

Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness

Terms of Reference

MISSION:

The Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness (the Coalition) works as a collective to plan, coordinate, recommend and implement community responses to homelessness (see Appendix A for definition of Homelessness)

MANDATE:

- Work with all levels of government, including First Nations, Metis and their respective agencies, the private sector, housing providers, faith groups and non-governmental organizations to develop a community action plan to end homelessness in the Comox Valley.
- Utilize existing information and acquire additional information as required; build an action plan to address the identified health, economic and social needs of people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless which includes a continuum of appropriate, adequate, safe and supportive housing (see Appendix A for definition of Continuum of Housing).
- Help to develop and support local low-barrier housing initiatives such as subsidized housing, supportive housing, emergency shelters and transitional housing (see Appendix A)
- Determine a set of action priorities for the next five years and coordinate efforts to achieve those priorities in conjunction with all of the community partners and all levels of government
- Pursue a coordinated public awareness program to build community understanding and support for people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless and the action plan.
- Monitor progress, evaluate initiatives and prepare annual progress reports to the Comox Valley community and their elected representatives.

VALUES AND OPERATING PRINCIPLES:

Members and advisories of the Coalition wholeheartedly commit to collaborating on the priority, as identified by the coalition, of the people in the Comox Valley who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. Therefore, the agencies will commit to endorse the projects selected by the Coalition. The Coalition will:

- Speak with one voice to address the priority needs of individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness in the Comox Valley.
- Use a process of consensus for decision-making (see Appendix A for definition of consensus).
- Operate from an inclusive, participatory, transparent and respectful basis in evaluating, planning and implementing actions to address homelessness.
- Be action orientated and focused on results and outcomes and impacts on people who are homeless, at risk of being homeless and the community as a whole.
- Use collaborative strategies in all its efforts to end or prevent homelessness be it housing and/or support services, including funding advocacy.
- Liaise with all community stakeholders and encourage their active participation in meeting the goals of the Coalition.

- Incorporate the principles of “housing first” and “harm reduction” and work towards providing a continuum of housing solutions. (See Appendix A for definition of Housing First and Harm Reduction)
- Identify and advocate for selected projects that address gaps along the continuum of housing and support services targeting the full spectrum of age and population groups served by Coalition member agencies.

MEMBERS:

Members in the Coalition will be comprised of representatives of community stakeholders from a diverse cross section of organizations including, but not limited to:

- Representative members from service provider organizations
- Faith Groups
- Health Agencies
- Community Groups
- Private Sector
- Not for profit Housing Providers
- Community Service Clubs

Organizations will be asked to appoint one representative. Member organizations may send an alternate to a meeting in the absence of the appointed representative. Member organizations may be added at any time by consensus of the group.

LEADERSHIP TEAM:

In March of every year the Coalition Coordinator will ask for expressions of interest from members to take on a role on the Leadership Team. The Coalition Coordinator will report back in May, and at the June meeting the new Leadership Team will be determined for the following year.

The new Leadership Team members will begin their term in June. In the event that a Leadership Team member has to leave the role before their term is up, the Coalition will select another member by consensus as soon as possible who will carry out the duties only for the remainder of the term. The role of the Leadership Team will be to coordinate the activities of the Coalition and bring items for discussion and decision forward to the members.

ADVISORY:

Advisory organizations and individuals may include, but are not limited to:

- Government Agencies (e.g. VIRL, BC Housing, Social Development, MCFD)
- Local Government (Non-elected officials)
- RCMP, CVRD Emergency Services, Correctional Services, BC Transit
- Elected Local, Provincial, First Nation and Federal representatives
- Members of the Public
- Private Housing providers
- Chamber, BIA
- Community Justice Centre

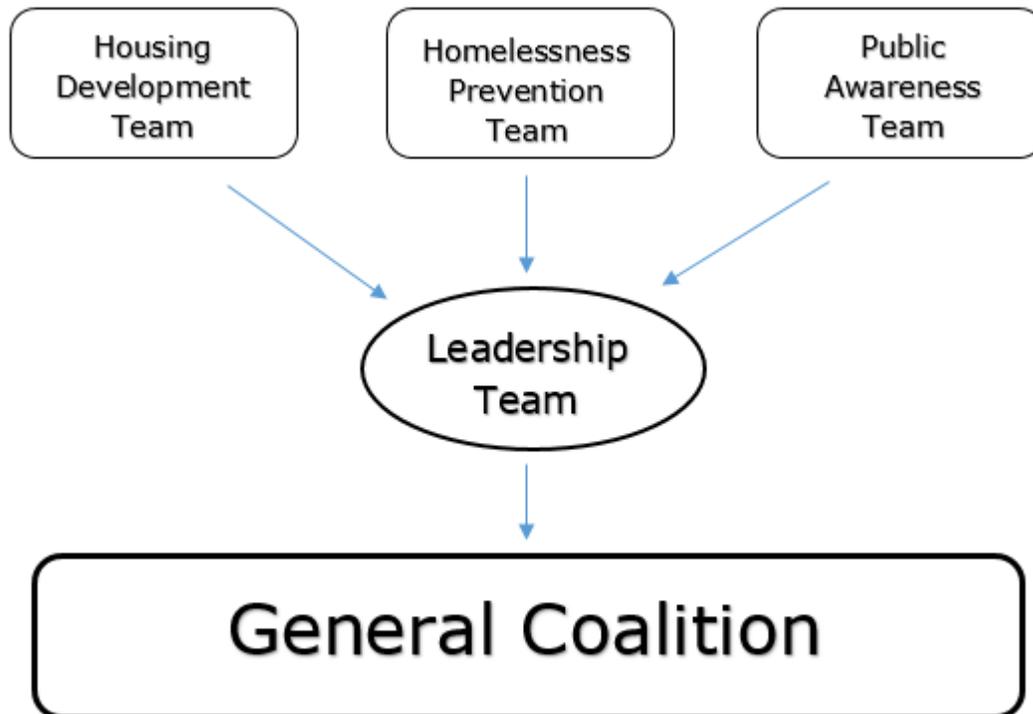
Advisory organizations may be added at any time by consensus of the Members.

