

Winter Emergency Response 2012-13 Final Report



homeward trust
edmonton

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Highlights

- Total funding for the Winter Emergency Response (WER) Program 2012-13 amounted to \$1,046,230. Homeward Trust administered this funding for five drop-in locations and a winter bus outreach service. These projects were funded from November 1, 2012 until April 30, 2013.
- Resources for WER were provided by Homeward Trust through the resources of the Government of Canada’s Homelessness Partnering Strategy, the Government of Alberta’s Outreach Support Services Initiative to implement *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in Ten Years*, and the City of Edmonton’s annual donation to Homeward Trust.
- The six projects that were funded included:
 - Boyle Street Community Services: Winter Warming Bus and Drop-in
 - Mosaic Centre Drop-in (E4C acts as the fiscal agent)
 - Edmonton Do Likewise Society – The Neighbour Centre Drop-in
 - Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre Drop-in
 - Salvation Army Crossroads Community Church Drop-in
- The Edmonton Do Likewise Society’s Neighbour Centre was the first south-side WER drop-in.
- 59,111 visits were recorded by WER agencies over the 2012-13 season. With adjustments to account for missing data, the total number of visits exceeds 69,000, which still represents a decrease from the 78,335 visits recorded in the 2011-12 season.
- 76% of visits were by men, 24% were by women and less than 1% of visits were by transgender individuals. These proportions are consistent with those observed in previous WER seasons.
- Two thirds of visits recorded (66%) were by individuals of Aboriginal descent, an increase from 59% of visits in each of the last two WER seasons. 29% of visits were by Caucasian individuals, and 4% of visits were by individuals of other ethnicities.
- This season, most agencies used Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) software to manage WER data. For the first time WER data is integrated into a broader Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and individual service users can be tracked across different agencies and programs.
- The average nightly occupancy of emergency shelters in Edmonton over the WER season was 614, an increase from the 2010-11 WER season average of 552 and the 2011-12 season average of 554, despite the fact that funded capacity has remained steady at 611 bed spaces per night.

Agency	Type	Location	Funding Allocation	
			Provincial	City/Federal
Boyle Street Community Services	Drop-in	Inner City	\$476,041	-
Boyle Street Community Services	Warming Bus	City Wide	\$73,959	\$136,190
Edmonton Do Likewise Society	Drop-in	South Central	-	\$72,287
Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre	Drop-in	West Central	-	\$78,666
Salvation Army	Drop-in	North Central	-	\$116,116
E4C – Mosaic Centre	Drop-in	North East	-	\$98,080

Introduction

About Homeward Trust Edmonton

Homeward Trust Edmonton is a not for profit organization that uses a community-based approach toward the goal of ending homelessness in Edmonton. Our primary role is to coordinate responses to housing needs by working together with local agencies and all orders of government. Homeward Trust increases access to housing by funding the development of new units and accessing market units, coordinates the provision of support services, undertakes community planning and research, and raises awareness in the community through events and initiatives. Between 2001 and 2012, Homeward Trust has disbursed over \$148 million in funds for 82 capital and over 230 support projects. We have also been able to leverage those funds to attract an additional \$144 million in support from other groups and, as a result, created over 1,900 housing units. Over 2,500 formerly homeless individuals have been housed through implementation of the Housing First Support Program.

Winter Emergency Response Program Overview

In 2008, Homeward Trust implemented its first Winter Emergency Response (WER) plan. The 2012-13 season marked the fifth winter for this initiative to address the needs of Edmontonians who are homeless during the harsh winter months. While emergency shelters, drop-in centers, and housing programs are available, winter weather remains a threat to the safety of individuals experiencing homelessness. The WER Program is intended to provide additional funding for an extension of hours of service at drop-in centres when emergency shelters are closed, and transportation to drop-ins or shelters for homeless people sleeping rough. WER programs also provide one-to-one support to connect people to housing and services. Collaborations with local business, organizations, and volunteers provide arts and recreational activities, meals and supplies, and social support for people in need.

Resources for WER are provided by Homeward Trust through the resources of the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy, the Government of Alberta's Outreach Support Services Initiative to implement *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in Ten Years*, and the City of Edmonton's annual donation to Homeward Trust. Six projects were funded for the 2012-13 WER period (November 1, 2012 – April 30, 2013): drop-ins at Boyle Street Community Services, Edmonton Do Likewise Society, Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre, Mosaic Centre and Salvation Army Edmonton Crossroads Community Church; and the Boyle Street Community Services Winter Warming Bus. In addition to administering \$1,046,230 in funding for these projects, Homeward Trust was responsible for coordinating data collection, analysis, and reporting, as well as organizing monthly meetings of the WER Committee. The WER Committee consisted of Homeward Trust and WER agencies, as well as a representative from Alberta Human Services, who met monthly to address issues experienced by the agencies, share progress of their WER programs, and discuss data collection challenges and strategies.

This WER 2012-13 Final Report covers the following sections:

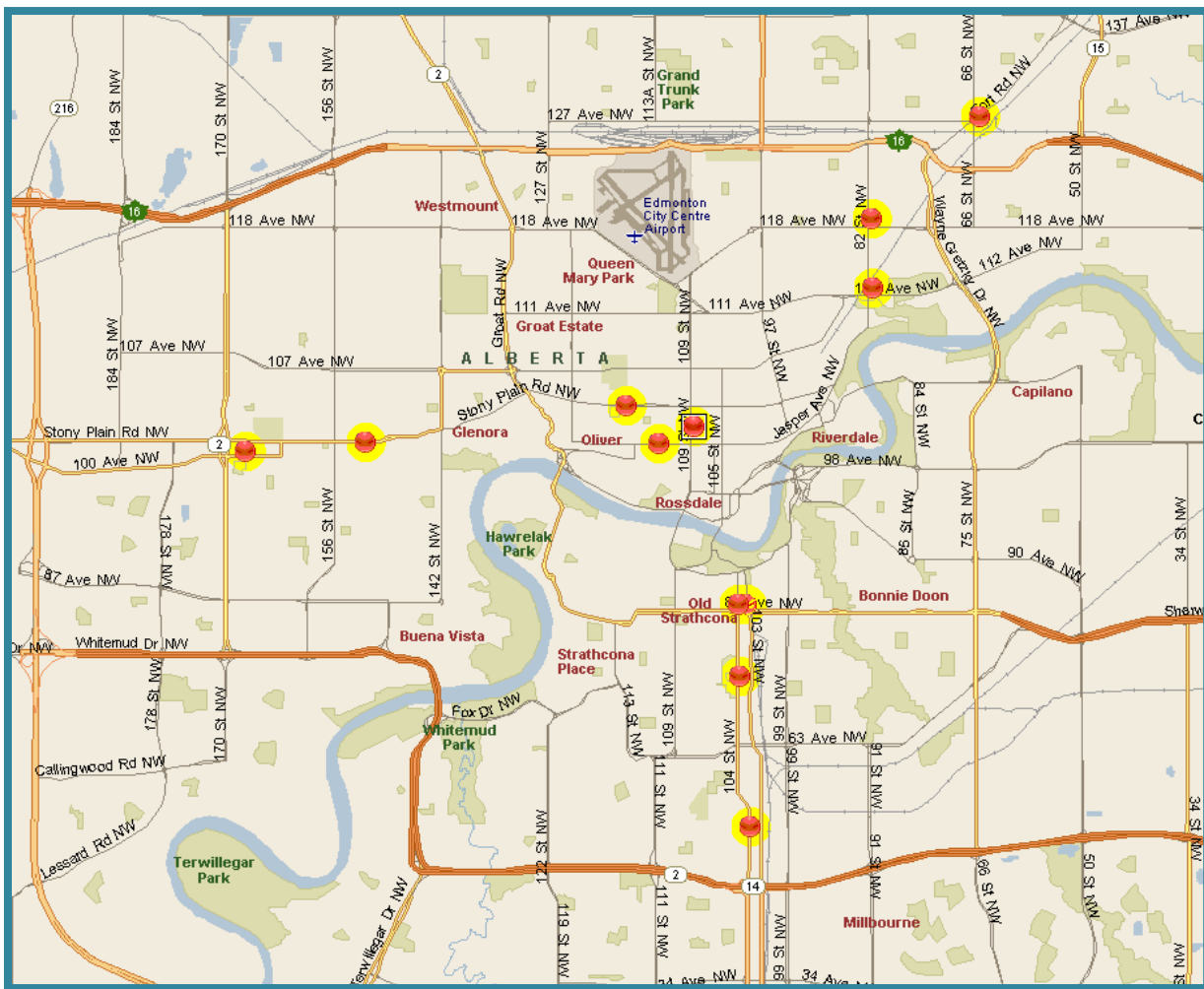
- WER 2012-13 funded services;
- Overview of WER visits including demographics and emergency needs provision;
- Service delivery details and individual agency reports;
- Integrated data collection: process & results;
- Challenges, insights & recommendations.

Winter Warming Bus

The Winter Warming Bus run by BSCS provided many services for its clients throughout the winter months. The bus circulated throughout the city, making stops along a regular route but also meeting people outside of this route, sometimes on the outskirts of the city. The Winter Warming Bus was also an essential access point for people who are not comfortable coming downtown for shelter or services.

The core function of the Winter Warming Bus was to ensure the safety of individuals who were sleeping rough throughout the winter season and provided clients with transportation to drop-ins, shelters and other service providers. Additionally, the Winter Warming Bus provided information and referrals to resources. It provided basic needs items such as warm food, beverages, clothing, blankets, socks, winter gear, first aid, and hygiene items.

The Winter Warming Bus served an important function of creating and building meaningful, trusting relationships between bus staff and clients who may otherwise feel disconnected from service systems.



WER Program Usage Data

Data Collection & Analysis Process

Over the past year, Homeward Trust has made progress in the development of Edmonton's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), an electronic, community-wide system for collection of person-level information over time on individuals and families experiencing homelessness and the services they access. During the 2012-13 WER season, Homeward Trust piloted the integration of WER program data into the HMIS system. Homeward Trust uses the Efforts to Outcomes™ (ETO) as case management software for Housing First teams, and as the platform for Edmonton's HMIS. Starting in fall 2012, ETO was used exclusively by three of five drop-in centers (the remaining two used Excel spreadsheets) and the Winter Warming Bus to capture data from the WER program. Appendix A outlines the process of ETO development, training, data entry and analysis in relation to the WER program. Details are also provided on data cleaning and completeness, along with key lessons and recommendations for future improvement of data collection processes.

For all previous WER seasons, drop-ins and the Winter Warming Bus collected a tally of the total number of visits each day, along with some basic demographic information about visitors, and an approximate record of emergency needs supplies and services provided. The ETO WER program was designed with the capacity to track the same key fields – winter warming visits, demographics, and emergency needs provision. The key change this year was that ETO facilitates registration and tracking of unique individuals, and integration of WER data with Housing First and other program data. More integrated, consistent data collection between Housing First teams and WER service providers will inform approaches to better track and engage people who continue to depend on drop-ins, and connect them to housing and other support services.

