



**Edmonton Winter Emergency Response
2009- 2010
Funded Projects Report**

Edmonton Winter Emergency Response 2009-2010 Homeward Trust Funded Projects Report

Highlights:

- \$714,787 in funding was provided by the Government of Alberta. Homeward Trust administered this funding to four drop in locations and a van service. These projects were funded from November 1, 2009 until April 30, 2010.
- 102,316 visits took place, and 185,080 meals were served through the five WER projects.
- Services offered included rides to shelters, meals, referrals to other agencies, and calls for medical aid if needed.
- Agencies did not report any major incidences over the course of the WER projects.
- Shelter usage was down during the WER period, which could be attributed to many factors, including the Housing First projects.
- Nearly 77% of visitors were observed to be male, while nearly 22% were observed to be female.
- Nearly 51% of visitors were observed to be Aboriginal, 42% were observed to be Caucasian, and the remaining 7% were observed to be either of another ethnicity, or new immigrants.
- Of the visitors, 29% were observed to have mental illness, while 47% were observed to be under the influence. Agencies indicated that they were seeing more clients with mental illness this year, and needed better training and resources to help with this issue.

Overview:

Homeward Trust Edmonton (HTE) is a community-based, comprehensive housing organization that provides leadership and resources towards ending homelessness in Edmonton. We fulfill our mandate by leading initiatives and programs, engaging community stakeholders and partners, conducting research, creating awareness and funding housing and support projects.

Homeward Trust was created in 2008 out of the merger of the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund and the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing. Since 2001, Homeward Trust and its predecessor organizations have disbursed over \$100 million in funds for capital and support projects. We have been able to leverage those funds to attract an additional \$122 million in funds from other groups. We have funded 275 projects in total, including 80 capital projects representing over 1900 housing units.

In 2009, the City of Edmonton and the Government of Alberta both adopted 10 year plans to end homelessness. Homeward Trust is a key organization in the management and implementation of the goals in these plans. With the support of all three orders of government – the Government of Canada provides funding through its Homelessness Partnering Strategy – we are making progress towards ending homelessness in Edmonton.

In October 2009, Homeward Trust presented the Government of Alberta and the Winter Emergency Response (WER) partners with its Winter Emergency Response Plan. The Plan outlined the types of

activities and supports required to support people experiencing homelessness during the harsh winter months, and a contingency plan for severe weather conditions.

