

Our Homelessness Partnership Strategy program (HPS) aims to prevent individuals released from correctional facilities from becoming homeless by connecting them to community resources (mental health and outreach services, emergency shelters, and supportive housing) so they can find and maintain safe, affordable housing. Service Canada funds two full-time employees who begin to assist individuals' with their pre-release plans inside North Fraser Pretrial Centre, the Fraser Regional Correctional Centre, and the Surrey Pretrial Services Centre (allowing the development of trusting relationships). The HPS program accepts referrals from correctional staff as well as direct requests.

The HPS workers research housing placements; advocate for individuals when meeting with potential landlords to ensure they—our clients—are receiving accurate information about their rights as tenants and are being treated fairly; assist with information on food banks, furniture, home starter kits, and any other items that will promote successful (re)integration; and assist individuals' ability to access various community services.

The Outreach Team has created working relationships with staff at a number of provincial institutions within British Columbia. Partnerships have been built with parole offices, probation offices and shelters throughout the Lower Mainland. This has resulted in a significant increase in client contact, as referrals come to the HPS program from community resources and community corrections. The outreach team has also introduced the HPS program to halfway houses, treatment centres and other residential community housing programs.

### **Admission Criteria**

The HPS program is offered on a self-referral basis and also accepts referrals from the Integrated Offender Management Teams, Mental Health Liaisons, and various other correctional staff. Individual requests are generated by institutional referral forms, letters, telephone calls, community corrections and through our Community Services Office.

### **Population Served**

The HPS program processed 3451 requests in 2010. Services are provided to individuals affected by, or at risk for involvement with, the criminal justice system, individuals who are transitioning into the community from federal and/or provincial correctional facilities, individuals with developmental disabilities, individuals with mental health issues, and those who suffer from substance misuse issues.