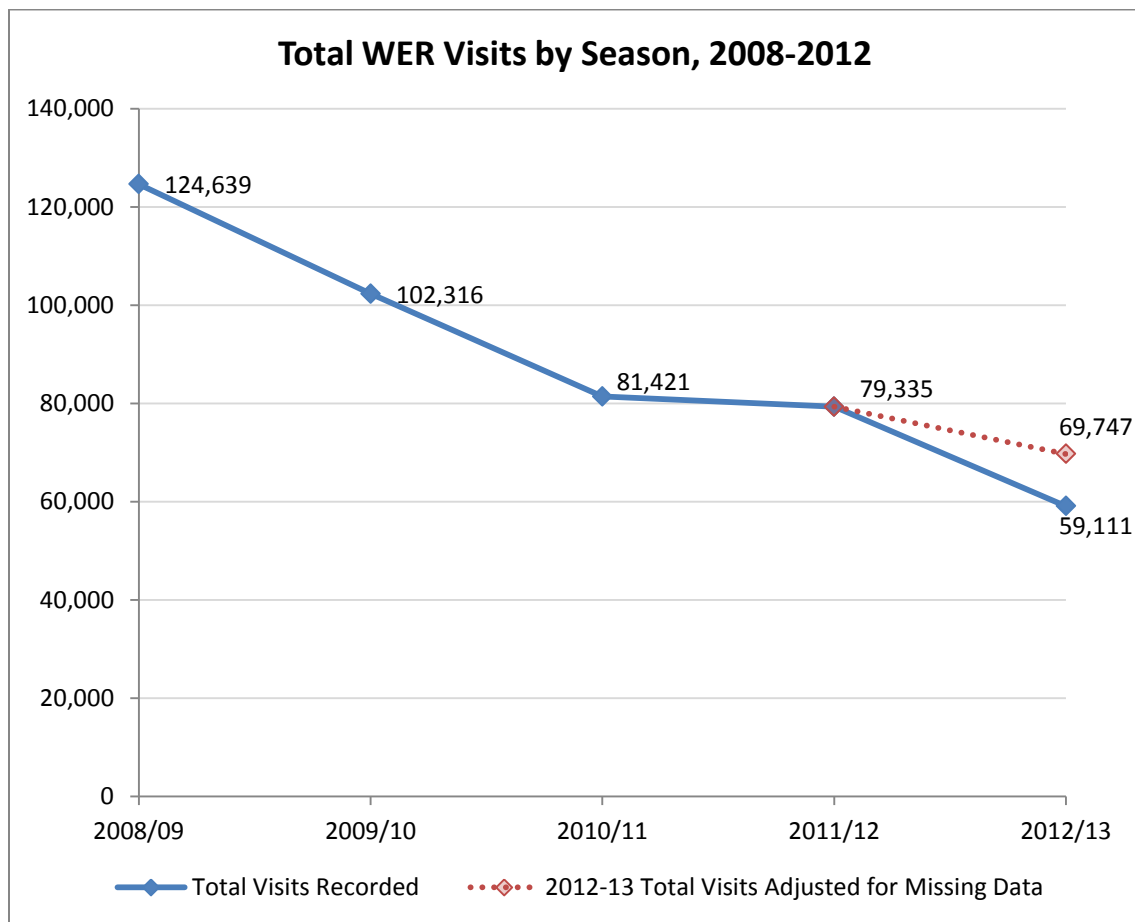
Since the inception of the WER program, every effort has been made to consistently record the number of visits to the drop-ins and bus each day. It is a challenging undertaking, particularly at busy drop-ins where people come and go frequently. Year-over-year changes in data collection methods and tools, agency staff, drop-in hours and other factors all affect the number of visits recorded daily, making it important to interpret changes in total numbers with caution. This year's changes were designed to increase the accuracy, consistency and validity of reporting across WER agencies. However, the inevitable learning curve involved in adopting a new system and new technology and may have decreased the proportion of visits that some agencies were able to record.

Total Visits, 2012-13

The total number of recorded visits during the 2012-13 season among all the WER agencies was 59,111. The table and graph below present the change in the total recorded WER visits by season. This year's total continued the trend of annual decreases in total WER visits since the 2008-09 season. Although every agency experienced a decrease in the number of visits (with the exception of Edmonton Do Likewise Society, as it was their first year), this season's decrease is attributable to a substantial reduction in recorded visits to the BSCS and Salvation Army drop-ins. In addition, the total number of

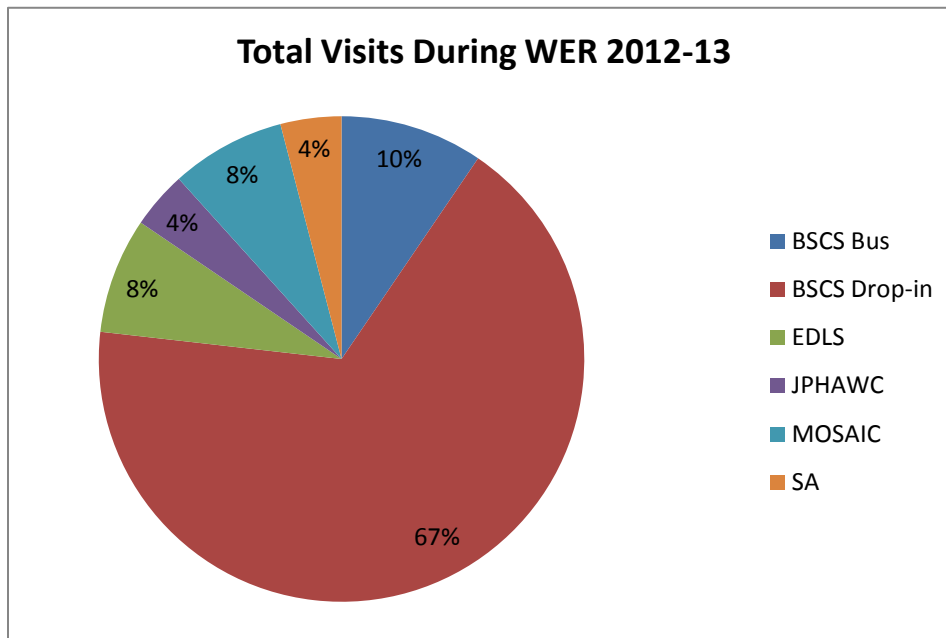
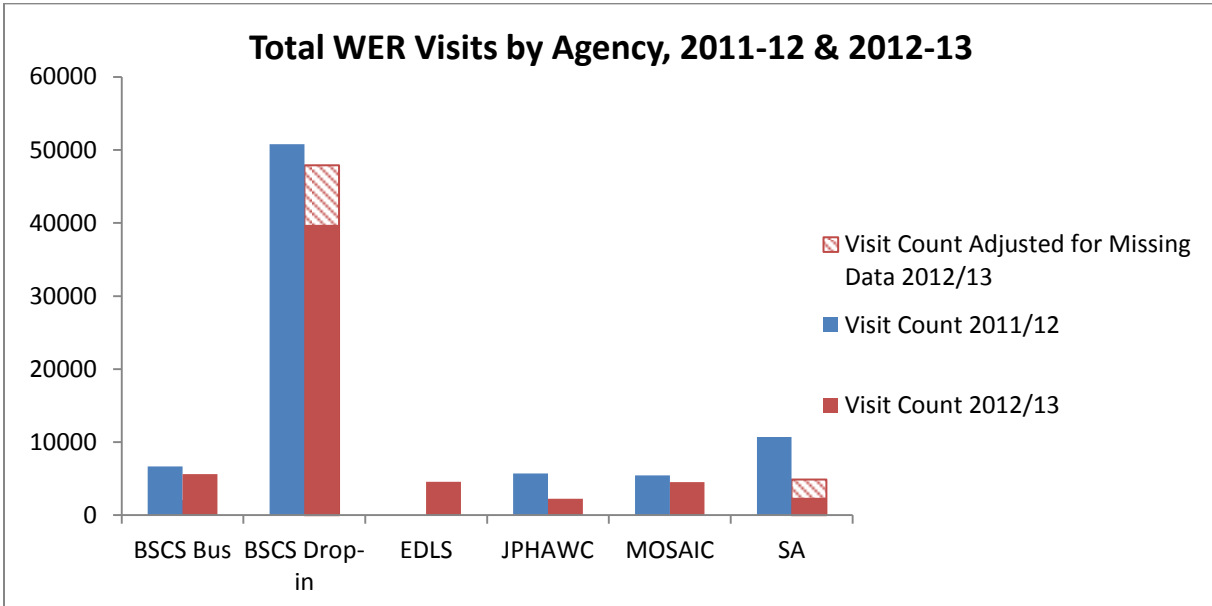
recorded visits to Salvation Army was under one fourth and JPHAWC under one half of the 2011-12 season. Despite the funding of one additional drop-in facility this season, the Edmonton Do Likewise Society, the total number of visits decreased. Even with adjustments to BSCS Drop-in numbers to account for missing data (see next section below), there is still an almost 10,000 visit difference between 2011-12 and 2012-13.

SEASON	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13 (Figures in brackets reflect adjustment to account for missing data)
Total WER Visits by Season	124,639	102,316	81,421	79,335	59,111 (69,747)
% Change from previous season	N/A	-18%	-20%	-3%	-25% (-13%)
% change from 2008-09 baseline	N/A	-18%	-35%	-36%	-53% (-44%)



Visits by Agency, 2012-13

The BSCS Drop-in continues to account for over two thirds of WER visits, as has been the case in previous seasons. The lower-volume drop-ins and bus account for 4-10% of visits each. The proportions, illustrated in the pie chart below, reflect the number of visits recorded by each agency. Adjustments to account for missing data¹ slightly increase the share of visits at the BSCS Drop-in and decrease the share of other agencies, but the pattern remains the same.



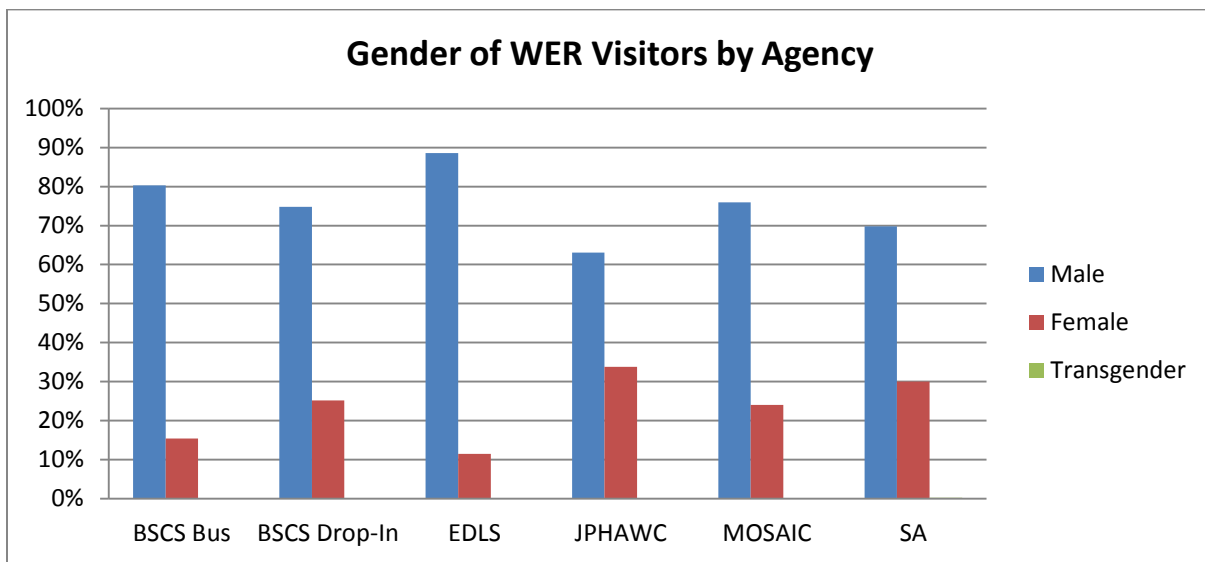
¹ BSCS visit numbers were submitted to Homeward Trust in separate AM and PM visit spreadsheets. To estimate the number of visits not recorded, any missing entries were replaced by the lower of the monthly average or median number of visits for AM or PM counts. Salvation Army's monthly visit numbers were adjusted by applying the highest monthly visit per day average (27 visits per day in January and April) to the months with missing data.

Demographics of Visitors

The WER projects served some of the most vulnerable populations within Edmonton during the harsh winter months. This included not just individuals currently experiencing homelessness, but also those who are at risk of or have previously experienced homelessness.