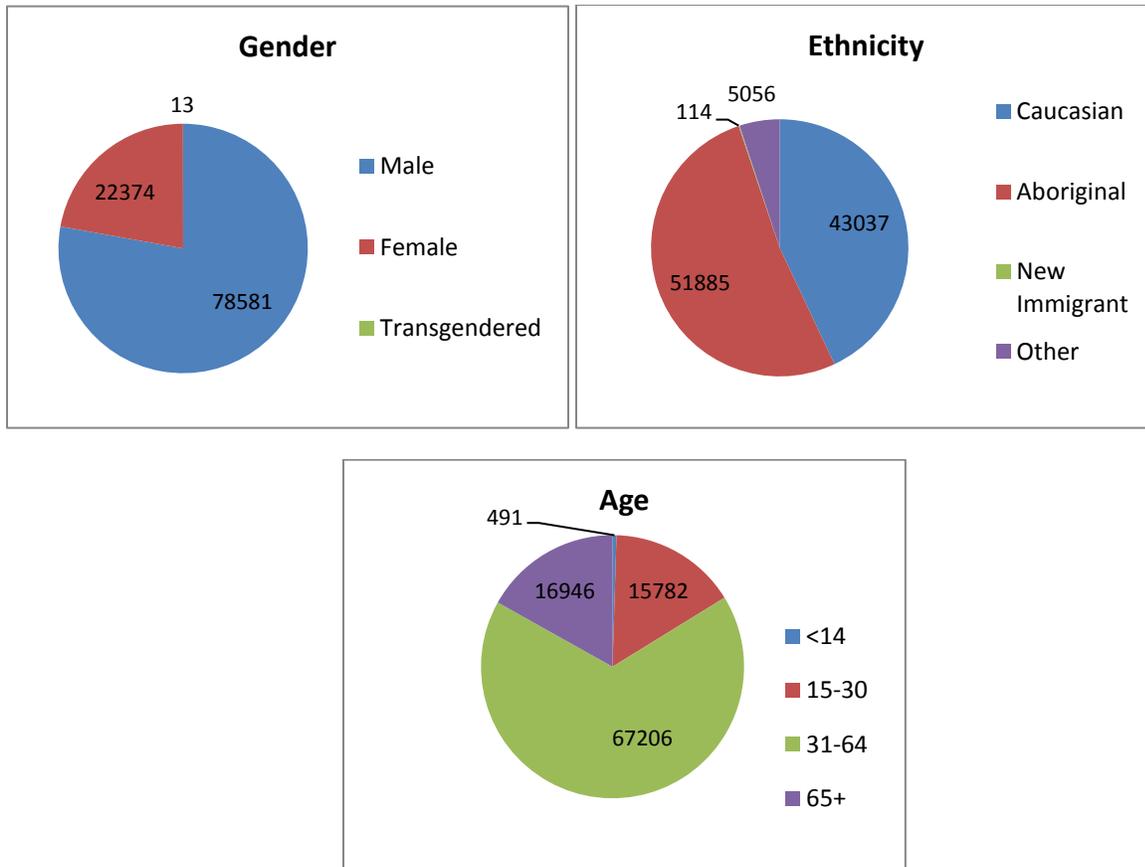
The 2009-2010 Winter Emergency Response ran from November 1, 2009 to April 30, 2010. During this time, Homeward Trust administered \$714,787 in funding provided by the Government of Alberta. The five projects funded by Homeward Trust during this Winter Emergency Response period include drop ins at Boyle Street Community Services, Fort Road Victory Church, Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre, and Salvation Army Edmonton Crossroads Community Church, as well as the Boyle Street Community Services Winter Warming Van. As a result of this funding, drop in warming centres, outreach van services, staffing, and food for the Winter Emergency Response programs were able to serve homeless, and at-risk of homelessness clients throughout the city. Thanks in part to these projects, no major incidences or deaths occurred as a result of the cold weather this winter. Over the course of WER, 102,316 visits took place, and 185,080 meals were served.

The role of Homeward Trust throughout the winter months was to administer the financial contracts of each of the drop ins and the warming van, coordinate bi-monthly meetings of the Winter Emergency Response Committee, collect and analyze the data provided by the agencies, and conduct the reporting. Homeward Trust acted as the administrative and financial agent to Winter Emergency Response.

The Winter Emergency Response Committee consisted of Homeward Trust and its partner agencies including Boyle Street Community Services, the Salvation Army, Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre, Bissell Centre, Hope Mission, and Boyle McCauley Health Centre, as well as government representatives from the City of Edmonton, and the government of Alberta. The committee met bi-weekly through the WER period in order to address issues experienced by the agencies, the progress of the response, data collection, and various other topics. These discussions have helped with the coordination efforts of the WER, as well as will help to guide future plans.

Demographics:

The WER projects served people who needed to stay warm from the cold. As such, many of the clients served came from varied backgrounds. Of the 102,316 visits, 76% were observed to be male while 50% were observed to be aboriginal. This compares to the 69% of the Homeless population counted in 2008 that were observed to be male, and the 38% of those counted in 2008 that were observed to be aboriginal. The following charts give a better picture of the demographics agencies saw during the 2009-2010 WER projects.



*Data was collected from the agencies daily through the use of Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey is a free online survey software and questionnaire tool which allows us to customize our questions through which we can collect, review, edit, and download the responses into usable formats. Questions were asked about the number of visits, gender, ethnicity, and age of the visitors, the services provided, whether visitors included families with children, and if the agencies observed that clients were under the influence, or were perceived to have mental health issues.

