



UNLOCKING POTENTIAL BC's Affordable Housing Conference



Mo4 - PHRN Panel: Planning for Affordable, Equitable, Walkable Housing

Centralized Access to Supported Housing (CASH), Victoria, BC



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Background

Homelessness in
Victoria, BC

- More than 1700 people are homeless in one year (Pauly et al., 2013)
- More than 1,000 are in need of permanent housing on a single night (Albert et al., 2014).



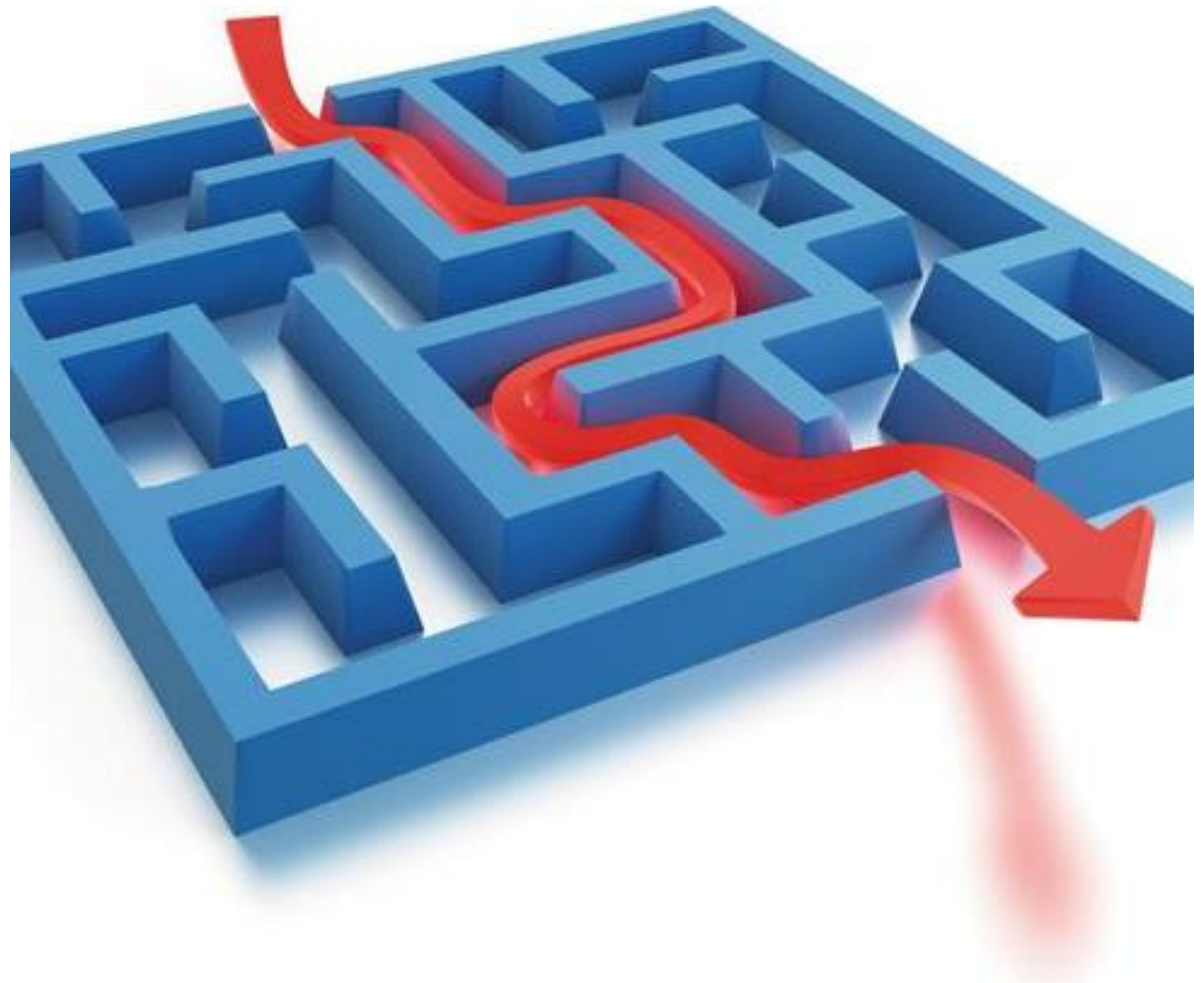
Centralized or Single Point Access to services

Proposed
Benefits:

Easier Access

Efficiency

Effective use of
resources






What is the background?


CASH, Victoria

- CASH was initiated in Victoria in May 2012 under the auspices of the Service Integration Working Group (SIWG), Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness.
- Six partners provide access to 976 housing units for people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness
- CASH creates and manages the waitlist for these housing units.
- CASH has three fulltime staff, 2 program facilitators and one administrative assistant.



What are the CASH Program Objectives?