Gender

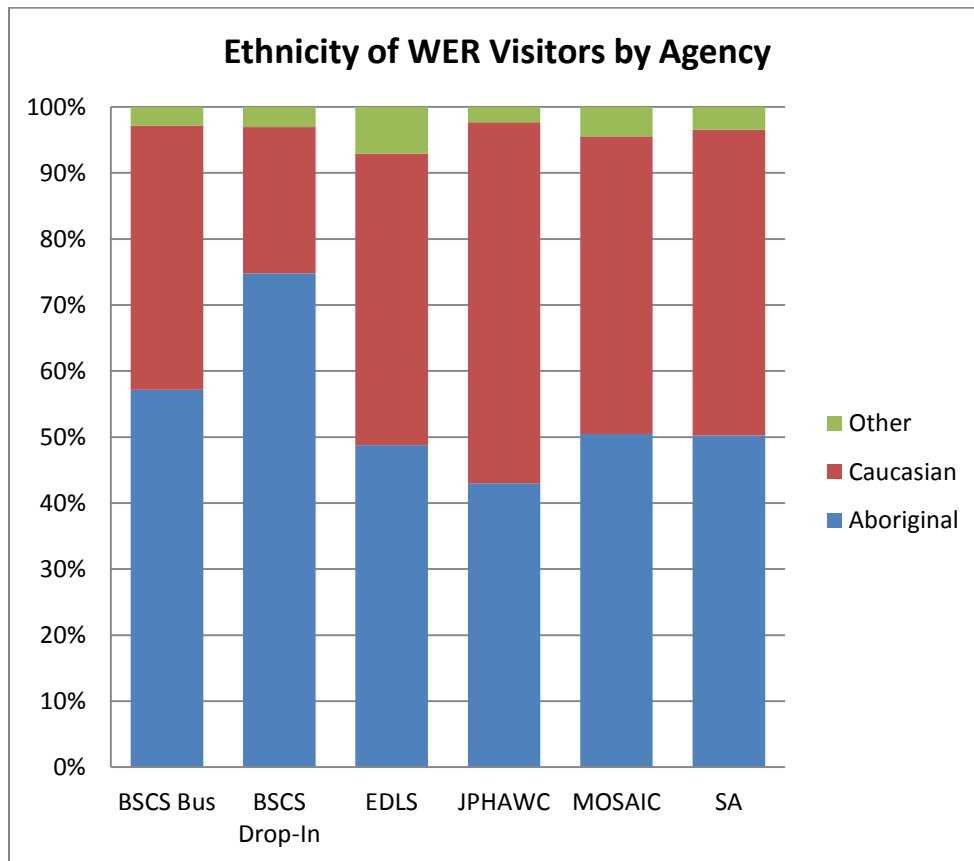
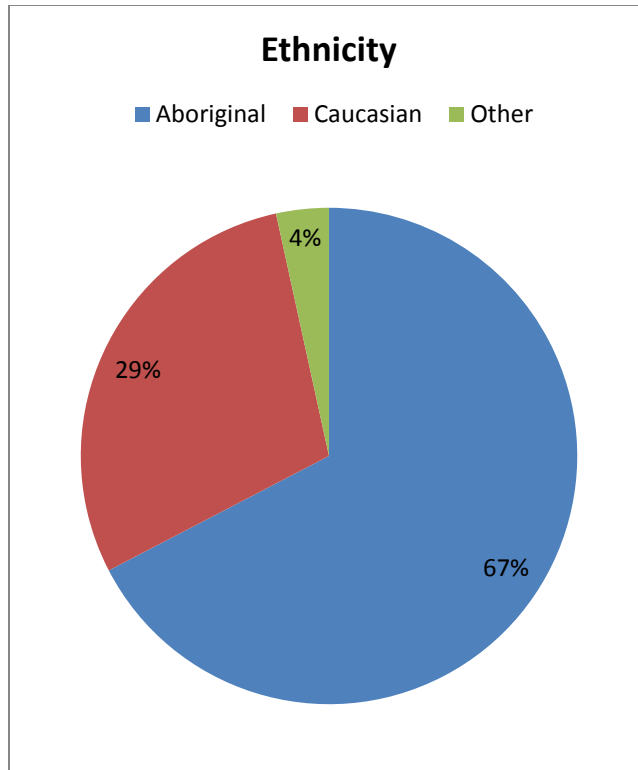
Of the visits for which gender was recorded, 76% were made by men and 24% were made by women. 27 visits were made by transgender individuals, accounting for less than 1% of all visits. JPHAWC experienced the highest proportion of visits by women, at one third of all visits, while at EDLS just over 10% of visits were by women. The agencies at which the greatest proportion of visits were by men also experienced the highest proportion of visits by individuals who were sleeping rough. The linking of data to specific individuals will provide opportunities for more detailed cross-analysis of demographic characteristics in future.



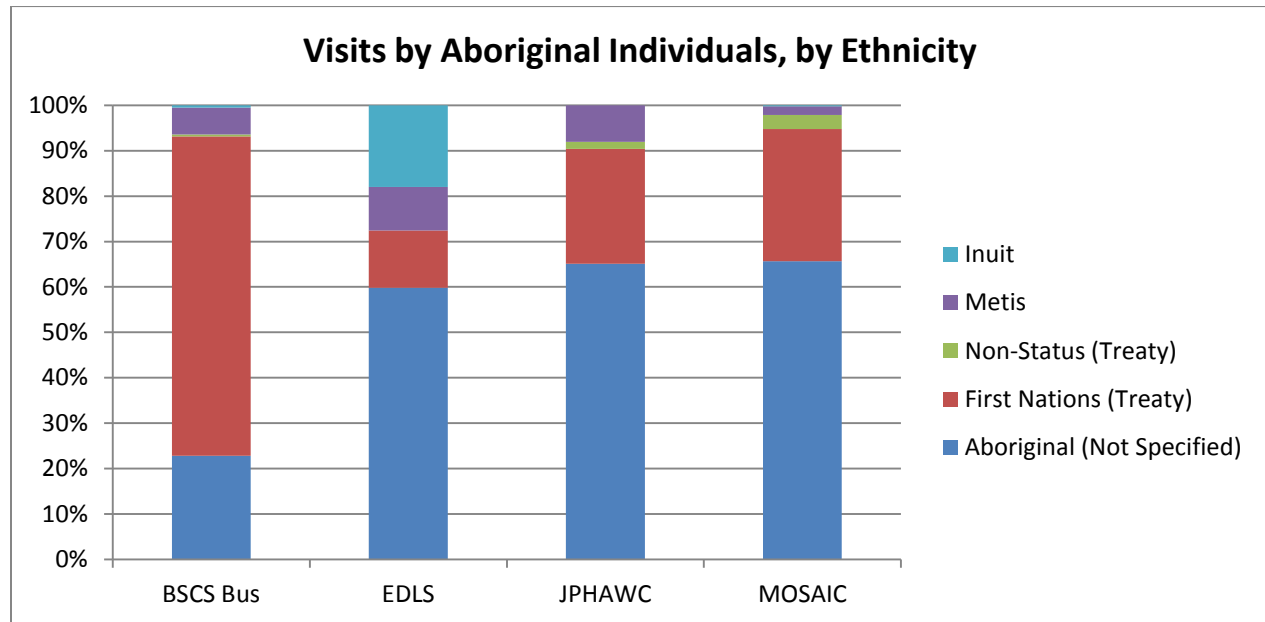
Ethnicity

During the 2012-13 season, individuals of Aboriginal descent accounted for 66% of visits², Caucasian individuals for 29% and individuals of other ethnicities for 4%. Client ethnicity was unknown for 2% of all visits. Aboriginal individuals were using WER services more frequently than people of other ethnicities, particularly at the BSCS Drop-in, where they accounted for almost three quarters of all visits.

² The 2012 Edmonton Homeless Count found that of those counted as homeless, 46% identified as Aboriginal, while Aboriginal individuals account for only 5% of the total Edmonton population.



Four of the six programs³ recorded whether Aboriginal visitors identified as First Nations (Status or Non-Status), Métis, Inuit or other Aboriginal ethnic groups (not specified). The breakdown of visits by Aboriginal ethnicity at these four agencies is displayed in the graph below. With the exception of EDLS, most agencies recorded the highest proportion of visits (for which Aboriginal ethnicity was known) by people identifying as First Nations. Because these numbers were reported by visit rather than by individual (to keep with the practice of previous WER reports), small numbers of individuals with frequent visits can affect the data. For example, while close to 20% of visits by Aboriginal individuals at EDLS were by Inuit, this proportion actually represents the frequent visits of 5 individuals.



Age

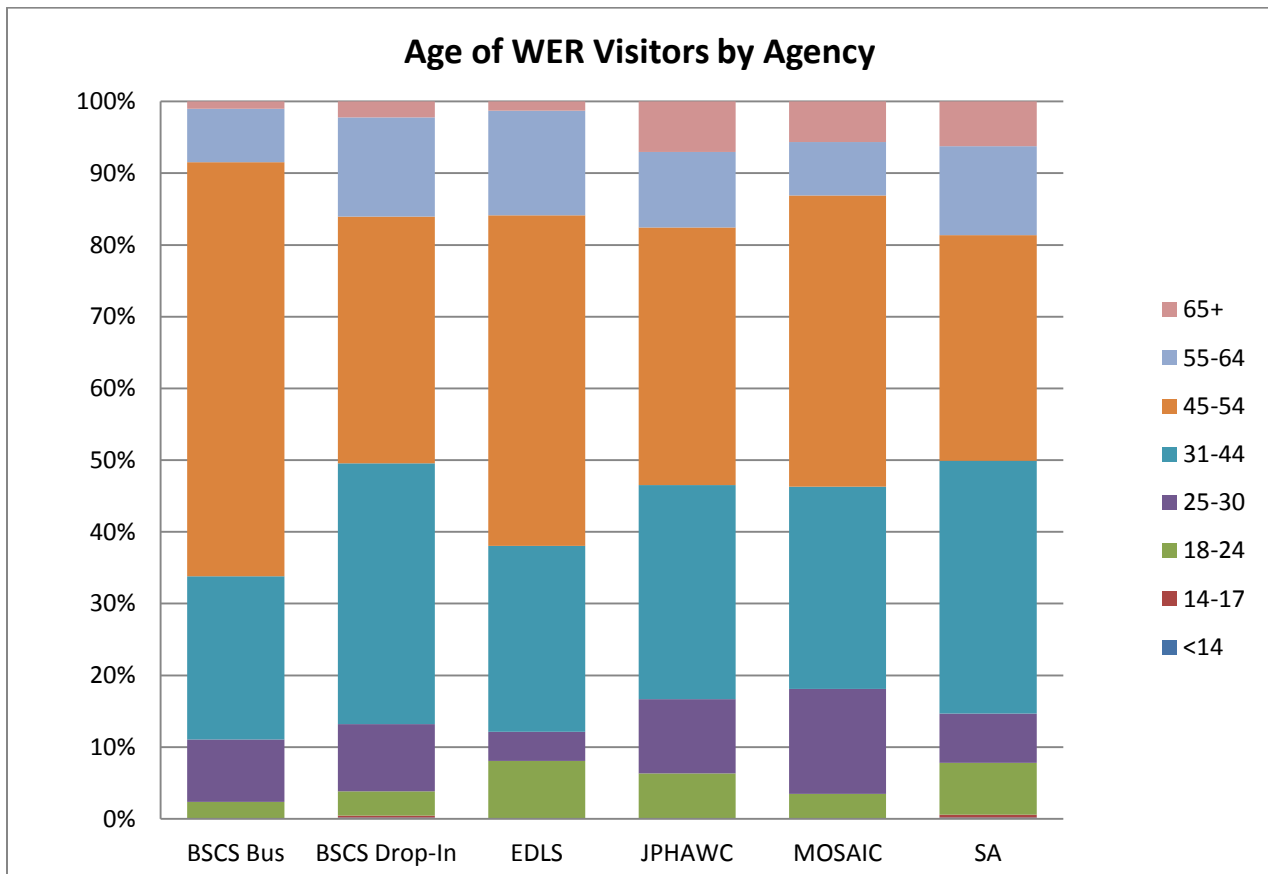
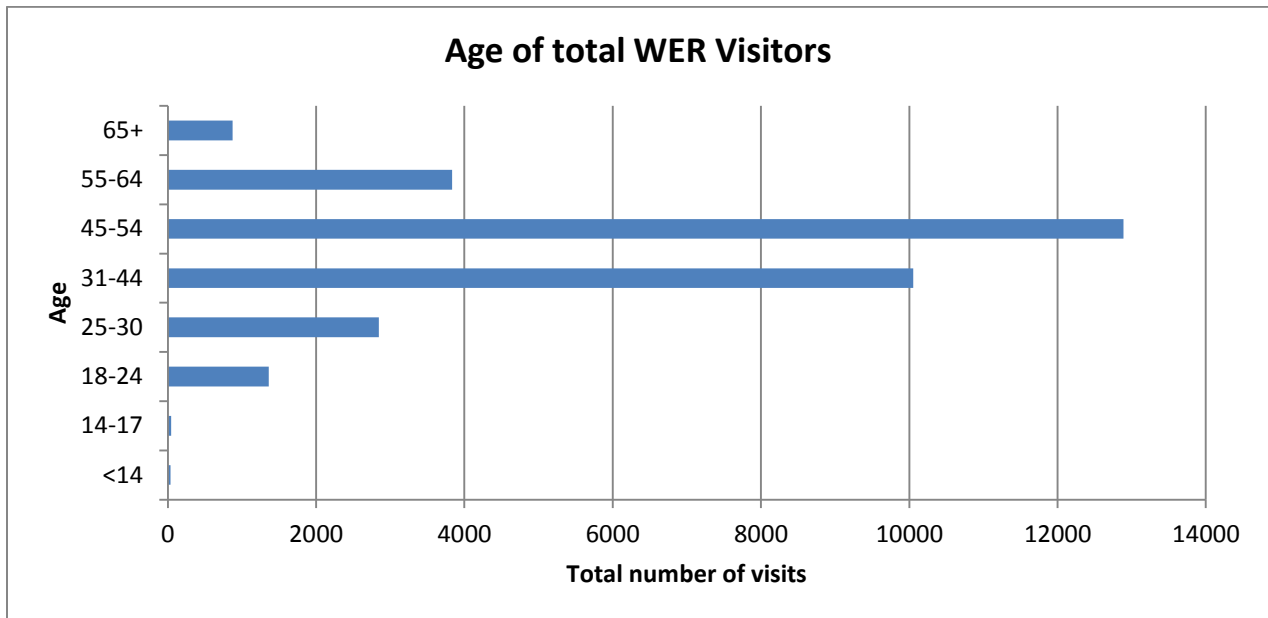
The vast majority of visits (58%) were by individuals between 45 and 55 years old, followed by 23% of visits by people aged 31-44. When compared to the 2012 Homeless Count results, in which 25% of the individuals counted were aged 45-55 and 26% in the range of 31-44, there was overrepresentation of the 45-55 age cohort among WER visitors. Only 34 visits in the WER season were by individuals below the age of 14. EDLS, JPHAWC and Salvation Army experienced the highest rate of visits by youth under age 25, at 6-7% of all visits.