Van Services:

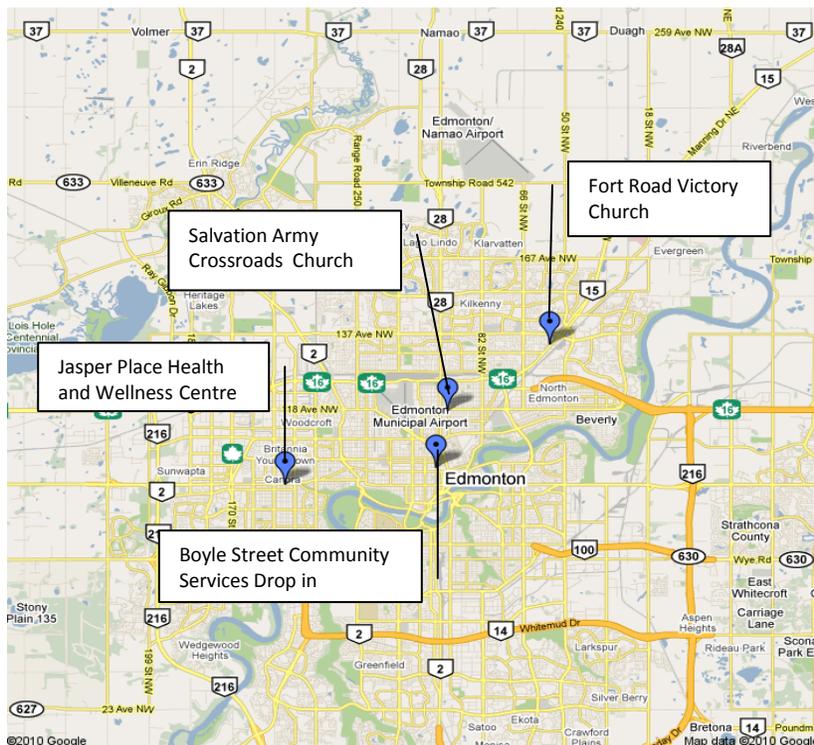
The winter warming van has provided many services for its clients. According to Boyle Street the van had a consistent route throughout the city. It also responded to any phone calls which indicated that there were people in distress.

The van served two functions this winter. The first function was that it ensured the safety of the people who were sleeping rough. It provided clients with rides to shelters and warming centres, referrals to other agencies, some food, warm dry clothing, and blankets. It occasionally acted as transportation to the hospital.

The second function of the van was to create and build relationships with the clients. The van's staff members have indicated that they were able to refer clients to detox, rehabilitation programs, housing programs, medical treatment, and employment. These types of relationships and referrals occur in the van, and also through the outreach that the van staff do throughout their days.

Drop Ins:

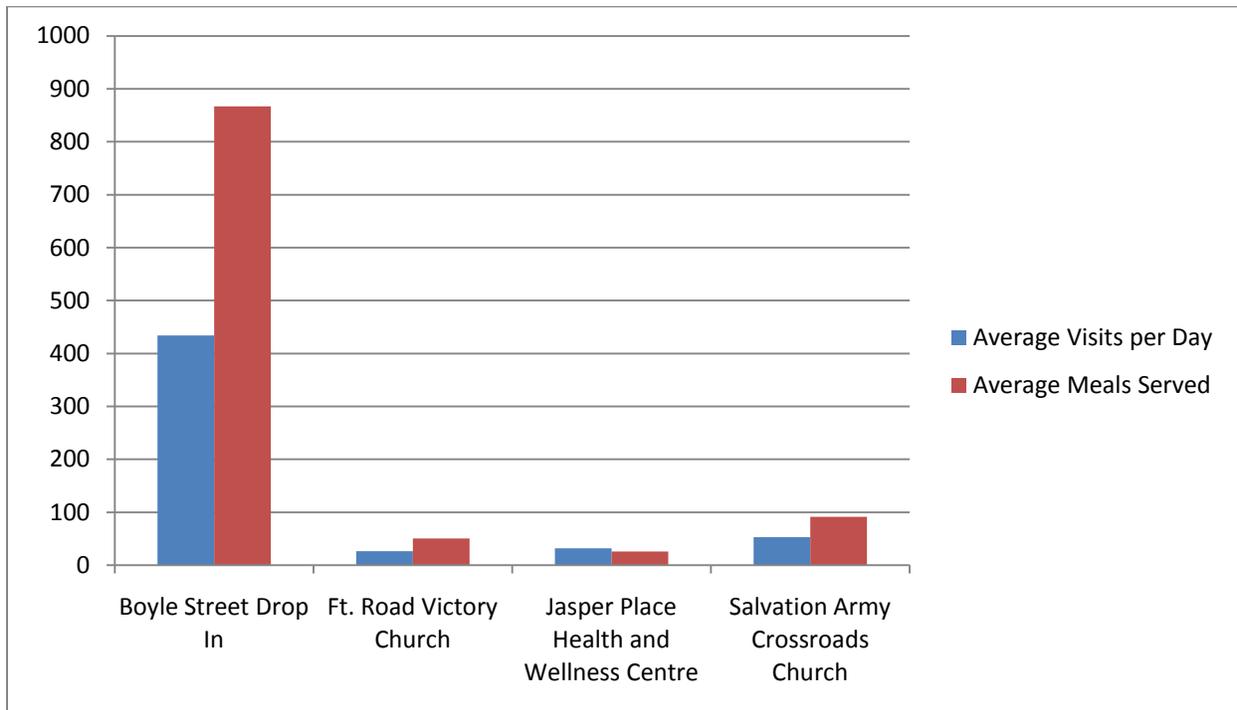
The drop in locations have been mapped out below using Google maps:



The agencies funded to extend their drop in hours over the course of WER include Boyle Street Community Services (BSCS) drop in, Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre (JPHAWC), the Salvation Army Edmonton Crossroads Community Church (E3C), and Fort Road Victory Church. The drop in warming centres provided clients with a place to come for a meal, entertainment, community, and the opportunity to stay out of the cold. Each of the agencies mentioned that a key aspect of the winter warming project was the ability to build relationships with the clients who participated in the programs. Through these relationships, agency staff members were able to refer clients to other services, including housing.

The extension of hours at the drop in centres covered the critical time when shelters and other agencies were not open, thus keeping more people inside and warm, and not facing the elements. They were located throughout the city, ensuring that various communities, including the North East, West End, and downtown area, had access to their services.

Some of the drop ins saw high numbers of visits throughout the winter warming months. The Boyle Street Community Services (BSCS) Drop in operated above the 200-300 estimated visits, instead averaging 434 visits per day. It was anticipated that the Salvation Army Crossroads Church (E3C) would be serving 50 individuals per day during drop in hours. In reality, the drop in served an average of 53 individuals per day.



Services provided by each of the agencies included meals, referrals to other agencies, and rides to the nearest shelter. Meals tended to include soup, sandwiches, coffee, tea, and juice. The van transported the clients to shelters to ensure that they would be sleeping in a warm, safe location. Referrals to other agencies would have included everything from contact information for Housing First programs, detox, shelters, health services, as well as other locations where clients could receive a meal. Drop-ins also collected data on the number of trips to the hospital and calls to EMS that were made on behalf of clients.

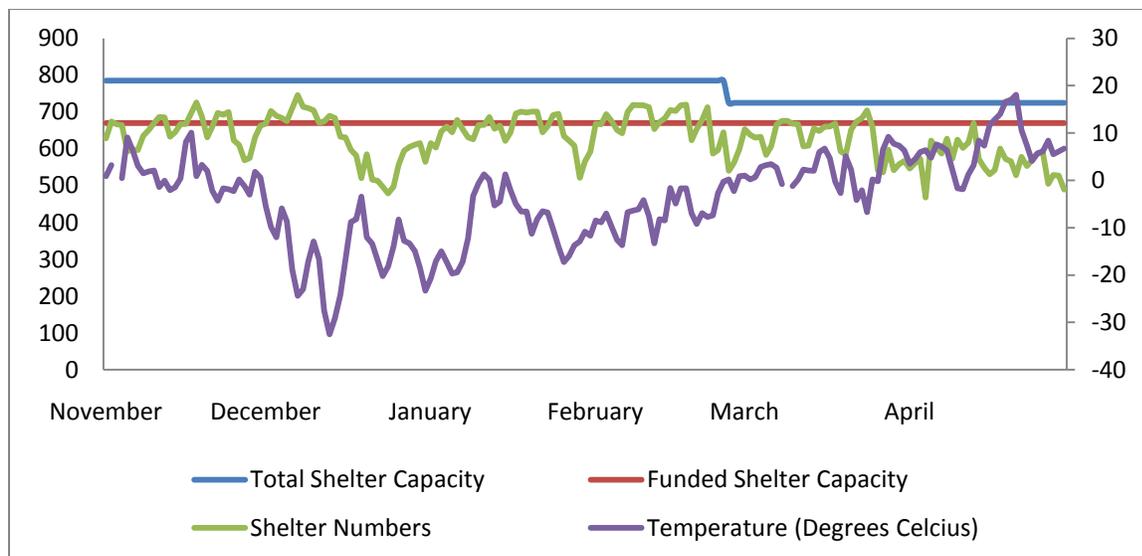
The following chart displays the range of referrals and services offered by the WER projects.