- A fair and equitable process for all people accessing supported housing in the Greater Victoria area.
- A single community supported housing application that can be completed and submitted by any agency. CASH supports the motto - “Any door is the right door”.
- Efficient use of community supported housing resources and timely referrals.
- Transparent, clear selection and referral process.
- Shared best practices amongst housing providers.




Why was the evaluation conducted?

- To provide insights into the current operations of CASH including successes, challenges and impacts of the program.
- To determine the extent to which the CASH program was effective in meeting its intended objectives.
- To identify the consistency of CASH principles with principles of Housing First.



- To determine the level of participant, staff and partner agency satisfaction with the CASH program particularly in relation to the referral process in terms of fairness, equity and transparency.
- To identify recommendations that would increase the overall effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction with the CASH program.



How was the evaluation conducted?

- A descriptive case study design was used as it aims to understand how programs such as CASH operate in the real world.
- Data sources included interviews, observations, program documents and statistics.
- 30 one on one interviews were conducted with clients, referral agents, housing providers, CASH staff and funding and community partner groups.

“I had to actually ask what CASH stood for, and that was just a month ago. But when they said ‘CASH referral’, I didn’t know that it was an acronym, so I’m thinking cash referral, I’m thinking, okay, cool!”

...a client participant



Who is referred to CASH?

CASH Program - Quick Facts

- 67% males (1490) and females 32.5% (720) and < 1% transgendered
- Twice as many males as females have been referred to CASH.
- 19% (425) of those referred are Aboriginal
- There are two or three times as many referrals to CASH as available spaces at any given time.

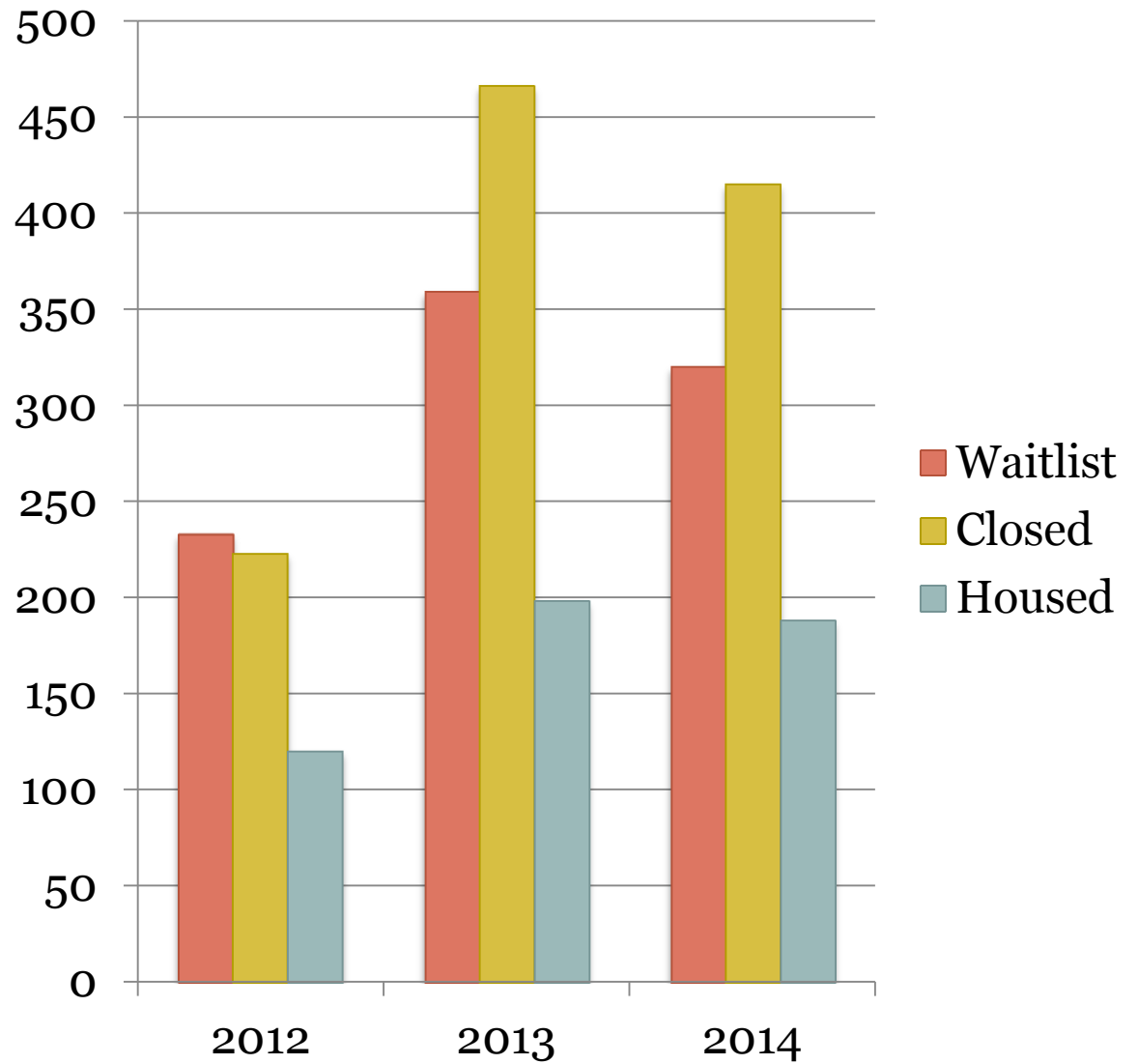


CASH Selection Process

How are individuals identified to be on CASH waitlists?