Throughout the WER season this year, agencies noted that many individuals were reluctant to provide their date of birth. Despite this challenge, five of the six agencies recorded birth date for the majority of visits, and four agencies managed to record dates of birth for at least 85% of visits. The high volume drop-in at BSCS experienced the greatest challenge collecting age data due to the volume of visits and visitor reluctance to provide the information.⁴ When this was the case, agencies were advised to try to

³ BSCS and Salvation Army did not collect data on categories of Aboriginal heritage.

⁴ Date of birth data was available for: 100% of BSCS Bus visits; 39% of BSCS Drop-in visits; 88% of EDLS visits; 94% of JPHAWC visits; 56% of Mosaic visits; and, 85% of Salvation Army visits.

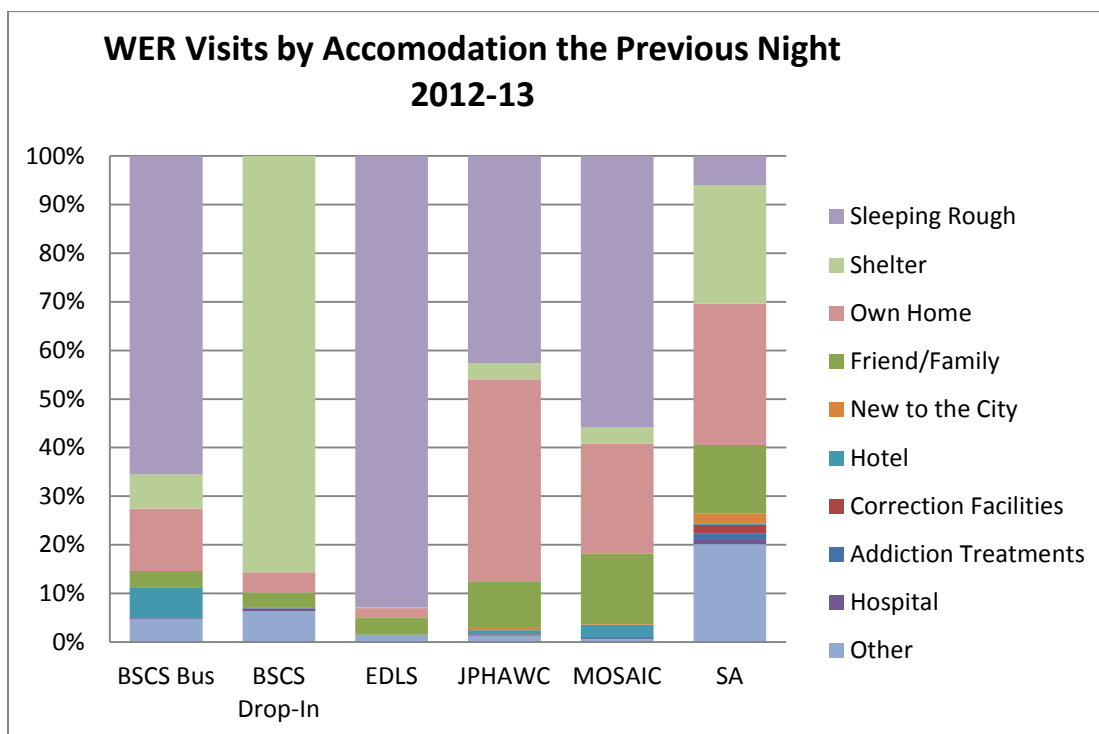
obtain an approximate year of birth. It was noted that frequent visitors tended to build relationships and trust with staff and eventually provided this information.



Accommodation the Previous Night⁵

During the 2011-12 WER season, responses to the questions of where a participant slept the previous night were recorded according to five options: at a shelter, with family or friends, slept rough, at own home/apartment, or other. One of the recommendations last year was to further define the 'other' option to improve understanding of the circumstances that leave people requiring WER services. As a result, this season five more categories were added: 'hospital', 'hotel', 'correction facilities', 'addiction treatments', and 'new to the city'.

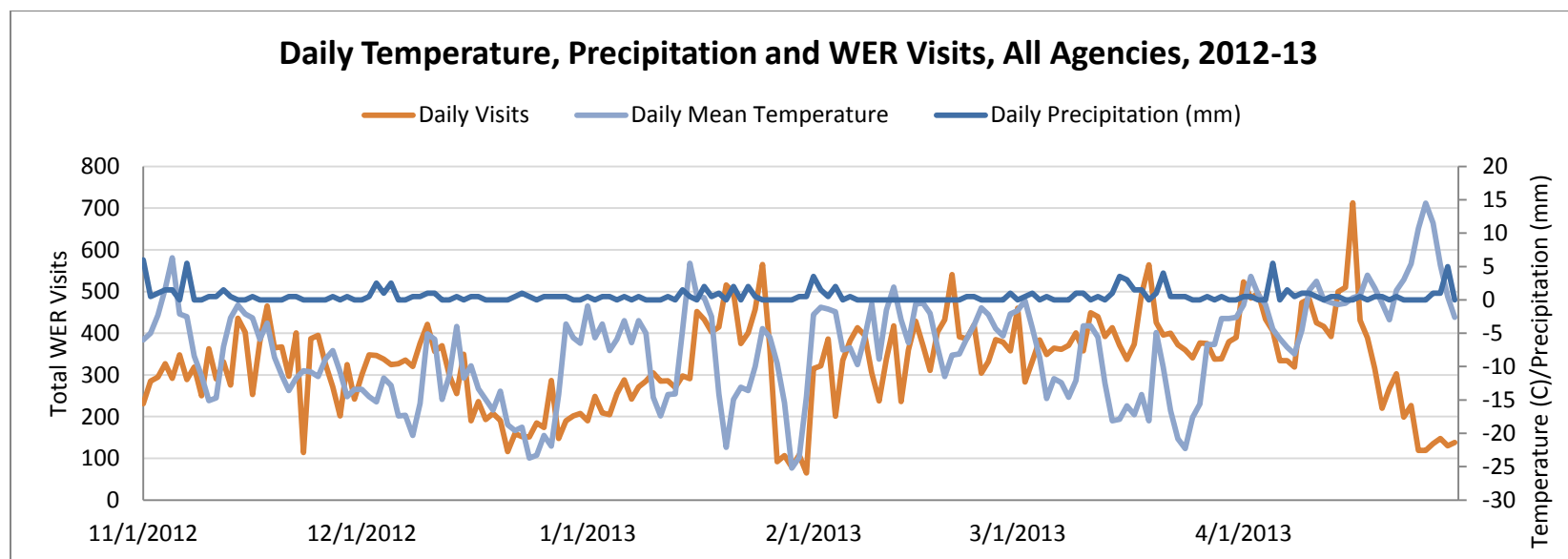
The responses to this question about accommodation vary substantially across agencies, highlighting the differences in the populations served. Very similar to the previous season trends, amongst drop-in service users outside the inner city (JPHAWC, Mosaic Centre and Salvation Army), a substantial percentages of visits were by those living in their own homes. People with homes but living in poverty. The vast majority of visitors to the BSCS Drop-in slept in shelters the previous night. The BSCS Drop-in is located near the city's largest emergency shelters, and opens early in the morning as the shelters close. In contrast, over 90% of visits to EDLS were by individuals sleeping rough, by far the highest proportion experienced by any agency, supporting anecdotal evidence of homeless individuals living south of the river who do not cross the river to access shelters.



⁵ 57% of Salvation Army visits did not provide this information. This resulted in a 2% of unknown data out of all visitors in the WER program this season.

