

A Pandemic Response and   
Recovery Toolkit for Homeless   
System Leaders in Canada

Appendix A-10.

Housing and Support Options for Homeless People During the Pandemic Response and Recovery

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## A-10. Housing and Support Options for Homeless People During the Pandemic Response and Recovery

Housing and support options out of homelessness should never be one size fits all. Pandemic recovery can be the opportunity to infuse greater diversity and innovation into the housing and support options in your community.

### Private Rental Stock Access Strategies

Existing private rental stock will be one of the main strategies, or at least one of the first strategies attempted, depending upon market conditions. Several options present themselves[[1]](#footnote-2):

* **Portable independent housing voucher** – with or without any help from a support worker, the person/family is able to find a landlord willing to rent to them. The voucher is for a set amount of funding or a top up from current income level (usually provincial/territorial welfare shelter allowance) to market rent. If the person leaves, they can take the voucher with them and find another landlord to rent to them.
* **Site-specific housing voucher** – with or without any help from a support worker, the person/family views units from select buildings where government has already committed to a set number of housing vouchers. The voucher is for a set amount of funding or a top up from current income level. These vouchers are attached to the building, not the person/family.
* **Market rate from willing landlords** – without any help from a support worker in arranging or accompanying viewings in most instances, a worker prepares a list of landlords who have indicated a willingness to rent to those impacted by the disaster. This may or may not be affordable[[2]](#footnote-3).
* **Master leasing** – the government or a non-profit organization enters into the lease agreement with the landlord and then sub-leases the unit or house to the person or family impacted by the disaster. Liability is held by the leaseholder. The leaseholder may make the unit more affordable by not charging the sub-lease holder the full amount that is paid in the master lease. In the future, the hope is to allow the person/family to transition in place and assume the lease in their own name at a future time of lease renewal.

### Rent Geared to Income Rental Stock Access Strategies

Rent geared to income strategies in social housing, supportive housing, and other comparable housing and supports will be another option to consider. To make this effective:

* **Modified chronological access** – preference for accessing existing social housing is informed, in part, by the likes of homelessness status or acuity level.
* **Preferred access for supportive housing** – preference to house people out of homelessness ahead of housing people currently living in other accommodations, especially if that person has never experienced homelessness.

### Acquisition and Rehabilitation Strategies

Some recovery strategies may make it possible to acquire buildings for the purpose of housing people impacted by the pandemic. Accommodations like motels may lend themselves to this purpose without dislodging others, as say, purchase of an existing lower-income apartment building might. There are two main approaches:

* **Acquire and occupy** – purchase of a building like a motel that was already occupied by people during the pandemic or can be purchased and occupied post pandemic. The motel must have suitable amenities and layout to allow for permanent occupancy without renovation first.
* **Acquire, rehabilitate, and occupy** – purchase of a building like a motel and then spend time renovating it for permanent use. If not started early enough in the recovery process, there can be a lag from when it is identified as needed and when it is ready for occupation. If such a lag exists, a strategy of where people live in the meantime should be created.

### Supporting a Range of Support Services

Support services for people moving into housing as part of the pandemic response and recovery should be customized to meet the needs of a specific person or family. Such non-financial supports are generally delivered through case management or comparable follow-up support practices. These types of supports should be adjusted to meet the household’s specific needs, rather than expecting the person or family to change to meet the needs of the supports. Here are the options that should be available in your community as best as possible:

| **Type of Support** | **Description** |
| --- | --- |
| Independent living | No support person or organization attached to the household. The household may reach out for supports from a non-profit or government department at various increments should they require any assistance. |
| Short term assistance | Support assistance up to 12 weeks to do a once-per-week in-person or telephone check-in with the person or family. |
| Moderate-length, moderate-intensity, time limited assistance | Usually delivered as a Critical Time Intervention or Rapid Re-Housing program, the person or family is visited at least every two weeks for the first few months, and then supports decrease as the person/family stabilizes. Support services are usually available up to a maximum of two years and can flex intensity as required. |
| Moderate-length, higher-intensity, time-limited assistance | Usually delivered as a non-permanent intensive case management program, the person or family is visited in their home weekly to work on goals to achieve longer-term housing stability. Support services are usually available up to a maximum of two years. Participants may transition to permanent supports if required. |
| Permanent assistance | Customized in intensity, these are in-house supports that have no fixed end date, so long as the individual or family is still working on life or housing stability issues and requires such assistance. |

1. Different jurisdictions may use different terminology. Focus on the concepts not the name of the type of intervention. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Some disasters will result in less rental housing being available which may drive up price because of lack of availability. Preliminary analysis of COVID-19 impacts on rental housing is inconclusive at this time. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)