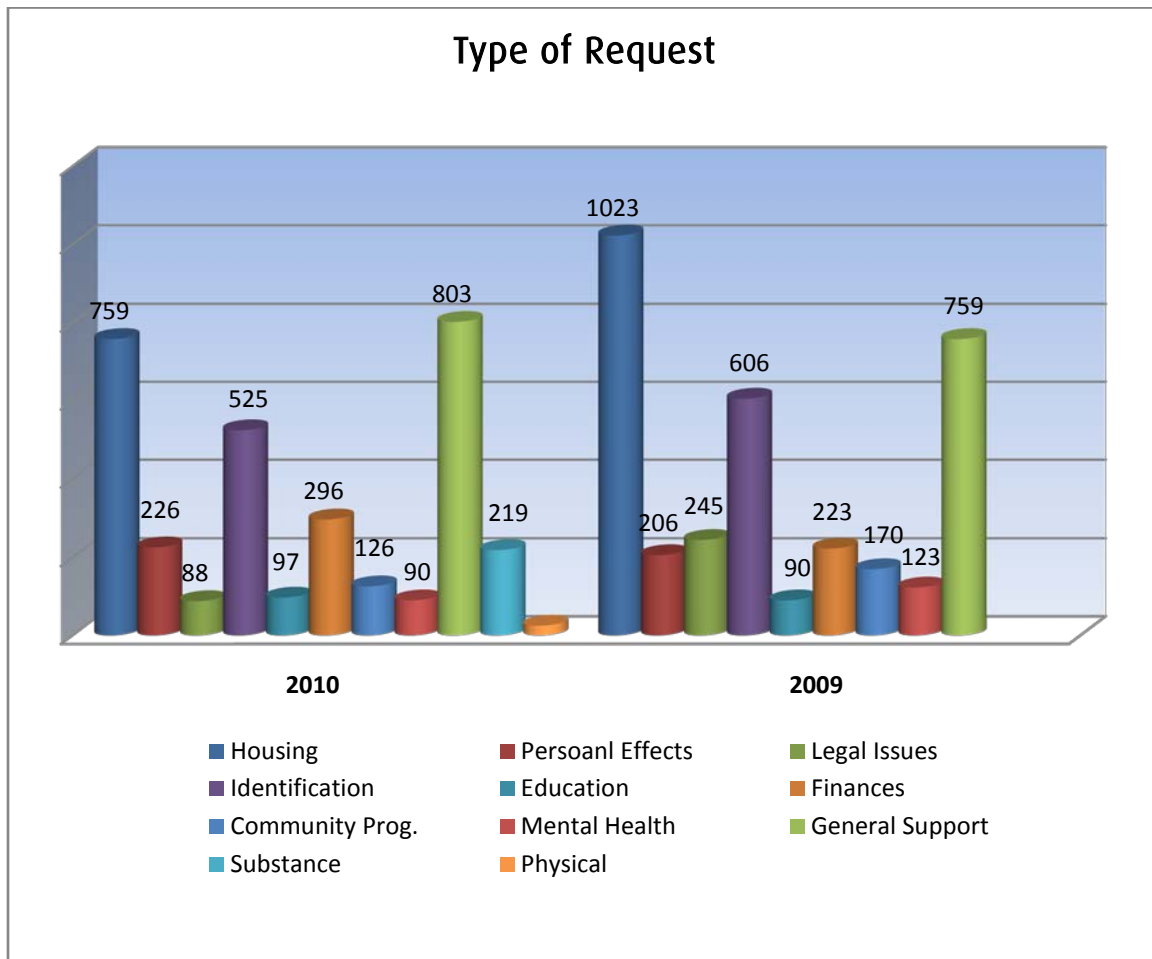
### **Changes in Service**

This year, the HPS program returned to having two full-time outreach workers. There was also staff turnover this reporting year with three different outreach workers. In addition, the Community Services Office continues to provide follow up service to the HPS program by assisting individuals in acquiring medical or social insurance cards, birth certificates, landlord tenant mediation services, employment program referrals, education program referrals, and drug and alcohol treatment

resource information. In addition, the Community Service Office offers a welcoming place to use computers, phones, have coffee and access to one-on-one support. The HPS team also works in the Community Services Office, where if individuals need assistance with housing, they are welcome to walk-in and meet with the HPS workers.

### Community Needs Assessment

The HPS program works with incarcerated persons inside provincial correctional facilities and with individuals released from federal and provincial institutions into the community to assist them acquire and maintain long-term, affordable housing. This is achieved by assisting individuals to access employment programs, mental health services and community resources. This year the HPS program processed 3451 requests for housing and other various needs compared to 4204 in 2009. A decline of 753 requests from 2009 is attributed to a change in staffing model from three full time workers to two outreach workers. The graph below shows the different types of requests in each category.



This year the HPS team encountered some challenges in finding safe and affordable housing. The following are some of those challenges:

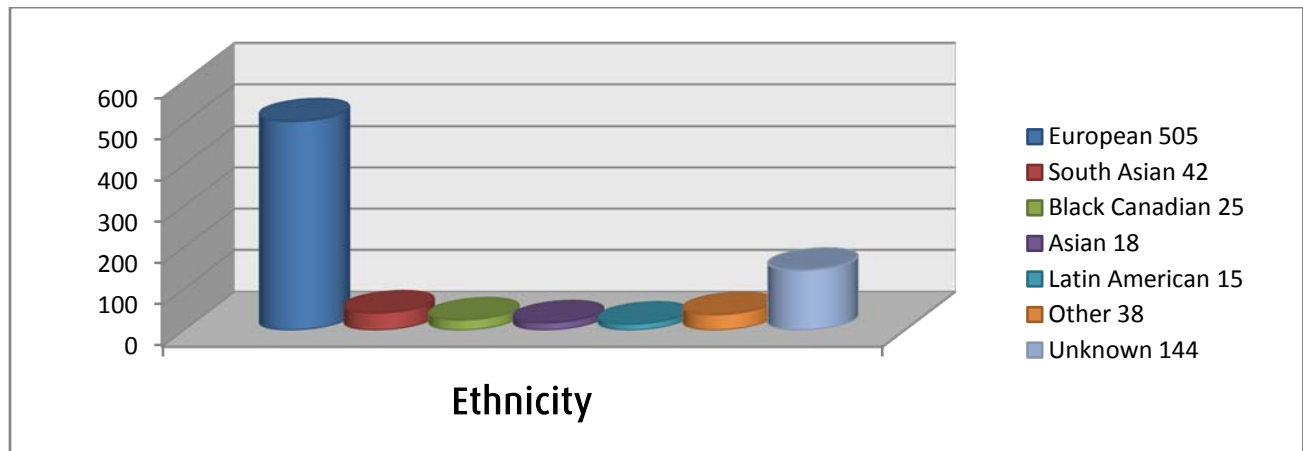
- While incarcerated, individuals are eager to work on pre-release planning. Upon release, such enthusiasm is tempered by lack of commitment, unresolved addiction issues and conflicts with social service offices
- Low vacancy rates in the Lower Mainland, and the dearth of low-income housing options, which are usually at capacity, have long wait lists, and low turnover. Individuals released from a correctional institution on income assistance are not perceived favourably
- Clients are sometimes released on the weekend or holidays, when important services are unavailable
- Institutional issues: lock downs, surges in illegal refugees at the institution (our clients were transferred to other institutions)
- The difficulty of applying for income assistance (an important step in securing personal funds) with uncertain release dates
- Having to wait up to five days to receive the required deposit for landlords from the Ministry of Social Development the Discrimination towards individuals with a criminal record or on income assistance

The HPS team are very aware of the challenges listed above and will continue to work diligently in overcoming them.

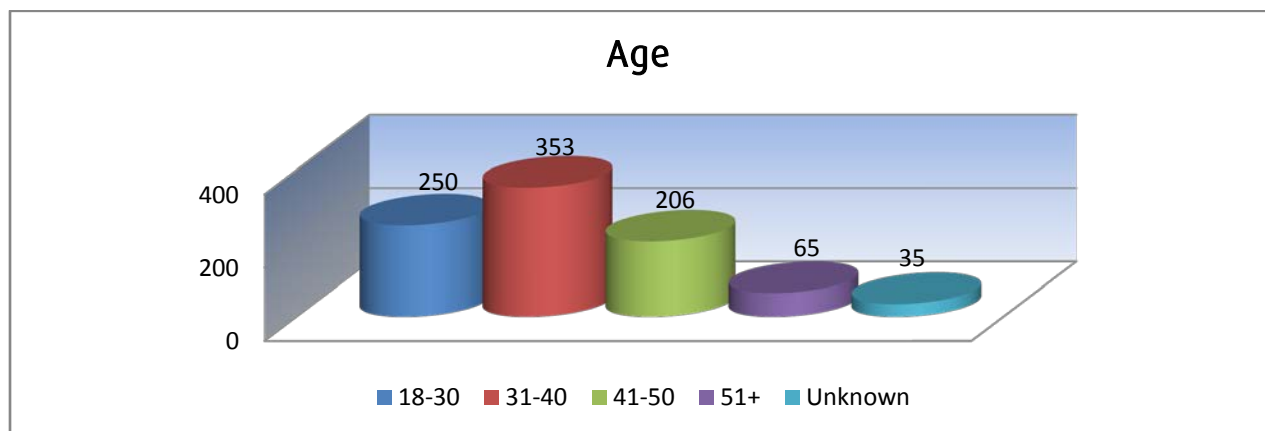
### **Program Objectives**

- Prevent homelessness for incarcerated individuals that are to be released and those already released from federal and provincial correctional facilities.
- Create networks with housing providers.
- Create networks with addiction services.
- Provide linkages to existing services in the community.
- Provide a venue to resolve conflict with service providers.
- Create networks with mental health services.
- Provide landlord tenant mediation services.
- Provide individuals with tenant rights information.
- Provide ongoing community support for individuals.
- Advocate for the individuals as needed.
- Provide support creating release plans for those incarcerated in addition to follow up support once in the community.