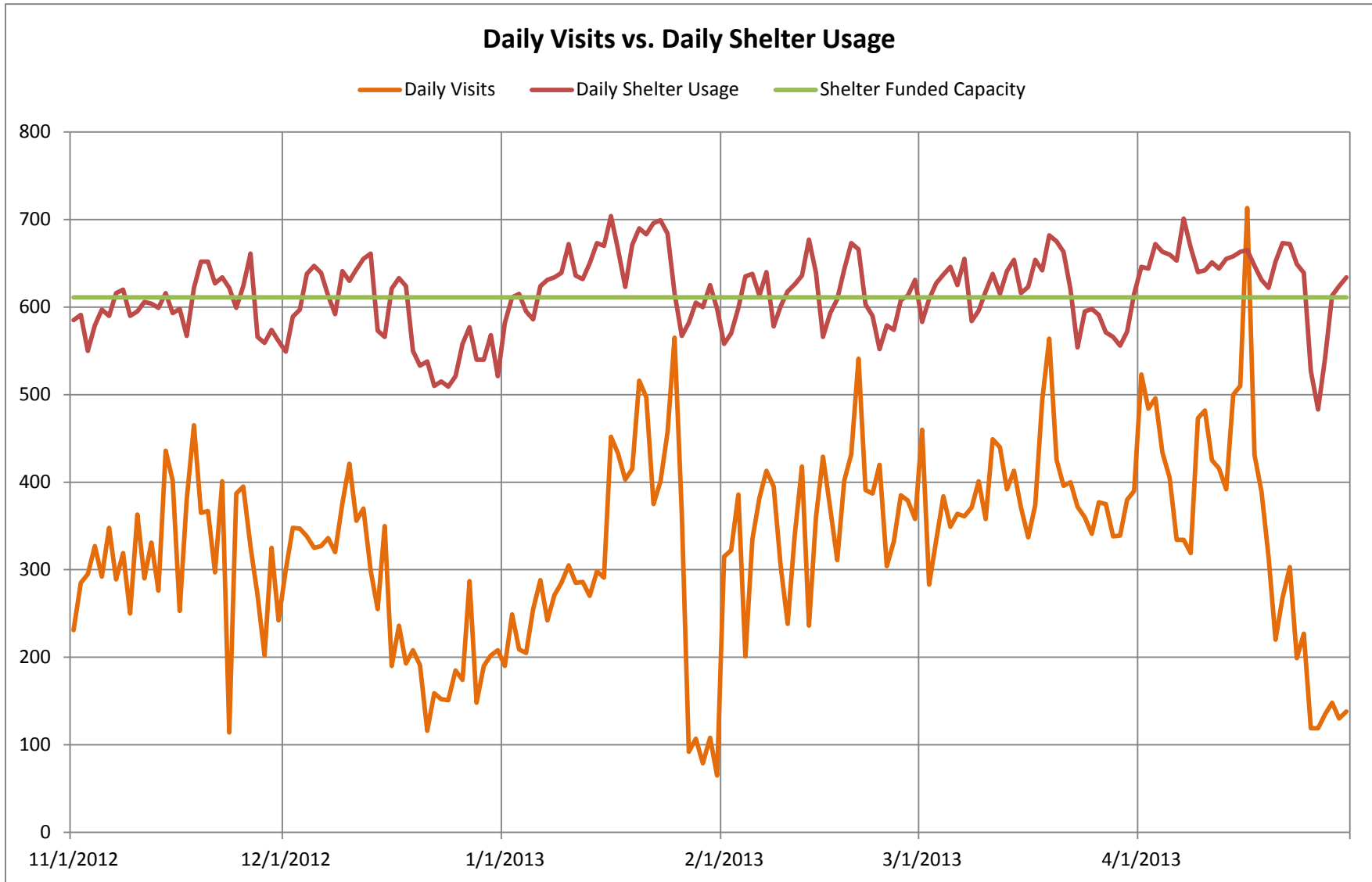
WER Usage Contextualized: Daily Visits, Weather & Shelter Usage

Although certain periods of low temperatures on the graph below appear to be accompanied by increases in WER visits, across the whole 2012-13 WER season there was no statistically significant relationship between daily mean temperature and daily WER visits recorded. Similarly, there was no statistically significant correlation between millimeters of precipitation and WER visits.⁶ Only three agencies – JPHAWC, EDLS and BSCS Bus – experienced any statistically significant correlation (at the 5% significance level) between temperature and daily visits. In each case there was a very weak correlation between increased temperature and increased visits, but temperature accounted for just 4-14% of the variance in daily visits, meaning that most change in daily visits is due to factors other than temperature changes. There is, however, a weak but statistically significant relationship between daily shelter usage and WER visits.⁷ When daily shelter usage is higher, so too are WER visits. Changes in shelter usage only explain 25% of the variance in daily WER visits, however, indicating that other factors also influence the number of daily WER visits. Across the past three WER seasons, average shelter occupancy has increased each season, while WER visits have decreased, indicating that year-over-year factors other than shelter occupancy rates are driving WER usage.



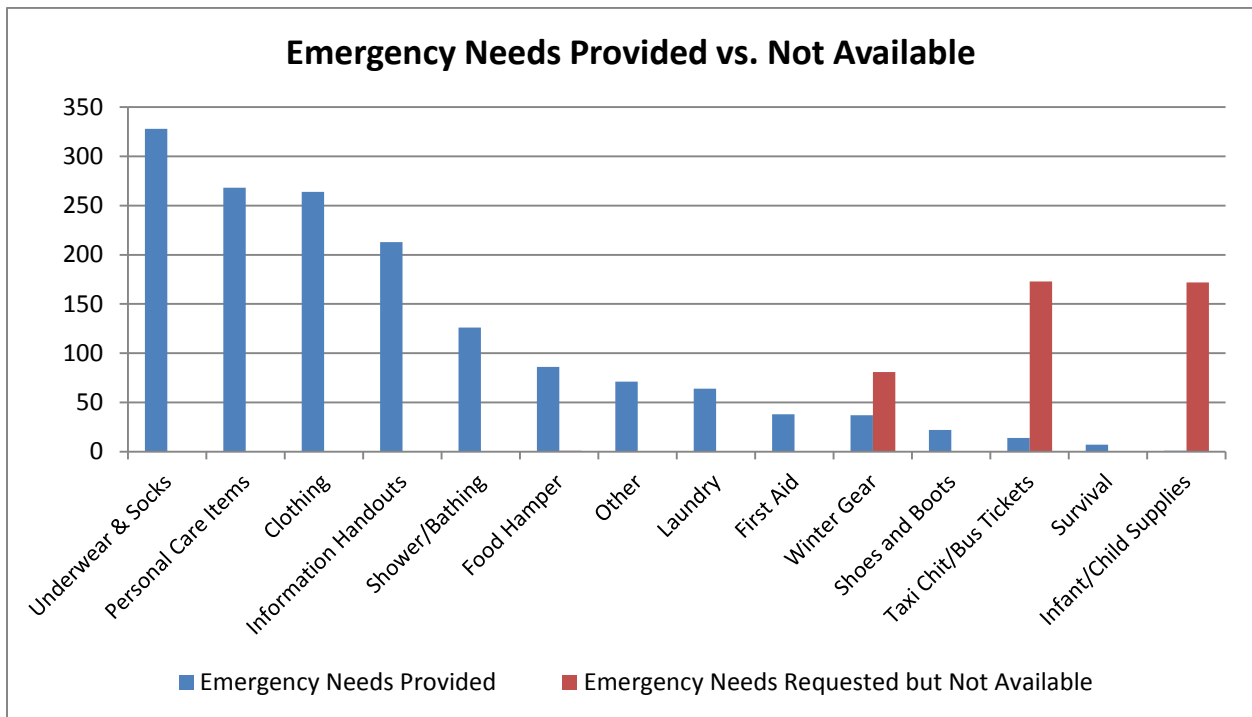
⁶ Salvation Army data is not included in this reading because when the data was transferred from paper form onto excel, specific dates were not recorded.

⁷ There is sufficient evidence at the 5% significance level to indicate a relationship between daily shelter usage and daily WER visits during 2012-13 season.



Emergency Needs

The lower-volume drop-ins and the Winter Warming Bus recorded requests for and provision of basic emergency supplies and services. In addition to the supplies and services displayed in the graph below, over 1500 meals were served the agencies, excluding the BSCS Drop-in.⁸ Underwear and socks, personal care items, and clothing were the most frequently provided emergency supplies. Winter gear, transportation vouchers, and infant/child supplies were the items most frequently requested but not available.



⁸ In previous years, BSCS drop-in estimated the number of meals served based on the total number of visits received (estimated 2 meals per visit).

WER Usage Patterns

Visits by Unique Individuals

Before the introduction of ETO-based integrated data collection, visits to WER sites were counted or estimated, but it was impossible to track the number of unique visitors. This season, the agencies using ETO⁹ recorded a total of 1904 unique individuals who used WER services. Some of these individuals visited multiple WER agencies and could be tracked through their multiple enrollments in ETO.

The ability to track unique individuals provides new insight into how people use WER services. Across all agencies using ETO, the majority of clients entered into ETO used the WER program more than once over the course of the season. The Winter Warming Bus had the highest percentage of single-time users, at 36%, while the Edmonton Do Likewise Society had the lowest percentage of single-time users at 15%.¹⁰ Across all agencies, 75% of clients visited 11 times or less over the season. Edmonton Do Likewise Society experienced the highest proportion of very frequent visitors; EDLS had the highest median number of visits, and 25% of visitors used the drop-in at least 36 times each. The chart “Frequency of Client Visits by Agency” illustrates that most agencies experienced a very high percentage of repeat visitors, but a relatively small percentage of very frequent visitors. The chart “Proportion of Visits by Frequent Clients” demonstrates that while very frequent users account for a relatively small percentage of all visitors, they account for a high proportion of the total visits experienced by most agencies.

VISITS BY CLIENT ANALYSIS	BSCS Bus	EDLS	Mosaic	SA	JPHAWC	ALL Agencies
# unique visitors	644	167	466	978	359	1904
Mean visits/individual	9	27	10	2	6	11
Median visits/individual	2	12	3	1	3	4

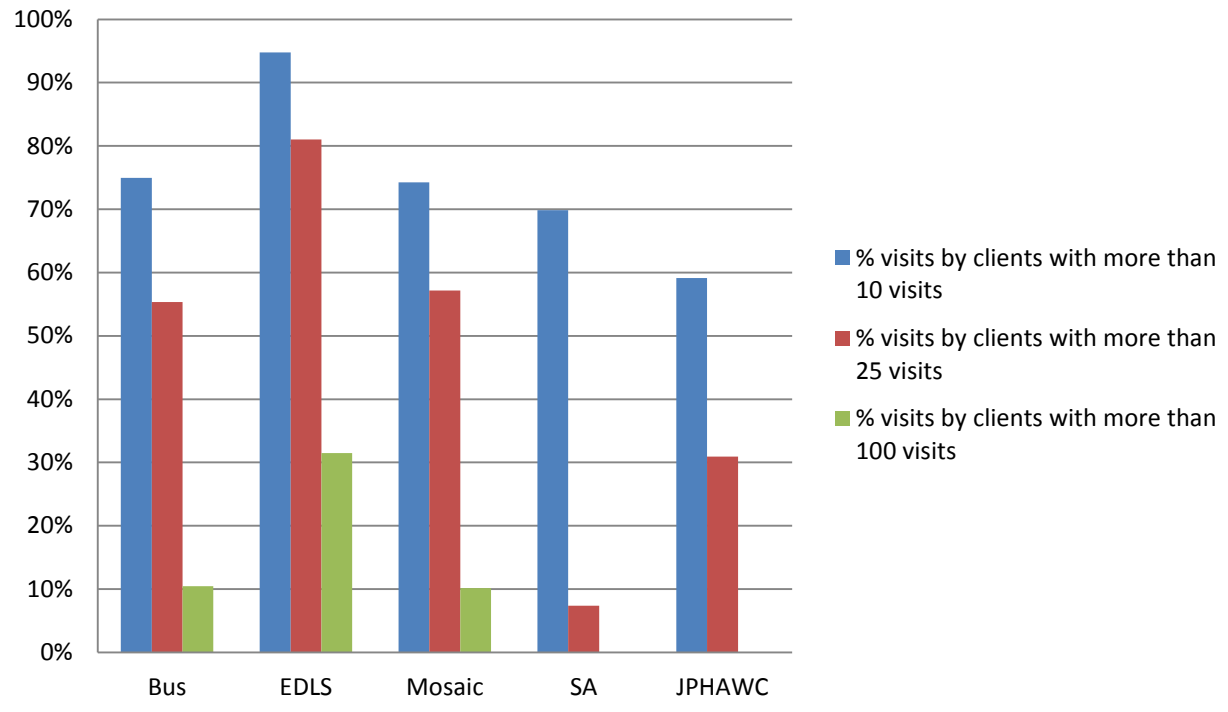
⁹ BSCS Bus, EDLS, Mosaic Centre, and JPHAWC entered all WER data into ETO. Although Salvation Army did not enter all data onto ETO, the total number of unique individuals was calculated manually in an Excel spreadsheet. BSCS Drop-In’s data was also entered in an Excel spreadsheet, but it could not be calculated manually due to the extremely high (approximately 40,000) number of records.

¹⁰ Differences may be due in part to the willingness of clients to provide identifying information.

Frequency of Client Visits by Agency



Proportion of Visits by Frequent Clients



Patterns of Use across WER Agencies

Most WER clients visited just one agency, while a small minority visited two or three WER services over the course of the season. The most common combination was the Winter Warming Bus and JPHAWC: 62 clients accessed both.

