



**Greater Vancouver
Shelter Strategy**

***2010-2012
Shelter Service Plan***

September 30, 2010

Introduction

This Shelter Service Plan identifies broadly supported future directions for emergency shelter facilities and services in Metro Vancouver. While the plan primarily focuses on 2010-11 and 2011-12, the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy (GVSS) recognizes that this is part of a longer term effort.

The intention is for service providers, governments at all levels, funding agencies, multi-stakeholder homelessness networks and other organizations to use this information in their work toward ending homelessness.

Method

GVSS member organizations developed the principles and future directions in this plan through facilitated dialogue sessions hosted in February 2009 and March 2010. Participants drew on their diverse expertise and experience, considered the evidence, and came to consensus on what needs to happen.

In addition, the plan draws on existing documents that are relevant to shelter need and demand in the region. The primary sources used were as follows:

- *3 Ways to Home: The Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver*
- The 2005 and 2008 regional homeless counts;
- *The 2008-2010 Service Plan*
- GVSS annual evaluation reports for recent years;
- *Listen to What We Are Saying, Please Listen and Try to Understand: Homeless Voices Part 3* and other Homeless Voices reports
- GVSS emergency shelter inventories.

New Service Development Directions

Our primary goal is to provide services and resources toward ending homelessness. The following service development directions, approved by consensus of GVSS members, are intended to help achieve that goal.

1. ***Minimize increase in shelter beds.*** Shelters need to serve as a pathway to affordable, appropriate housing.
2. ***Acknowledge and communicate about the need for supportive and transitional housing.*** Organizations involved in emergency shelter provision are well positioned to contribute to efforts toward creating a balanced housing continuum, and to provide evidence about the needs of their clients.
3. ***Deepen understanding of what works and what does not in helping people become re-housed.*** This will include learning about effective practices in securing housing, as well as staying housed.
4. ***Reduce barriers.*** For example, shelters and Extreme Weather Response sites should become open to pets and shopping carts wherever feasible.
5. ***Continue to shift services to become more individualized and respectful of privacy needs.*** With the range of shelter guests becoming more diverse, and their requirements more unique, design of shelter facilities needs to shift toward private rooms. Also, collection of intake data needs to be done in a way that empowers people to self-identify their gender and other specifics.
6. ***Explore opportunities for healthy evolution in the cultures of organizations that serve homeless people.*** Ideally all of these organizations will have cultures of inclusion and listening, so that the voices of clients, front line workers, and others can effectively contribute to creating excellence.

Ongoing Objectives

In 2010, GVSS members and partner organizations confirmed that shelter service development needs to continue to address the following eight objectives (new and revised content is underlined):

1. Continue to meet the need for emergency shelter services, and for networking and coordination among shelter providers;
2. Continue work to convert cold/wet weather to year-round shelter services, including upgrading these services to year-round standards;
3. Enhance access throughout the region by creating services in sub-regions or communities where none exist;
4. Deepen understanding of serving specific marginalized and underserved populations, and improve service access and suitability for women and other population groups;
5. Reduce demand for shelter by continuing to build capacity for linkage with other services and housing;
6. Continue to reduce incidence of turning people away by improving access to information about currently available beds;
7. Develop the Extreme Weather Response program to address extreme weather threats throughout the year, including heat waves;
8. Continue to strengthen Extreme Weather Response, through enhancements to services such as referral capabilities, and through coordination.



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Values and Principles to Guide Service Development

Core Values

The 2010 GVSS Strategic Plan states the following six core values:

- ❖ *All people should have access to permanent, appropriate housing.*
- ❖ *When people become homeless, rapid re-housing is a priority.*
- ❖ *When required, people should have supports to maintain their housing.*
- ❖ *When needed, people should have access to temporary shelter that is safe and healthy.*
- ❖ *People should be able to be sheltered or housed in the community of their choice.*
- ❖ *People using shelters deserve respect and dignity, including selection from a menu of services.*

Principles

The following five principles, updated from the *2008-2010 Service Plan*, will guide development of shelter facilities and services (new content is underlined):

1. Emergency shelter services should be accessible throughout the region, for people of all genders and ages;
2. The shelter system should continue to broaden access, minimize barriers to service and continue to develop a culture of hospitality;¹
3. Strengthening partnerships among shelter service providers and others can help improve access to services and coordination of delivery;
4. Shelters need to have capacity to support linkage of clients with other services and stabilized housing;
5. Coordinated provision of extreme weather response is required to augment available shelter services.

¹ This does not mean that every shelter must be minimal barrier, rather that shelter services must collectively work toward meeting the needs of the diversity of people in need of shelter: all ages, all genders, and regardless of life choices.

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- Bonnie Moriarty, Elizabeth Fry Society
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