Society — Prince Edward Island

2022 PROVINCIAL ACTIVITIES REPORT FOR ANNUAL REPORT

Overview

In Prince Edward Island, the John Howard Society of PEI is recognized as a major contributor in the provision of preventive and support services for persons who are at risk. While we remain active in the traditional program for those involved with the criminal justice system, we are also a leader in the delivery of services to prevent and reduce homelessness in the province, particularly in marginalized communities.

In our work, we focus on how our interventions can bring long-term benefits, and we support a range of efforts that increase options for our clients.

One of the most challenging tasks facing all human service providers is to ensure there is the flexibility to respond in a changing environment. We work with all levels of government and many community-based organizations to find holistic solutions to the challenges faced by our clients.

The past year has been productive, as we've faced clients' barriers in many areas of life, including employment, housing, mental and physical health, addictions, and family violence.

Provincial Correctional Centre Outreach

Our staff person works a total of 20 hours a week (divided between two provincial institutions) providing service to inmates to help prepare them for release. This help could include housing, transportation, relationship skill-building, identification, referrals, employment, etcetera.

Pre-Employment Program

The pre-employment program targets individuals who, due to complex needs, are not ready to compete in the labour market and need an approach based on life skills. We work to avoid a client's entry into homelessness through short, intense case management. One example could include providing a rent subsidy for a short period of time, along with creating a case plan to avoid future victimization.

Employment Program

The employment program provides employment assistance services based on four employability dimensions: decision-making, skills enhancement, job search skills, and employment maintenance. The program is open to all individuals who have a criminal record as an employment barrier.

Employment assistance services are designed to address the employment and/or pre-employment needs of individuals who are, or have been, involved in the criminal justice system. The services are the only ones in the province that specifically target the employment needs of the offender. An effective assessment of the offender's skills and needs provides an understanding of the full range of problems experienced by the individual and then a tailored intervention to meet their needs. The service interviews and assesses each referral on an ongoing basis to identify individual shortcomings to employability. Upon identifying the barriers, the individual and staff work together to develop a return-to-work action plan that uses the interventions of the program to address areas of need.

Reaching Home — Canada's Homelessness Strategy

The John Howard Society of PEI is the community entity for the federal government's Reaching Home program. In this capacity, we are responsible for the overall administration and coordination of the program.

Under the program, the Government of Canada provides funding for activities to prevent and reduce homelessness in the designated communities of the City of Charlottetown and City of Summerside, as well as in rural Prince Edward Island. Activities could include capital construction, including the construction and renovation of facilities; design and delivery of support services; prevention activities, such as eviction preventions; improvements in service delivery networks within a community, including training front-line staff on homelessness-related activities; community planning; and other activities directly related to the objectives of Reaching Home.

In our role, we are responsible for implementing strategies to address identified priorities and managing sub-project funding agreements, including financial and activity monitoring. We offer a collaborative and systematic method to providing housing and services in a fair and trauma-informed approach.

Reaching Home is also overseen by a community advisory board (CAB) and a rural advisory board (RAB) consisting of approximately 20 agencies across PEI who work with the homeless or those at risk of being homeless. The roles of the community advisory board are to provide leadership in matters related to homelessness, confirm Reaching Home funding priorities, and review and approve projects for Reaching Home funding.

So far, our collaborators in this project include Blooming House, Canadian Mental Health Association — PEI Division, Chief Mary Bernard Memorial Women's Shelter, Family Violence Prevention Services, provincial Department of Justice and Public Safety and Department of Social Development and Housing, LifeHouse Summerside, Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI, Native Council of PEI, ResourceAbilities, and Salvation Army of PEI.

Coordinated Access will be the first time PEI will have a clear view of what homelessness looks like provincewide, as we often see the face of homelessness to be hidden in our province. This system will provide us with data to better serve the clients' needs.

Community Outreach Center (COC)

We continue to collaborate with the Community Outreach Centre, a centre in Charlottetown that helps Islanders experiencing homelessness connect with the support services they need.

The centre opens seven days a week, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., and offers supports to people seeking financial assistance, counselling, employment, food, and housing. Islanders can also access a washroom, shower, laundry facilities, telephone, and a computer area. In addition, programming is offered by government and community partners on a regular basis. No appointment is required; Islanders can drop in to the centre as needed. Transportation support is also provided.

As a collaborator, we are a member of a working group made up of government and community partners. They include the Department of Social Development and Housing; Health PEI, Mental Health and Addictions; Upper Room Food Bank; Blooming House women's shelter; Family Violence Prevention Services; Canadian Mental Health Association; Salvation Army; Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI; Native Council of PEI; and the City of Charlottetown.

Our staff meets with clients of the centre on an ongoing basis.

WrapAround Housing Program

The society's WrapAround housing program is an individualized planning process aimed at helping individuals and/or families create strategies to meet their housing needs. The program focusses on those experiencing relative or absolute homelessness or other housing issues such as eviction or inadequate housing. WrapAround believes that housing is a basic life necessity and that first meeting housing needs promotes a harm reduction approach to recovery and other personal/medical/life issues.

The program process helps the individual and/or family build on their strengths and connects them with their community through available resources. The case manager encourages self-sufficiency by assisting the participant in identifying and problem-solving around their needs and barriers and by offering life skills and eviction-prevention skills to promote housing stability.

Service is offered in rural and remote areas of Prince Edward Island, including rural Queens County, Kings County, and east Prince County.

CRA Volunteer Tax Program

The society provides free tax return service for all clients of our programs.