

Best Practice Manual for the Implementation of Community Homes for Opportunity in Ontario, Canada

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Executive Summary

Introduction

A best practice manual is a guiding document for maintaining standards for program implementation. This best practice manual was developed by Lawson Health Research Institute to assist with the provincial rollout of a modernized housing program, known as the **Community Homes for Opportunity** (CHO) program. The manual is specifically intended for the individuals directly involved with the rollout, namely tenants, homeowners, home staff, community agencies, and the **Ministry of Health** (MoH).

Recommendations are based on findings from a third-party evaluation of the pilot program conducted between May 2018 and February 2019. The first (pilot) phase of the CHO program was implemented with 28 homes serving 368 tenants operating through St. Joseph's Health Care London. The evaluation consisted of quantitative and qualitative data collected at three timepoints. Individual interviews were conducted with a random selection of 115 tenants. Focus groups were conducted with various stakeholders, i.e., tenants, homeowners, staff, community mental health agencies, and MoH. The focus groups facilitated a discussion about the benefits and challenges of integrating the CHO program into the home.

Objectives

- To provide tenants, homeowners, home staff, MoH staff, and staff from community agencies with actionable tips to successfully implement the CHO program.
- To identify issues and corresponding solutions necessary for the implementation of the CHO program in homes across Ontario.

Tips for Successful Implementation of the CHO Program

The CHO program strives to achieve best practices for supportive housing. The CHO program aims to help tenants to:

- maintain safe and affordable housing;
- have more control of their housing and supports;
- become better integrated into their communities;
- improve or stabilize their physical and mental health; and
- be active in their own goal-setting and wellness planning.

This manual highlights the suggestions from research participants for how to achieve these goals. Tips were formulated for each of the stakeholders of the program who were directly involved in the implementation. Examples of key tips included:

Tips from Tenants

- Involve tenants in learning activities that promote independence and skills. For example, tenants may benefit from attending group or individual sessions about financial skills and budgeting before changes to the CHO program are implemented.
- Provide more opportunities for tenants to take part in leisure activities of their choice, both within the home environment and in the broader community.

Tips for Homeowners

- Maintain good communication and relationship with tenants, home staff, community agencies, and the MoH.
- Maintain a ratio of staff appropriate to the number of tenants in the CHO homes.

Tips for Home Staff

- Encourage and support tenants to participate in internal and external activities, such as house meetings, shopping, running errands, or attending other community events.
- Involve tenants in decision-making, especially as it pertains to their well-being.

Tips for Community Agencies

- Organize regular meetings in individual homes to provide information about the CHO program.
- Provide training for staff and homeowners to improve their knowledge about the roles and responsibilities of the people involved with the CHO program.
- Provide training for staff and homeowners regarding ways to best support tenants and their wellness.

Tips for the Ministry of Health

- Review contracts for inconsistencies and provide clearer, more concrete information that can guide the actions of homeowners and staff.
- Involve all stakeholders in planning activities for the CHO program.

Conclusion

This best practice manual provides practical insights and solutions for potential challenges of the CHO program. The manual will serve as a guiding document for the second phase of the implementation of the CHO program, as well as the eventual rollout of homes across the province.