Agency:	# of Meals Served:	# of Van Riders:	# of Referrals to other Agencies:	# of Trips to the Hospital:	# of Calls to EMS:
BSCS Drop in	157,793	0	4,088	42	131
BSCS Van	4,128	2,155	76	1	0
JPHAWC	4,848	802	44	2	2
E3C	12,237	44	152	3	1
Victory Church	6,074	594	0	0	0
Total:	185,080	3,595	4,360	48	134

Shelter Usage and Mean Daily Temperature

By all accounts, shelter usage went down this year. This could be due to a number of factors, including the success of the Housing First programs. As of February of this year, Edmonton’s Housing First Program has housed 546 people, making up a total of 424 households. Of these 546 individuals, 29% (158) are considered Chronically Homeless, previously sleeping in a place that was not meant for human habitation, and/or in an emergency homeless shelter¹.

The following chart reflects Edmonton’s Emergency Shelter² capacities and the usage during the Winter Emergency Response time period of November 1, 2009 until April 30, 2010. This chart reflects the mean temperature for the Edmonton City Centre weather station³ for the same period of time. When comparing the data sets, look for the lines to be moving in opposite directions. As temperature goes down, shelter usage tends to go up, showing that there is a correlation between shelter usage and colder temperatures. It should be noted that the total shelter capacity changed from 785 to 725 due to the closure of 60 emergency mats at the George Spady Centre at the end of February, 2010.



¹ The Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness, [A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years](#), (October 2008), pg 7.

² Shelter data is distributed through The Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness’ “Alberta Daily Shelter Summaries”.

³ Mean daily temperatures were taken from “National Climate Data and Information Archive” [Environment Canada](http://www.climate.weatheroffice.gc.ca/climateData/dailydata_e.html?timeframe=2&Prov=XX&StationID=31427&Year=2009&Month=11&Day=1) <http://www.climate.weatheroffice.gc.ca/climateData/dailydata_e.html?timeframe=2&Prov=XX&StationID=31427&Year=2009&Month=11&Day=1>.

Major Incidences

No deaths were reported due to extreme weather. The majority of the agencies indicated that they had to contact police or ambulance in order to obtain the appropriate level of support for various smaller incidences throughout the winter months. Fortunately no agencies reported deaths; however, agencies did report that clients entered the facilities with injuries obtained outside of the warming centres.

Winter Emergency Response Projects 2009- 2010

Homeward Trust Edmonton entered into five funding agreements with Edmonton area agencies that provided services, food, and/or shelter to the homeless. The following is a synopsis of the projects funded, what went well, who was served, challenges encountered, lessons learned, and the amount of funding provided throughout the program. The following comments and statistical information were provided by the WER agencies.

Boyle Street Community Services- Extended Drop in Hours

Project Description

Extended drop in hours at Boyle Street Community Services began on November 1, 2009 as per the agency's contract with Homeward Trust. Extended hours include weekends and statutory holidays when the centre is open from 6 am to 9 pm and weekdays from 6 am to 9 am and 5:30 pm to 9:00 pm.

The primary task of the Winter Emergency Drop in is to address short-term survival issues (e.g., personal crisis, emergency housing, and first aid). The drop in staff also served as a link to other programs at Boyle Street and the broader community.

The drop in staff met a range of immediate needs faced by people who are homeless: food, clothing, personal hygiene products, warm blankets and connections to other supports in the community including shelters. The drop in offered breakfast and lunch every day, and a range of recreational activities including games, books, crosswords, movies, sports nights, and special events like dances, or our first Homeless Olympics), access to telephones on evenings and weekends.