	# Clients
# Clients with Visits to 1 Agency	1571
# Clients with Visits to 2 Agencies	74
# Clients with Visits to 3 Agencies	3

Connections with Other Programs

One of the goals of employing ETO to integrate WER data collection with other components of Edmonton’s growing HMIS is to enable better tracking of individuals across agencies, programs and services to support improved service coordination and delivery. Of the clients registered in the WER program in ETO this year, 105 individuals had a current or past enrollment in at least one Housing First-related program in the Homeward Trust ETO enterprise (Intake, Housing First or Graduate programs).

	PROGRAM in Homeward Trust ETO Enterprise				
	Outreach & Access	Intake	Housing First	Graduate	TOTAL
# WER Clients with Enrollment Record	2	102	69	20	105
Clients with 1 Enrollment in Program	2	91	60	20	0
Clients with 2 Enrollments in Program	0	10	8	0	0
Clients with 3 Enrollments in Program	0	1	1	0	0

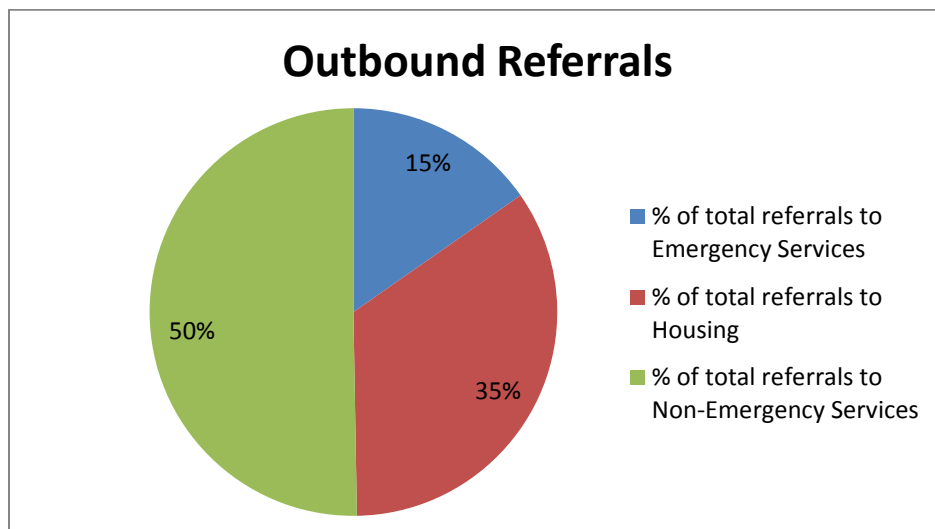
This preliminary information is useful for directing future exploration and analysis. Possible questions for further investigation include:

- How many Intake and Housing First enrollments occurred during this WER season?
- Are Housing First clients using WER services clustered around certain agencies?
- Of the 20 Housing First graduates using WER, how many returned to the Housing First program, how many stayed housed, and how many experienced a return to homelessness?
- For graduates and individuals currently enrolled in Housing First, what motivates their use of WER services?

Outbound Referrals

Staff members at drop-in facilities often refer clients to resources based on their expressed needs. Some of these referrals were recorded into ETO, although there may have been many other indirect referrals that were not recorded. In the interests of simplicity, three categories of referrals were recorded in ETO: (1) referral to emergency services, for example police and ambulance; (2) referral to non-emergency services, which essentially includes any other service, including addiction treatment, food bank, among others; and (3) referral to housing, which could include Housing First or other resources. Of the 183 referrals that were made and recorded into ETO for this season, 50% were made to non-emergency services and 34% to housing.

Outbound Referrals	BSCS Bus	BSCS Drop-in	EDLS	JPHAWC	MOSAIC	SA	TOTAL
Number of Referrals in the date range	21	N/A	89	21	39	13	183
Number of unduplicated participants referred	20	N/A	50	19	34	11	134
Referred to Emergency Services	1	N/A	13	4	3	7	28
Referred to Housing	2	N/A	26	14	17	4	63
Referred to Non-Emergency Services	18	N/A	50	3	19	2	92



Service Delivery Details & Agency Reports

This section provides summaries of written reports, photos, and other information submitted to Homeward Trust by agencies at the end of the WER period. It is organized into three subsections:

1. Higher Volume Drop-in: Boyle Street Community Services
2. Winter Warming Bus: Boyle Street Community Services
3. Lower Volume Drop-ins:
 - a. Edmonton Do Likewise Society – The Neighbour Centre
 - b. Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre
 - c. The Mosaic Centre
 - d. Salvation Army Crossroads Community Church

Program	Budget Amount	Claimed Amount	Provincial	Federal	City	Drop-in Capacity	Hours of Operation	Total Recorded Visits
Salvation Army Drop-in	\$116,116	\$116,114		\$116,114		200	Monday to Saturday 8:30am-5:30pm; total of 54 hours of drop-in service per week	2398
BSCS Drop-in	\$476,041	\$476,040	\$476,040			180	Monday - Friday from 6:00 am to 9:00am, and 5:30pm to 9:00pm and on weekends and statutory holidays from 6:00am - 9:00pm; total of 62.5 hours of operation per week	39769
BSCS Warming Van	\$210,149	\$207,353	\$71,549	\$135,804		N/A	Monday to Saturday from 2:00-10:00pm and Sundays from 1:00-9:00pm; total of 56 hours of operation per week	5623
EDLS Drop-in	\$72,287	\$70,466			\$70,466	25-45	6:00pm-9:30pm 7 days a week; total of 24.5 hours per week	4555
JPHAWC Drop-in	\$78,666	\$78,303			\$78,303	140	7:00-10:00pm Monday to Friday and 5:00-10:00pm on weekends and holidays; total of 25 additional hours per week	2252
E4C - Mosaic Drop-in	\$98,080	\$97,954		\$97,954		45	5:00-9:00pm Monday to Friday and 4:00-9:00pm on weekends and holidays; total of 30 additional hours per week	4514
Total	\$1,051,339	\$1,046,230	\$547,589	\$349,872	\$148,769	565		59111

Higher-Volume Drop-in: Boyle Street Community Services

Regularly scheduled programming and activities are provided through the day, as well as support and assistance with basic needs such as light meals, clothing, socks, winter gear, and first aid supplies. Supported referrals for both internal and external support services (detox, intox, mental health and housing) are offered.

Successes and Partnerships:

Many who access the WER program experience the hardship of physical limitations, legal constraints, addictions and mental health challenges, which often present as barriers to service access. The drop-in is critical to the continuity of service during the non-operational hours of many of the other inner-city agencies. Individuals accessing the WER program are provided the opportunity to have their basic needs addressed initially, with the understanding that there may be underlying complex needs which will require connection to supports such as Mental Health or Adult outreach services.

In order to maximize the opportunities for individuals to receive service, the drop-in works closely with other BSCS programs that have existing partnerships with organizations such as Streetworks, the Learning Center, The Bissell Center, Kahkiyaw and Bent Arrow. Partnerships with the other inner city agencies to provide alternative programming or support specifically during the winter months were created. For example, staff from the Hope Mission and Mustard Seed came to work part time for the winter program and their experience and relationships that had already been established with individuals was very valuable.



Photo of the Boyle Street Community Services Drop-in.

Winter Warming Bus: Boyle Street Community Services

The Winter Warming Bus provided basic needs items similar to that of the drop-in, as well as information and referrals. This program is absolutely crucial in reaching individuals who are on the outskirts of the city and not accessing services downtown or at other drop-in sites. For some, the Bus is where they go for help if needed. It follows a relatively consistent route, although there is flexibility in locations for stops in response to calls from individuals.

The regular stops for the Winter Warming Bus included:

- Mosaic Centre
- Centennial Bottle Depot
- Old Strachona Bottle Depot
- Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre
- South Side Memorial Chapel parking lot
- Save On Foods parking lot @ 112 Avenue & 82 Street
- Safeway parking lot at 118 Avenue & 82 Street
- Oliver Square parking lots
- 7-11 on 109 Street and 102 Avenue
- Mac's on 113 Street and Jasper Avenue

Successes and Partnerships:

Cross-referencing the Winter Warming Bus participant roster with client lists from other programs allows staff to identify where Bus participants are being engaged in other programs and from there are being housed.

In addition to providing information about resources such as the food bank, the Bus works quite closely with other BSCS programs, most notably but not exclusively the City Wide Street Outreach program. The Bus also partners with other WER providing agencies when appropriate. Along with meeting immediate needs and assisting with access to services, the Bus provides a constant, friendly face and a connection for people who may otherwise feel disconnected.

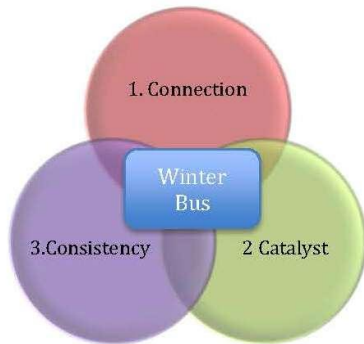
In Their Own Words: A Client Perspective on the Winter Warming Bus

Between January and March 2013, Caitlin Tighe, a sociology graduate student from the University of Alberta, worked with Homeward Trust and Boyle Street Community Services to complete a small, exploratory project investigating the perspective of those who use the winter warming bus on its services and its role in connecting them to housing. The project was facilitated through the university's Community Service Learning program, and supervised by Dr. Sara Dorow. Caitlin spent 12 hours on the bus over three different evenings, and conducted 18 informal interviews with clients, as well as conversations with bus staff and bottle depot staff. The findings from these interviews and observations are summarized on the following page.

Excerpt from *In Their Own Words: A Client Perspective on the Winter Warming Bus*
 By Caitlin Tighe – Sociology 518 Student, University of Alberta

KEY THEMES

<i>Connection</i>	<i>Catalyst</i>	<i>Consistency</i>
Clients often expressed strong connections with the bus and the bus staff. The terms respect and trust were common. These connections serve as the groundwork for promoting change.	In some cases, the bus functions as a catalyst for making the first step towards securing housing. Working from a place of established connection, the bus is well positioned to be the catalyst for change.	Substantial barriers exist for many clients when seeking out help. The consistency of the bus service is key to sustaining on-going success. Clients know they can depend on the bus to be there.



Comments from the Clients of the Winter Warming Bus

1. Connection

"The bus is very important to a person"

"...but without a doubt, people respect this bus. It really helps guys like me out"

"They're always on time ... they treat us well. They help out a lot of people and I really respect that"

"They're telling me the truth! I gotta do more...to keep myself going"

"Like, they're really great people. They helped me out a lot."

"...they're decent people, and they do the best they can."

"I respect this bus"

2. Catalyst

"...and they try to house ya and get ya to try to straighten around and trying to get people off their addictions. Yea... counsel, help counsel and give em' direction."

"...they said they cut off the housing program for a while... so that's why I just talk to [staff]."

"I ended up coming back...and then the bus was still here and stuff so I was talking to them, and then eventually I met some lady who worked at [place of employment] and had a conversation with them and got that job"

"...they can steer you in the right direction. If you don't know, then he'll know. And just kind of divert. You're never left high and dry."

3. Consistency

"...it takes a lot, to live in a place. And they just can't do it, because they...for whatever reason, they don't fit into society. Society comes in, and tries to make it more comfortable for them"

"Can't depend on nothin'. Well, you can depend on this bus that's about it."

"Year round service would be really good...people are still homeless in the summer."

Lower-Volume Drop-ins

Total Visits by Agency

The lower volume visits incurred 16% – 33% of the visits.