## Client Demographics



55.5 percent of the HPS programs clientele is European descent, while the second largest ethnic group is Aboriginal at 13.4 percent.



The demographics for age shows that 39% of the clients served were between the ages 31-40, and 28% between the ages 18-30.

## Analysis

### Review of Last Year's Goals

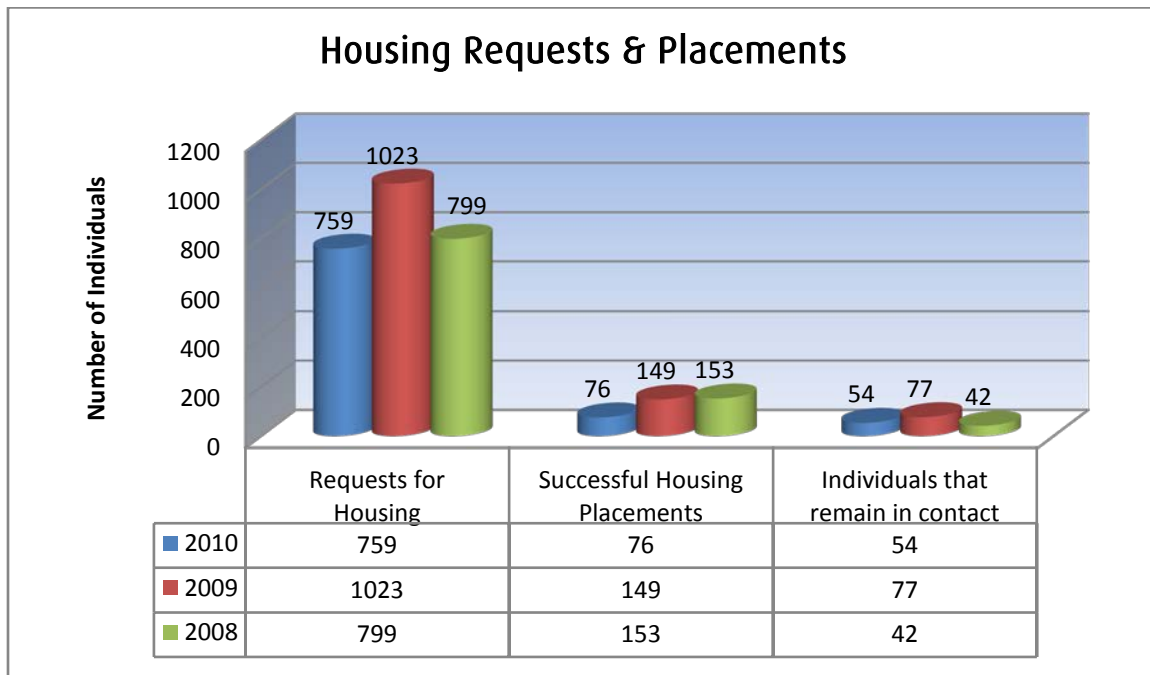
Secure funding for the HPS program after March 2011.	The contract was renewed for April 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2011- March 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2012.
CAMS to be fully operational.	CAMS has been fully operational since August 2010, and all of the previous information prior to August has been entered into CAMS.
Host a public forum on homelessness	Not achieved this year. The HPS team and Community Service team will work together in 2011 to host a Community Forum.
Try and secure a number of bed spaces with shelters and other housing providers for individuals being released from correctional facilities.	The HPS team continues to work closely with shelters and other organizations on a regular basis to assist clients with housing upon their release.

<p>Improve on the type of statistical information collected.</p>	<p>The HPS team has worked diligently to improve how we report and collect data. The HPS team has been successful in indentifying specific areas of reporting to better reflect the outcomes in the contract with Service Canada. This year we are using Microsoft Access to track our statistical information. The HPS team will continue to improve the way we report and track statistical information.</p>
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**Effectiveness**

The table below shows the number of requests we had for housing, the number of successful placements and the number of individuals that remain in contact with our service this past year compared to 2009. The results were lower this year than last. In 2009 our results were high because we had an additional full time housing worker.