Who Was Served

The largest percentages of clients served were of aboriginal heritage between the ages of 31-50. On average, more than 50% of all clients using the drop in services are aboriginal. 80% of the clients who visited were male, while 20% were female.

What Went Well

- Low staff turnover this year helped create some consistency in service delivery.
- Breakfast and lunch service was much improved and helped keep the peace.
- Increased recreational programs were well received by community members.
- The winter team worked well together and had opportunities through staff meetings and situation de-briefs to voice opinions and identify needs.
- Working closely with the Safe Communities project at Boyle Street has bridged the gap with Edmonton Police Services and allowed staff to create relationships with our beat officers, to ensure safety in and around the building.

Challenges

- The number of people using the services in the drop in was consistently high over the course of the winter.

- There were many newcomers to the winter drop in this year, particularly on weekends and evenings. In many cases, this required building relationships from scratch.
- There was a consistent need for first-aid, often taking up considerable staff time.
- Facilitating the transportation of clients to area shelters at the end of the day was an ongoing challenge.
- Safety in the building and the immediate surrounding area required constant vigilance.
- Community volunteers were used on a regular basis but this can also be taxing on our staff as supervision is required.

Lessons Learned

- Staffing levels should be higher during weekends.
- Serving meals at tables may also add to the peace of the drop in.

Homeward Trust Approved Contribution: \$400,000

“I have been coming to Boyle Street Community Services’ drop in off-and-on for a few years. If I didn’t go there, I could easily freeze in the winter. It’s also a good source of information. The people at Boyle Street are really helpful and can provide me with information about housing, AISH and many other things. But when the weather is inclement, it’s a warm place to come in from the cold – and there’s almost always lunch! The food is fantastic – far better than you’d expect. This is also a meeting place for me. I have made a lot of friends and acquaintances.” – Julian S. BSCS Drop-in Client

Boyle Street Community Services- Winter Van and Outreach Service

Project Description

BSCS provided outreach and transportation service to individuals in need of emergency shelter in and around the City of Edmonton. Through this project, transportation was provided (2 pm to 10 pm seven-days-a-week) from selected areas in Edmonton to available shelter beds or other safe accommodation for people who were stranded and had nowhere to spend the night. This service was coordinated with the other WER projects. Safe measures (blankets, clothing, hot drinks, referrals and information on staying safe) were provided to clients who refused rides. The outreach service included time on the street and in communities finding people who were at risk. A follow-up service was provided to people who utilized transportation services to address their personal circumstances in an effort to avert the recurrence of the same emergency.

Who Was Served

- Van visited an average of 20-40 clients per night.
- Half of the contacts made during a typical day required transportation to downtown shelters.
- The vast majority (about 90%) of community members served by the winter van faced addiction issues.

What Went Well

- Strong experienced outreach workers best serve the needs of the individuals.
- Consistent route worked well.
- Majority of clients who did commit to follow up were successfully supported.

Challenges

- Limited training opportunities for Outreach workers.
- High demand and high numbers.
- At times, follow up by the client was difficult to accomplish.
- Limited or no access to community services as most are closed in the evening.
- Tools for documentation from funder need to be revised.

Suggestions/Recommendations

- A core set of outreach diagnostic tools would best equip a large outreach delivery.
- Entry level counselling should be mandatory for new hires.
- Extended hours of service would be beneficial.

Total Homeward Trust Approved Contribution: \$207,379

Fred lived year round in a camp he'd built near Clareview. He'd been homeless for 13 years. Boyle Street Community Services outreach van staff made frequent visits to him, checking on his well being and telling him about the services that were available to him. After many conversations and a long process of building trust, Fred decided he wanted his own real home. After van staff made a number of arrangements with Boyle Street, Fred went for a medical and he packed his bags. He's been there since January and he says he's really happy. He says if it hadn't been for Boyle Street's staff, he would never have found his own place.

Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre (JPHAWC)

Project Description

The Jasper Place Health and Wellness Centre was host to the Winter Emergency Response Program. The program started on November 2 and ran until April 30th. The center was open Monday through Friday from 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm. The main goal of the program is to give people a safe, warm and friendly place to stay for a few hours, while also meaningfully engaging clients and building relationships.