LOWER VOLUME AGENCIES	EDLS	JPHAWC	MOSAIC	SA	TOTAL
TOTAL VISIT COUNT 2012-13	4555	2252	4514	2398	13719
Percentage of Total Visits	33%	16%	33%	17%	100%

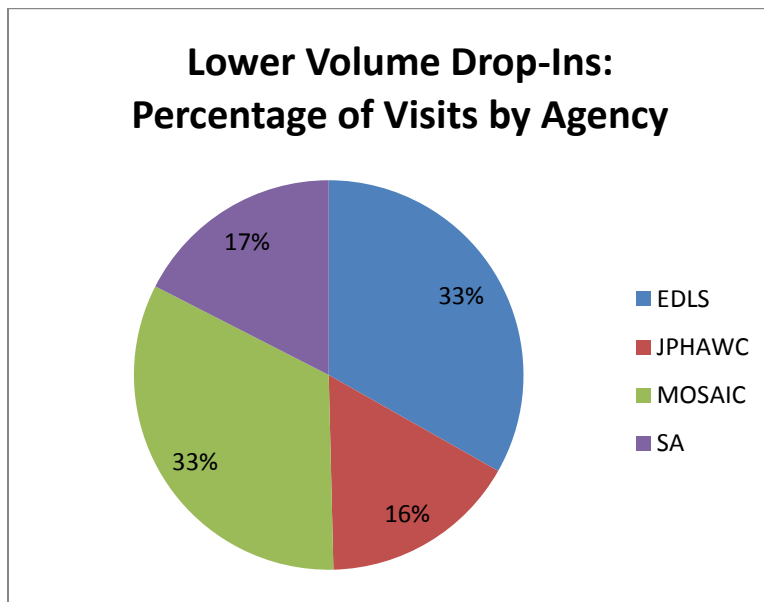


Photo of the Mosaic Centre on Fort Road after a major snowfall.



Photo of a garden at the Edmonton Do Likewise Society's Neighbour Centre.

Edmonton Do Likewise Society – The Neighbour Center

The Neighbour Center serves as a place to be heard and experience genuine human connection and care. Basic needs resources including light meals, clothing, and access to showers and laundry was provided. Access to computers was provided, which were used extensively by individuals to assist in pursuit of housing and employment.

Successes:

The Neighbour Center was a new addition to the WER program, providing a drop-in and resource center on the south side of Edmonton. The center continues to develop and expand its range of resources, and is anticipating the implementation of a foot care program which will be run by volunteers of the Edmonton Do Likewise Society who are registered nurses and public health care nurses. Establishment of an advocacy program is currently underway, running two afternoons a week to provide access to a Registered Social Worker, a Social Work Student, and another volunteer being trained in Advocacy. The program will work to address barriers in access to services.

The Neighbour Centre also hosted three students from the University of Alberta's Criminology program who chose to do their field placement with EDLS. Each of these students developed projects that helped the Centre: one around the complexities of Agent Status, another around a strengths-based programming model called the Good Lives Model, and another around principles of restorative justice and how they could be applied to restoring individuals with behavioral issues to our community.

In February 2013, an AHS registered nurse and an assistant made themselves available for private health consultations on-site two days a month, serving as a vital link to the health care system for those who have barriers to accessing health services. In March, the center was approached by Periosmart Mobile Dental Hygiene Services to discuss facilitating a dental hygiene clinic two days a month, which now provides service one morning every week.

While the Neighbour Centre is not providing programming specific to housing, the staff do work to connect individuals to services and resources required in addressing their needs, including three individuals and one couple who have been assisted in securing housing.

Partnerships:

Keeping in mind the needs of the individuals they serve, as well as that of the surrounding community, the Centre has worked diligently to establish a presence on the south side. A community initiative is being planned to conduct a clean-up of the surrounding area with volunteers from the Centre and local neighbourhood. EDLS and the Old Strathcona Business Association have been exploring the possibility of developing a partnership that would see benefit to both EDLS and the surrounding community. Exceptional relationships have been built with businesses in the Old Strathcona area, including nearby Starbucks and Save-On Foods. Support is provided by the Family Pantry, which gleans bread and other baked goods from area bakeries, and connections have been made with the Garneau Food Security Group and the Edmonton Food Bank. Regular visits from the BSCS Outreach Team and the Bissell 24/7 Map team provide linkages to housing and services for individuals.

Jasper Place Health & Wellness Centre

The center is a safe place for those in need, working to engage community members through providing meals, access to basic needs provisions and personal care. Those who utilize the center are supported by referrals to the Housing First program where appropriate, or by referral to the appropriate program for their needs such as emergency shelters or affordable housing.

Successes:

The center experienced a higher number of individuals accessing services than in previous years who were sleeping rough or couch surfing and relied on the centre for shelter, food and winter clothing or blankets. The Winter Warming Bus was key in providing transportation to overnight shelter. In addition to those who are experiencing homelessness, the program is of value to those clients who have housing but are extremely low income. Appreciation has been expressed with regard to the community, resources and meals that are available during extended evening hours.

Working to connect individuals experiencing homelessness with necessary services, Jasper Place Health and Wellness Housing First outreach workers met on a weekly basis with those who were referred by the WER staff. The focus was to meet with those who were “sleeping rough” and who were assessed by WER staff as open to the opportunity of securing housing. Many of the individuals who did not meet the criteria to qualify for Housing First were given information on other low cost housing options or referred to shelters for temporary housing.

Partnerships:

The center has a variety of established partnerships and dedicated volunteers working to contribute to a sense of community and provide a welcoming atmosphere for individuals. Examples include:

- Four churches from the neighbourhood working together to provide weekly meals
- Youth groups from West Meadows Baptist Church, West Edmonton Christian Assembly and Beulah Alliance Church volunteered on a monthly basis.
- U of A Nursing practicum students put on movie nights and spa nights
- Bi-weekly jam sessions/pizza nights
- Lee Nohos, businessman from the community, provided Sunday night dinners
- Several area schools collected socks, winter gear and pennies for bus tickets
- Monthly volunteers for haircuts
- United Way Coats for Kids
- Watch and Pray group

The Mosaic Center

Staff provided a secure, warm and comfortable place, out of the winter elements. Healthy activities, aimed at building strong, cohesive community were offered. Staff and volunteers worked on building relationships with community members. Individuals were intentionally engaged in conversations centered around housing status, needs and desires, encouraging movement and offering supports and referrals towards positive change. Basic needs provision such as clothing, blankets, personal care items, food or transportation.

Successes:

During WER hours referrals made to the Mosaic Centre day program where staff were able to assist in providing continuity of service in meeting individual needs. Countless hours were spent advocating for clients with services appropriate for their needs, Examples include:

- Alberta Works and AISH
- Catholic Social Services
- Edmonton Public Library
- ID Program
- Bissell Centre
- Boyle McCauley Health Centre
- BSCS
- Hope Mission
- Salvation Army
- YMCA
- Edmonton Police Seniors Benefits
- New In Town, Bent Arrow
- McCullough Rehabilitation
- AADAC Detox
- Child and Family Services
- Employers
- Make Tax Time Pay sites
- Landlords
- Martyshuk Housing

An evening Alcoholics Anonymous program was established and ran during the winter. It was well attended by many community members and has since had to discontinue with the end of the WER program. Clients requested continuation of extended hours through the summer identifying the need for reliable mentoring and healthy activity choices within their community. Mosaic Centre's client history shows proof positive of the importance of consistent support during the stages of change stabilization and the need for community.

The Mosaic Centre staff are currently trying to assist in excess of 100 people who are living without shelter, couch surfing or using shelters. Through the WER program, an increase in requests for housing assistance has been observed. In the absence of formal housing programming, several individuals were assisted in securing housing. This was possible due to positive relationships the center has built with landlords, with the assistance of local EPS beat officers and the generosity of private community members.

Partnerships:

Several business, churches and school groups offered hot meals for those visiting the center. They provided nourishment through the meals offered as well as through the time they spent visiting and listening to community members. Those who volunteered found the environment to be positive and expressed that it encouraged them in their personal formation as they learn about the reality of poverty and the need for social justice.

Positive relationships were built and mentoring developed and strengthened as a result of the extended hours. People were encouraged when they saw effects of healthy lifestyle choices made by their peers and staff and were drawn to ask how they could achieve the same. As a result they are now striving to realize their own goals.

Salvation Army

The Salvation Army works very closely with those experiencing homelessness, as well as people in need of employment opportunities, help with resumes, and families in need of extra food, clothes, and financial help (budgeting). The goal is to restore hope and dignity to those who might otherwise remain invisible in society. Basic needs provisions are provided in the form of clothing, food, accommodation, life skills training, and counseling.

Successes:

The drop-in works to engage those who may be skeptical of staying in a shelter or who are sleeping rough. In the absence of potential barriers to service such as registration fees or entry requirements, the drop-in center is a loving place for individuals with nowhere to call home can interact with others and have a positive experience with service providers.

Individuals accessing the center have a designated contact who can provide them with information on shelters, drop-in centers, housing, and food services, as well assistance in making their way into recovery. Through the Salvation Army there are 22 service providers that are tied into the Community Support Resource referral-based program. Examples include:

- Adult ministries
- Anchorage addiction treatment program
- Chapel service
- Cornerstone Transitional Residence
- Food Assistance Program
- Income Tax Preparation
- Seniors service
- Men's aftercare, short term, and long term residences

Drop-in center staff participated in the success of formerly homeless individuals who had secured housing, offering support and guidance to assist with maintaining their tenancy. It is evident that having a structured program allows people at the drop-in center to help others in the same situation as them. Individuals accessing the WER program expressed appreciation with regard to the extra service hours and the knowledgeable staff contributing to the success of the program.

Partnerships:

In addition to providing access to the variety of services within the Salvation Army, the network includes drops ins of all sizes and diverse philosophies serving men, women, youth and families. Connection to the church for those who desire it is provided, and individuals are assisted in attending services.

Looking Forward

Integrated Data Collection

Key Learnings and Recommendations

Many of the learning pains related to data collection this year will naturally lessen as we move forward. In particular, the substantial work, trouble shooting and ongoing revision associated with development of a brand new ETO program has laid a significant foundation upon which we can improve next year. Based on feedback from agencies and Homeward Trust administration, recommendations for addressing the challenges outlined above are offered:

Data Collection Tailored to the Context

Customized strategies need to be developed to support effective and efficient data collection and entry in the higher-volume drop-in. Staff capacity, familiarity with ETO, internet infrastructure and computer equipment vary across agencies. Some agencies may require additional training, equipment, dedicated staff or other resources to support consistent data entry.

Implement System of Monthly Data Monitoring

Regular monitoring and feedback regarding data completeness would support teams in ensuring accurate data entry on a month-to-month basis, and facilitate early identification of any missing or problematic data. Additionally, monthly meetings are an opportunity to share interim findings and data analysis plans to help agencies understand why data is being collected and how it can be utilized.

Direct Data Entry into ETO

Barriers to directly entering data into ETO should be identified and, where possible, addressed. Direct entry of data online through ETO would significantly reduce the staff time required for re-entering paper records, as well as the opportunity for error in data re-entry.

Opportunities

- **Understanding Client Trajectories:** For clients who are enrolled in both WER and Housing First or Intake, pull additional data to determine program start dates and assess whether WER enrollment preceded or followed Housing First enrollment.
- **Longer Term Analysis:** If data collection continues in ETO in future WER seasons, it will be possible to assess how consistent individual WER clients are year-to-year, and to monitor linkages with Housing First and hopefully other housing-related services.
- **Integration with ETO Enterprises of Service Providers:** BSCS has its own ETO license and uses ETO for case management and data collection purposes for many of its programs in addition to Housing First and WER. If WER data could be linked to data in other ETO enterprises, we could substantially advance progress on a city-wide HMIS, and better understand the pathways for intra-agency referrals between programs.

WER Service Delivery: Challenges and Opportunities

Each WER service provider contributed feedback regarding key challenges encountered over the 2012-13 season, as well as recommendations for next year and opportunities for improvement of WER services. While some agencies face unique challenges based on their location, clientele and other programming, most of the concerns and suggestions summarized below were shared across agencies.

Challenges

- **Staff recruitment, training and support:** The limited time between funding approval and program launch leaves agencies scrambling to recruit sufficient staff and train them prior to the commencement of service delivery. Staff in settings with higher volumes of clients are challenged to provide consistent and adequate individualized support. Staff stress, burnout and turnover are concerns in a number of the drop-ins.
- **Shortage of housing, shelter and detox options:** While all agencies noted some success in connecting individuals experiencing homelessness to housing options, there continue to be challenges to responding to the housing needs of all WER users. Agencies noted that the city's affordable housing shortage, high emergency shelter occupancy rates, and wait times to access housing programs and detox placements all presented barriers to responding to the immediate and longer-term shelter needs of WER clients.
- **Limited donations and supplies:** Some WER service providers experiences shortages of emergency needs items due to the high volume of requests. Winter gear, socks and underwear, bus ticks and infant supplies were often in the shortest supply.