The individuals who participate in the HPS program have access to information, support, and advocacy. The relationship and pre-release plan is developed in the institution, allowing the workers to develop trusting relationships with the clients prior to release.



The HPS team assists individuals overcome barriers in locating potential housing placements to avoid becoming homeless. The main objective of the HPS program is to assist those individuals who are incarcerated, homeless and at-risk of homelessness find safe and affordable housing. To achieve this objective involves:

- involves researching potential housing placements
- scheduling appointments with landlords

- advocating for clients when meeting with potential landlords to ensure that the client is receiving accurate information, informed of their rights and tenancy agreements, and treated fairly and not being taken advantage of, communicating with landlords on their behalf.
- assisting clients with contacting Ministry of Social Development to fill out intent to rent application and damage deposits

HPS achieves the following:

- The HPS team has the ability to assist individuals upon immediate release from correctional institutions by picking up clients directly. One of the conditions upon release is that the individual must immediately go to their probation office, meet with their officer and be given their conditions. If the individual does not report to their probation office within 24 hours upon release from an institution, they may face a charge of breach of conditions. In other cases, the individual needs to attend an appointment at the income assistance office to ensure that they can have money to obtain necessities like food, clothing, hygiene products, as well as cash any outstanding cheques. Therefore, the HPS workers are able to meet with the individuals upon release, and work on the goals that are essential for a successful release. The benefit of having an advocate—an HPS worker—is that the worker can assist with any problems that may arise.
- The most important benefit of being with the individual upon release is to assist the individual in accessing housing, shelter or a recovery house/treatment facility on the day of release. This minimizes the risk of the individual being homeless, and also, if the HPS team and individual are not successful locating potential housing on the first day, then the worker knows where the individual is, and how to contact them. This way, the search for housing can continue the following day, or within a short period of time.
- The HPS program not only assists individuals when released into the community, but also assists individuals while incarcerated. Individuals can access various information while incarcerated due to the HPS workers going into the institutions, finding out information that they may need for successful pre-release planning, or other various aspects of their lives. HPS workers help fulfill requests for the following: legal concerns, identification, education, employment, community programming, substance misuse issues, mental health services, personal effects, and general support—these are the most common requests but the HPS team will assist in anything that an individual needs.
- When potential housing is located for the individual, they benefit from the knowledge/information of community resources that assist the client in maintaining housing, that includes assisting with information on food banks, furniture, home starter kits, and any other items for successful reintegration. The HPS program offers assistance in contacting the resource, as well as taking the individual to any appointments.
- HPS program also assists with maintaining the housing by being involved in landlord/tenancy mediation, assistance in getting to places that provide them with services, employment, education resources, mental health and addiction resources and Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

## Efficiency

Referrals were handled promptly.

100% of referrals received were processed.

Number of networks and relationship with other services providers were increased.

## **Satisfaction**

Provincial and federal correctional staff and consumers receiving support from the HPS team have verbally express a high degree of satisfaction program, saying that they recognize the importance of assisting individuals in securing long term affordable housing.

## **SUMMARY**

The success of the HPS program involves communication and teamwork. The HPS team has two outreach workers who work collaboratively together to ensure effective communication. They are in daily contact with each other and work together with higher risk offenders offering strategies and solutions to each individual case plan. The HPS team have placed successfully individuals who are at risk of homelessness into various different types of housing from shelters, basement suites, treatment centers, and apartments.

## **Goals for Fiscal Year 2011-2012**

- The HPS program will continue to expand and improve on the type of statistical information collected.
- Improve return rate for consumer satisfaction surveys from last year.
- HPS program to secure funding for 2012-2013.
- Host a forum on homelessness with Community Services.
- Increase the number of individuals housed in the 2011-2012 fiscal year.
- Continue to expand community partnerships, with various organizations in the lower mainland.

*- Emin Dhaliwal & Pam Flegel*