Council Direction:

Not Applicable

Information:

The purpose of the report is to provide Emergency and Community Services Committee with interim information concerning the Finding Home Pilot project. The period of the pilot is complete and the evaluation report is near to completion. The final report will be provided to Committee in the third quarter of 2010.

In March 2008, the Community Advisory Board for the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy approved funding for the Housing Division, Community Services Department to deliver the Finding Home Pilot Project. Dr. Stephen Hwang, of St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, has affirmed American research findings that there is a high incidence of brain injury amongst the chronically homeless. The Finding Home Pilot worked to substantiate these findings within the local target population and to develop training tools for front line delivery staff.

A major component of the pilot was to implement and evaluate a mobile, trauma informed model of intensive case management to address the complex needs of men who are chronically homeless. Trauma informed care is a service that is directed by a
thorough understanding of the profound neurological, biological, psychological and social effects of trauma and violence on the individual. It is considered a “best practice” in settings serving persons who are likely to have trauma histories, including persons who are homeless, individuals with mental health and substance abuse problems and victims of abuse and inter-partner violence.

The timeframe for the pilot was April 1, 2008, to September 30, 2009.

The objectives of the pilot were to:

- Create a client focused delivery system for marginalized individuals who move between the correctional, the social assistance and housing systems;
- Assess the feasibility of the pilot as a long-range service aimed at meeting a service gap within the existing support system for the chronically homeless; and
- Implement and evaluate a mobile, trauma informed model of intensive case management with an integrated psychosocial counselling component designed to address the complex needs of men who are chronically homeless.

The integrated psychosocial counselling component offered through the Finding Home Pilot is a multi-sectoral service that is traditionally not available to the chronically homeless through existing mainstream services such as the Ontario Works Program and the correctional system. It is a combination of services and supports including:

- Trauma informed counselling,
- Intensive case management,
- Health and social services coordination,
- Advocacy, awareness and access; and
- Bridging service gaps and barriers.

The Finding Home Pilot was staffed with three social workers, a .5 FTE clerical support staff and a part time clinical supervisor.

The pilot was designed to work in partnership with existing services such as:

- Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre;
- Shelter Health Network;
- Emergency shelters;
- Housing Help Centre; and,
- Ontario Works Program

During the term of the pilot, new partnerships evolved including:

- McMaster University;
• Probation and Parole Services;
• Community Services - Acquired Brain Injury Program, Hamilton Health Sciences; and,
• Brain Injury Services of Hamilton

This initiative filled a gap in service for the chronically homeless and will provide an evaluative framework to inform best practices in future delivery of service. A high level summary of accomplishments resulting from the pilot is as follows:

- Service was provided to 176 individuals of which:
  - 49 participated in intensive one on one counselling,
  - 41 continue to attend counselling with a Finding Home social worker

- Reduction in the incidents of participants cycling off and on Ontario Works assistance;

- Reduction in the rates of homelessness;

- Reduced number of shelter admissions and length of shelter stays for participants;

- Increase in the number of participants successfully applying for Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Many of the individuals had previously applied for ODSP without success.

- Reduced application time for ODSP as participants had access to health professionals who provided the appropriate documentation.

- Thirty participants received Acquired Brain Injury assessments with Hamilton Health Sciences. Twenty-three participants subsequently engaged in rehabilitative services.

- Creation of a screening tool for acquired brain injuries that can be used by frontline staff such as Ontario Works.

- Establishment of a weekly counselling group to provide increased supports to men.

The Finding Home social workers provided counselling to address barriers that prevented participants from accessing appropriate income, employment supports and housing. Often Ontario Works (OW) participants do not access other services because of their inability to navigate the complex social service system. Finding Home staff established working relationships with the social assistance and correctional systems to ensure that their clients were accessing the services they required.
Given the early findings and accomplishments of the Finding Home Pilot, this mobile, trauma informed model of intensive case management is now provided through the Transitions to Home Program (TTH). TTH is a component of the Blueprint for Emergency Shelter Services. TTH was formed in January 2010 and represents an integration of the existing case management responses within the Emergency Shelter System. It incorporated the Finding Home Pilot and Hostels to Homes Pilot staff and other case management services which support persons experiencing homelessness. Costs related to TTH are covered through the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program and Delivering Opportunities for Ontario Renters funding that is 100% provincial funding.

Professor Theresa M. Petrenchik, Ph.d, OTR/L from McMaster University was retained to conduct the evaluation for the pilot. The Finding Home Evaluation Report is near to completion and will be provided to Emergency and Community Services Committee in the third quarter of 2010.