Recommendations and Opportunities

Collaborate with other Agencies, Service Providers & Resources

Partnerships with other key social and health service providers could expand the programming and relevant services available to individuals and families who access the WER program. Agencies provided a number of specific suggestions for collaboration opportunities:

- Hold an orientation for all WER staff featuring critical service providers such as EPS (Victim's Services, PACT Team), Streetworks, FASD specialists, and more, to build connections and awareness of how different service providers can work together to support WER participants.
- Develop partnerships across inner city agencies to support WER or alternative programming in the winter months. Promoting WER program employment opportunities to part time, relief and shift staff at other agencies could contribute to a more consistent and experienced staff base for the WER program.
- Work with post-secondary institutions and training programs to connect practicum students with WER agencies for placements in the areas of social work, addictions and health.
- Establish a partnership with Alberta Health Services to facilitate access to health care professionals on location at the drop-ins and Winter Warming Bus. Foot care is a particularly important component of the emergency needs response provided by the Bus and some drop-ins. On-site access could facilitate improved connection with mainstream health services.

Facilitate Access to Information on Shelters and Housing Availability

Some of the WER agencies noted the need for improved communication and information pathways between WER service providers, housing agencies and shelters regarding bed availability and program wait times. For WER providers that do not also have housing teams, direct access to housing information and support is required to effectively support WER clients' efforts to make positive change.

Increase Lead Time for Program Planning

Over the past few seasons, funded agencies have consistently highlighted the challenge of completing program planning, staff recruitment and training when there is little time between WER program approval and the service launch date in November. Initiating program planning discussions, and confirming funding decisions earlier in the summer or autumn would facilitate adequate staff recruitment and more comprehensive and consistent training with the goals of improving service delivery and reducing staff burnout and stress. Two agencies noted plans to hire a small number of full-time staff to provide consistent service to clients, as well as leadership, training and support to part-time and temporary staff.

Improve Donation Management

The current practice of each agency managing their own winter clothing drive requires significant staff time and resources. Centralized collection, storage and distribution of items based on agency need could support a more consistent supply and more efficient management. Additionally, either coordinated or agency-by-agency social media strategies could increase community awareness, volunteer recruitment and the reach of donation appeals.

Facilitate Sharing & Capacity Building across Agencies

Monthly WER Committee meetings present an important opportunity for agencies to learn from and support each other regarding their WER programming. Instead of holding monthly meetings at Homeward Trust, they could be rotated between the drop-ins, with the host agency offering a short presentation on an initiative of interest or a problem for group discussion. Meeting on-site at the drop-ins would also show support for frontline staff and volunteers, and enhance understanding of the specific needs, issues and concerns at different agencies. Such meetings would also build a stronger sense of community amongst WER service providers and support mutual learning and improved services. One agency also suggested initiating a monthly drop-in newsletter to share stories of interest, successes and new initiatives.

Offer Alternative Sober Drop-in

BSCS noted that it can be very challenging for individuals trying to deal with addictions when the only place they have to go to spend days, evenings and weekends is an environment where many individuals have active addictions. Increased transportation options to help clients access other agencies and drop-ins, or a dedicated alternative sober drop-in could help provide individuals who are trying to address their addictions with more supportive options.

Appendix A: Integrated Data Collection

Background and Rationale

Over the past year, Homeward Trust has made progress in the development of Edmonton's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). An HMIS is an electronic, community-wide system for collecting person-level information over time on individuals and families experiencing homelessness and the services they access. Edmonton's HMIS is more than a database; it should be a tool to facilitate the implementation and refinement of our community's system for helping people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Homeward Trust uses the Efforts to Outcomes™ (ETO) as case management software for Housing First teams, and as the platform for Edmonton's HMIS. We are working with the province and local agencies to expand and coordinate consistent data collection through ETO to support the development of a comprehensive, system-level view of community efforts and performance. Starting in 2012, for the first time ETO was used by five drop-in centers and the winter warming bus to capture data from the Winter Emergency Response (WER) program. More integrated, consistent data collection between Housing First teams and WER service providers will inform approaches to better track and engage people who continue to depend on drop-ins, and connect them to housing and other support services.

Data collection in ETO for winter warming centers begun in 2012 will inform approaches to better track and engage homeless people who are not actively seeking housing and continue to depend on drop-ins and shelters even in the winter time. With more linkages between Housing First teams and winter warming drop-ins, and consistent data collected between them, people who frequent winter warming centers across Edmonton or are engaged by the winter warming bus will have a conduit for accessing housing and support services or referrals to mainstream services.

Data Collection Implementation Process

ETO Development

New programs were created within Homeward Trust's Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) enterprise to facilitate the collection of WER program data. The WER program ETO design reflected a number of considerations, including:

- The minimum data set required by the software to distinguish unique individuals;
- Comparability with central elements of the data set collected in previous years;
- Ease of data entry for frontline staff;
- Integration and alignment with data elements in other programs within the Homeward Trust ETO enterprise;
- Expected program outputs; and
- Anticipated and potential unanticipated WER program outcomes.

For all previous WER seasons, drop-in centers and the winter warming bus collected a tally of the total number of visits received each day, along with some basic demographic information about visitors, and

an approximate record of emergency needs supplies and services provided. The ETO WER program was designed with the capacity to track the same key fields – winter warming visits, demographics, and emergency needs provision. The key change this year is that ETO facilitates registration and tracking of unique individuals, and integration of WER data with Housing First and other program data.

Training and Technical Support

Homeward Trust provided ETO training to all WER program managers or their delegates in October 2012. The training focused on providing managers with familiarity and competency necessary to provide ongoing training and support to their staff. Additionally, ongoing support was provided by a Homeward Trust ETO administrator, who provided technical support, trouble shooting and advice to all agencies upon request throughout the WER season.

Data Entry

Data entry processes varied across the different WER service providers. The types of service, volume of visitors and human resource and equipment resources available necessitated different approaches to recording data. Most agencies continued with the practice from previous years of recording information on paper as visitors arrived at the WER service, and then entering this information by computer afterwards. For one of the six agencies, Homeward Trust recruited six volunteers over the span of three weeks to enter data onto excel spreadsheets from paper records.

Due to the very high volume of visitors at the BSCS drop-in, an alternate process for data entry was developed. The time required to enter each individual into ETO was simply not feasible for staff, particularly given that many drop-in visitors did not give last names and therefore could not be linked to previous ETO entries. Workers elected instead to record the minimum data set on paper as people entered the drop-in. A Homeward Trust ETO Administrator supported the drop-in to develop an Excel workbook into which data could be directly entered, eliminating the need for paper forms and the extra step of data entry. The plan was to then batch upload the Excel data into ETO.

Data Cleaning

In the month following the completion of the WER program, Homeward Trust liaised with each agency to check for data completeness and to resolve any potential discrepancies or duplicates. The data cleaning process occurred as follows:

1. **Identify potential duplicates:** Lists of clients entered by each agency were checked by Homeward Trust for possible duplicates, based on similarities in first name, last name, and date of birth and/or demographic characteristics. Agencies were provided a list of potential duplicates and, based on staff knowledge and agency records identified any confirmable duplicates. Homeward Trust then merged duplicates within each agency's ETO site.
2. **Merge confirmed duplicates:** Homeward Trust conducted "enterprise-wide" duplicate checks within ETO. This process identified entries under different agencies that are likely the same individual. The individuals' multiple ETO files are then merged to support tracking and enumeration of unique individuals across different service providers.

3. **Check for dates without data:** Lists of visits and emergency services recorded by date were used to identify any dates for which agencies had not entered any data. Homeward Trust then followed up with each agency to determine dates of closures or missing data.

Results

Data completeness

Across the five agencies that used ETO for WER data collection in 2012-13, the majority of clients registered were entered into ETO with the minimum data set of First Name, Last Name and Date of Birth. Individuals who refused to give any part of their personal information were not refused service. In all instances where an element of the key data set was missing, staff entered an identifiable place holder in ETO. The nature of services provided and clientele served meant that some agencies served higher proportions of individuals reluctant to share personal information. In some cases, clients who initially refused to share their name did so later in the season after building relationships with staff – in these instances, their ETO records were then updated with the accurate information.

Agency	# unique individuals identified	% records with FN, LN, DOB	# days missing data
BSCS Bus	644 (ETO)	53%	4
EDLS	167 (ETO)	85%	5
JPHAWC	359 (ETO)	88%	5
Mosaic	466 (ETO)	58%	6
BSCS Drop-in	N/A (Excel)	N/A	53 (includes days where AM or PM data is missing)
Salvation Army	978 (Excel)	76%	N/A (data entered by month, not by day)

New Reporting and Analysis Capacity

The new ETO data collection process has opened up possibilities for monitoring and understanding the WER program and its clients in new ways. The section “WER Usage Patterns” later in this report highlights many of the new dimensions of data analysis made possible through the ETO system. In particular, we are able to monitor the following key indicators for the first time:

- Number of unique individuals accessing WER services;
- Proportion of clients who are frequent and infrequent WER visitors;
- Client movement between the winter warming bus and various drop-in centers; and,
- Clients who access WER services and are currently or previously enrolled in the Housing First program.

What we learned

As expected in any pilot effort, there have been many challenges, but also many lessons and new insights gained related to data collection over the 2012-13 WER season. The ETO system and computerized data collection in general was new to most agencies, and required staff and managers to learn new software and think about their service tracking in a new way. A series of factors affected the speed and extent of adoption of the new system, and the quality and completeness of data collected. These factors include:

- Volume of visitors
- Staff to client ratios and staff time availability
- Manager and staff comfort with computer technology
- Internet infrastructure and hardware quality
- Client willingness to divulge personal information

Challenges in Different Settings

Delay in ETO Launch

Due to the development, testing and revision work involved in designing, building and launching new ETO programs, there was a short delay at the beginning of the season before ETO was launched and fully operational.

Software ‘Bugs’

At the beginning of the WER season, a key feature of the ETO software which identifies potential duplicates as new individuals are entered was not working. This resulted in duplicate entries that later needed to be merged.

Data Collection in a Higher-Volume Drop-in Setting

The volume of visitors at a drop-in centre has a significant impact on the feasibility of detailed data collection. At the higher-volume drop-ins, it is challenging for staff to record unique individuals and track the various emergency needs and other services each individual accesses at the drop-in. As noted under the section of Service Delivery Details & Agency Reports, under Higher-Volume Drop-in, BSCS Drop-in experiences a substantially higher volume of daily visitors than any other drop-in. Additionally, because many BSCS drop-in visitors arrive directly from downtown emergency shelters, the centre sees long morning line-ups of visitors rushing to enter from the cold weather. The registration of individuals risks becoming a bottle-neck and it is imperative to keep data collection as efficient and stream-lined as possible. Clients who re-enter the drop-in multiple times per day get frustrated with answering the same questions repeatedly, and in some cases start refusing to answer. Due to the size and business of the BSCS Drop-in, tracking the food, emergency supplies, referrals and other on-site services accessed by each client presents a significant challenge.

Staff Time Required for Data Entry

Agencies noted entering data in an unfamiliar system (and the increase in the minimum data set) required additional staff time. Service providers endeavor to maximize staff time available for client

interaction, so it is imperative to have efficient, stream-lined data collection, or to have additional dedicated staff resources to ensure complete and accurate data collection.

Additional Staff Training Required

Some agencies indicated a need for additional staff training in ETO. The relatively short timeline between staff hiring, program launch and ETO launch left some agencies struggling to simultaneously implement and train on data collection protocols.

Paper Records and Data Entry

The practice of recording information on paper and then later entering it into ETO created an additional data entry step, requiring additional staff time, and increasing risk of error and omission in data entry. Additionally, paper records require adherence to all relevant storage protocols to protect client privacy.