Who Was Served

The drop in served a variety of people including the homeless, mentally ill, people with addictions, lower income people, and families.

What Went Well

Several things worked well. The maximum capacity of JPHAWC is 100 people, which allows for more control of the atmosphere of the building. The rules of the centre have helped to keep staff safe and better able to engage and help clients. These include rules that do not allow intoxicated clients to enter the centre, as well as not allowing clients to return the same day after they've left, preventing the drop in from become a safe haven for those who engage in criminal activity.

Challenges

A challenge was the number of clients with mental health issues using the drop in, and determining how best to interact with those clients. Another challenge is preventing clients who are under the influence from entering the centre without the client becoming confrontational with staff.

Lessons learned

Lessons learned include not letting clients who appear to be intoxicated into the drop in, if at all possible. It has been found that those under the influence can make it more difficult for staff due to the potential for threats, yelling and swearing. Another lesson learned is to be more understanding and prepared to deal with mental health issues.

Homeward Trust Approved Contribution: \$95,708

Salvation Army Crossroad Church

Project Description

To provide a warming center to those who are homeless and/or at risk to become homeless from November 1, 2009 to April 30, 2010.

The Salvation Army Edmonton Crossroads Church also liaised with other shelter/centers in the city to ensure that all clients, if at all possible, had a place to go.

Who Was Served

The Salvation Army Edmonton Crossroads Church served individuals, including adult men and women as well as younger families or teens on the street.

What Went Well

Staff members engaged clients on the hard issues of homelessness and mental illness. They found that most of the people were more than willing to talk and wanted to find ways of getting the help they needed.

Challenges

Security was always an issue due to an increase in clients with mental illness and addictions issues. This is most definitely on the rise resulting in the police and EMS being called more frequently. Most programs and detox were full so it was hard to get people in.

Most of the people who came through our doors this year are really tired of the street and tired of their unhealthy lifestyles. This was a welcomed surprise. However, it is also a hard lesson to learn and accept that though they want the help, there are limited resources yet in place to help them. But overall, the desire is there.

Homeward Trust Approved Contribution: \$100,000

Fort Road Victory Church

Description of Project

This project provided a winter emergency drop in facility with daily meals and social activities during the months of November through April. The meals vary from soup and sandwich to casseroles to the occasional turkey dinner on special occasions. The meals are not announced in advance so there is no expectation on what will be served and on what day. The focus of the program is to provide a warm shelter for homeless and down and out people, where they can feel a sense of community, be involved by building relationships with the staff as well as other clients.

Who Was Served

The warming-centre saw a wide variety of clients, including individuals, families, homeless, and at risk of becoming homeless.

What Went Well

Activities included crafts and beadwork, game playing – crib and bingo, game shows, news and movies on television, hair washing and haircuts, puzzles, card making, clothing night and many other socially interactive activities. These activities created an atmosphere where staff and clients interacted and developed relationships.

Challenges

- Knowing more about the housing program and resources available in order to assist the clients in a greater capacity.
- Although there were some regular clients, the challenge to see people daily sometimes waivered resulting in numbers fluctuating. Being able to spend more time with clients and being more actively involved in their lives may assist with the consistency of attendance.
- It is difficult to build a relationship over six months and then see the clients irregularly for the next six months. Many times this can put the client back at square one.