MEETING PROCEDURES:

- The Coalition shall meet according to a determined schedule
- Special meetings shall be at the call of the Leadership Team or at the request of any three Members of the Coalition.
- Decisions will be made by consensus of the Members at a meeting. There needs to be a minimum of 50% of members at a meeting to make a decision. Advisory organizations and individuals will participate in the decision making through discussion at the meetings.
- All meetings will be held in open session and in a location accessible to the public.
- All Coalition teams will aim to meet together on a quarterly basis to discuss challenges, successes, opportunities and to share information

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS:

Coalition teams will identify and share issues, opportunities and action-oriented ideas with the Leadership Team. The Leadership Team is responsible for bringing forward items for discussion and decision-making to Coalition members. The Coalition discusses and makes decisions based on a consensus basis, speaking with one voice.



CONFIDENTIALITY:

- Where any Member wishes to raise and/or discuss confidential information, it is the responsibility of that Member to advise other Members that the information is to be treated as confidential.
- Members agree not to divulge any and all confidential information.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

- Members must declare interest or conflict of interest prior to meetings or as the situation arises (see definition of Conflict of Interest in Appendix A).

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

1. HOMELESSNESS (Source: Campbell River Homelessness Task Force Terms of Reference)

There are many definitions of homelessness which have been developed by various other communities and studies. For the purpose of these Terms of Reference, homelessness is defined as follows:

Absolute Homelessness

Individuals and families who are living in:

- Public spaces without legal claim (e.g. living in the bush, on the streets, in abandoned buildings, in tents);
- A temporary or emergency shelter or safe house;
- A public facility or service (e.g. hospital, care facility, rehabilitation or treatment center, correctional facility) and cannot return to a stable residence; or

Individuals and families who are:

- Financially, sexually, physically or emotionally exploited to maintain their shelter. (difficult to identify - drug houses, prostitution.)

Homelessness due to crisis

Individuals and families who are:

- Homeless because their previous residence became uninhabitable due to a human caused or natural disaster (e.g. fire, flood).

Risk of Homelessness/Hidden Homelessness

Individuals and families who are living in:

- Temporary accommodation where they do not have control over the length and conditions of tenure (e.g. staying in a guest room, name not on lease, couch surfing, two or more individuals who are double bunking in a single room because appropriate housing is not available);
- Time-limited housing designed to help them transition from being homeless to living in a permanent form of housing, e.g. transitional housing or second-stage housing;
- Accommodation where tenancy will be terminated within three months (e.g. given notice by landlord for a variety of reasons which may include tenant behavior).

2. CONTINUUM OF HOUSING: (Source: <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/visions/housing-and-homelessness-vol4/housing-glossary>)

Permanent: Long-term housing with no maximum length of stay.

Transitional: Time-limited, affordable, supported or independent housing. Tenants can usually remain in transitional housing for up to 2 or 3 years.

Emergency: Short-term shelter for people in crisis. Some emergency shelters also provide meals and support services to the people who stay there.

Supported/Supportive: Housing where the tenants have access to support services on the premises in addition to housing. These services vary and can include:

- Life skills training: income management, job training, medication management
- Medical care
- Social activities
- Problem substance use rehabilitation programs
- Case management

Scattered Site: Housing units are spread out in apartments in various locations around the city rather than all in one common building. These apartments may be either market or social housing.

Dedicated Site: Housing units that are placed in a common building where all the tenants are part of the program.

Subsidized: Housing that receives funding from the government or community organization. Tenants who live in subsidized housing pay rent that is less than market value.

Social Housing: Housing provided by the government (public housing) or a community organization (non-profit housing).

Private Market: Rental housing that is run by private landlords rather than a housing program.

3. CONSENSUS:

Consensus decision making is defined as, when the member “can live with” the decision of the group. A clear and common understanding of the issues is achieved by each member having the opportunity to express their opinion and for hearing the rationale and concerns of all the other members.

4. HOUSING FIRST: (Source: Campbell River Homeless Task Force Terms of Reference)

Means the provision of permanent low-barrier, supportive housing with a focus on harm reduction. The goal of “housing first” is to immediately house people who are homeless no matter what is going on in their life. The “housing first” principle is based on the premise that people will be accepted with substance abuse and/or mental illnesses rather than turning those people away. Research indicates that by first providing housing, other issues are also more effectively addressed.

5. HARM REDUCTION: (Source: Harm Reduction Coalition)

Harm Reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use. Harm Reduction is also a movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for the rights of people who use drugs. – Harm Reduction coalition

6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST: (Source: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/conflict-of-interest.html>)

A situation that has the potential to undermine the impartiality of a person because of the possibility of a clash between the person's self-interest and professional interest or public interest