Homeward Trust Approved Contribution: \$80,000

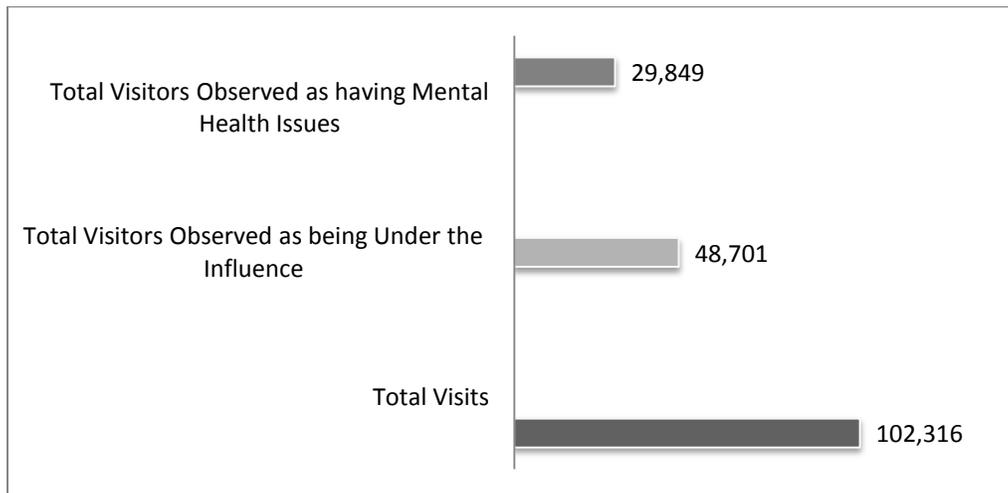
Clifford, otherwise known as baby, spent countless hours with the staff of WER and has built up the confidence to pursue housing on his own. Currently he has had a home for 3+ months and has been in contact with the church via email and phone to let us know how he is doing. He has finished detox and is now sober and very happy and confident. Clifford is currently taking a cooking course to further his skills.

Joint Learning/Recommendations:

In order for the Winter Emergency Response to continue to improve and work to the benefit of Edmonton’s homeless population, recommendations for the future must be taken into consideration. In particular, four areas seem to be of universal concern for the agencies: training, staffing, resource guides, and security.

Agencies have indicated that there needs to be consistent, formal training for the Winter Emergency Response staff. Training was recommended in order for the agencies involved to have well trained staff members that are better capable of handling situations that may arise which are unique to the warming centres. Homeward Trust has suggested hosting a training session for all WER staff in person at our offices. This training could be filmed and posted online for any new staff members to use after the project has commenced.

In particular, agencies stressed that training should be provided on mental health issues. Agencies have indicated that more than 29% of the visitors to the drop in have some kind of mental illness, while greater than 47% of visitors have been perceived to be under the influence. The following chart shows the total number of visits reported, alongside the number of visitors that Winter Emergency staff perceived to be under the influence, or had mental health issues.



*The data in this chart is reflective of the number of visits to the drop ins over the course of November to April. The number of visits in no way reflects the total number of clients with mental illness visiting the sites, as individual clients who exhibit these characteristics may visit the same drop in daily, or multiple times per day.

A further recommendation related to training is that each of the winter warming sites contain a resource manual of some kind in either a hard copy, or electronic form which contains reference material on housing first, services, mental health supports, etc. In this manner, all of the information can be found in one location, and consistent information will be given to each site. This will further help staff

provide referrals to clients who need their support. This would also help to support Winter Emergency Sites with providing their clients with a link to housing first resources.

Security seems to be another concern mentioned by many of the agencies. It is recommended that there be some training on security for the various agencies. The development of a best practices guidebook would also be of use for the development of security regulations for the agencies.

For the sake of transparency, and open data, it has been recommended that Homeward Trust will keep weekly or monthly up to date statistics on its website in order for other organizations, the public, the media, etc to have access to the data collected by the winter warming projects. Not only will this show who is being served, but it will provide a clearer picture of what winter warming is and does. These statistics will be updated weekly or monthly by Homeward Trust staff with the data provided by the participating agencies.

WER Project Financials 2009/10

				Provincial \$\$ HT Administered
Balance forward WER 08/09				\$ 229,413
2009/10 Financial Commitment				\$ 714,787
Total Funding		\$ 944,200	\$ 944,200	\$ 944,200
		Approved Maximums	Actuals Spent	
BSCS	Van & Outreach	\$ 207,379	\$ 195,705	\$ 195,705
BSCS	Extended Drop In	\$ 400,000	\$ 400,000	\$ 400,000
BSCS	Street Works	\$ 2,287	\$ 2,287	\$ 2,287
Salvation Army	Extended Drop In	\$ 100,000	\$ 83,472	\$ 83,472
JPHAWC	Extended Drop In	\$ 95,708	\$ 95,708	\$ 95,708
Victory Church	Drop In/Soup Kitchen	\$ 80,000	\$ 79,041	\$ 79,041
Totals		\$ 885,374	\$ 856,213	\$ 856,213
Uncommitted Funds Available		\$ 58,826	\$ 87,987	\$ 87,987