- A selection committee composed of a manager from each member organization and Island Health meets twice weekly to review and identify referrals suitable for wait listing through CASH.
- Each referral selected for wait listing is scored between 0 and 80 based on level of need.
- Individuals are placed on the waitlist of at least one CASH program deemed suitable to their needs.

Year by Year 2012-2015





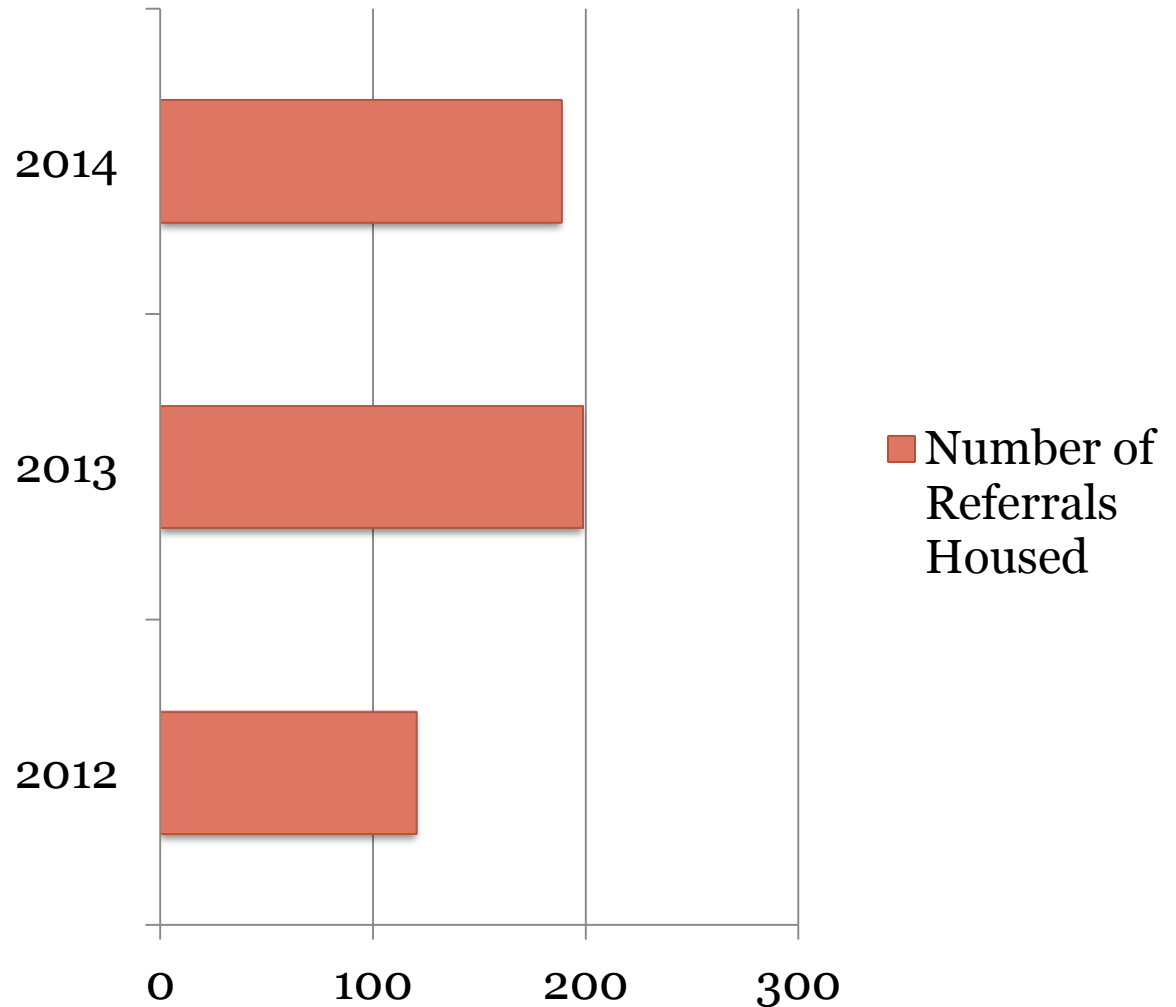
Who is Housed through CASH?

Twice the number of males, 68% (381) compared to 33% female, (189) referrals were housed.

20% (113 referrals) identifying as Aboriginal were housed.

Median age of those housed is 44 years. Age Range: 19-61 years.

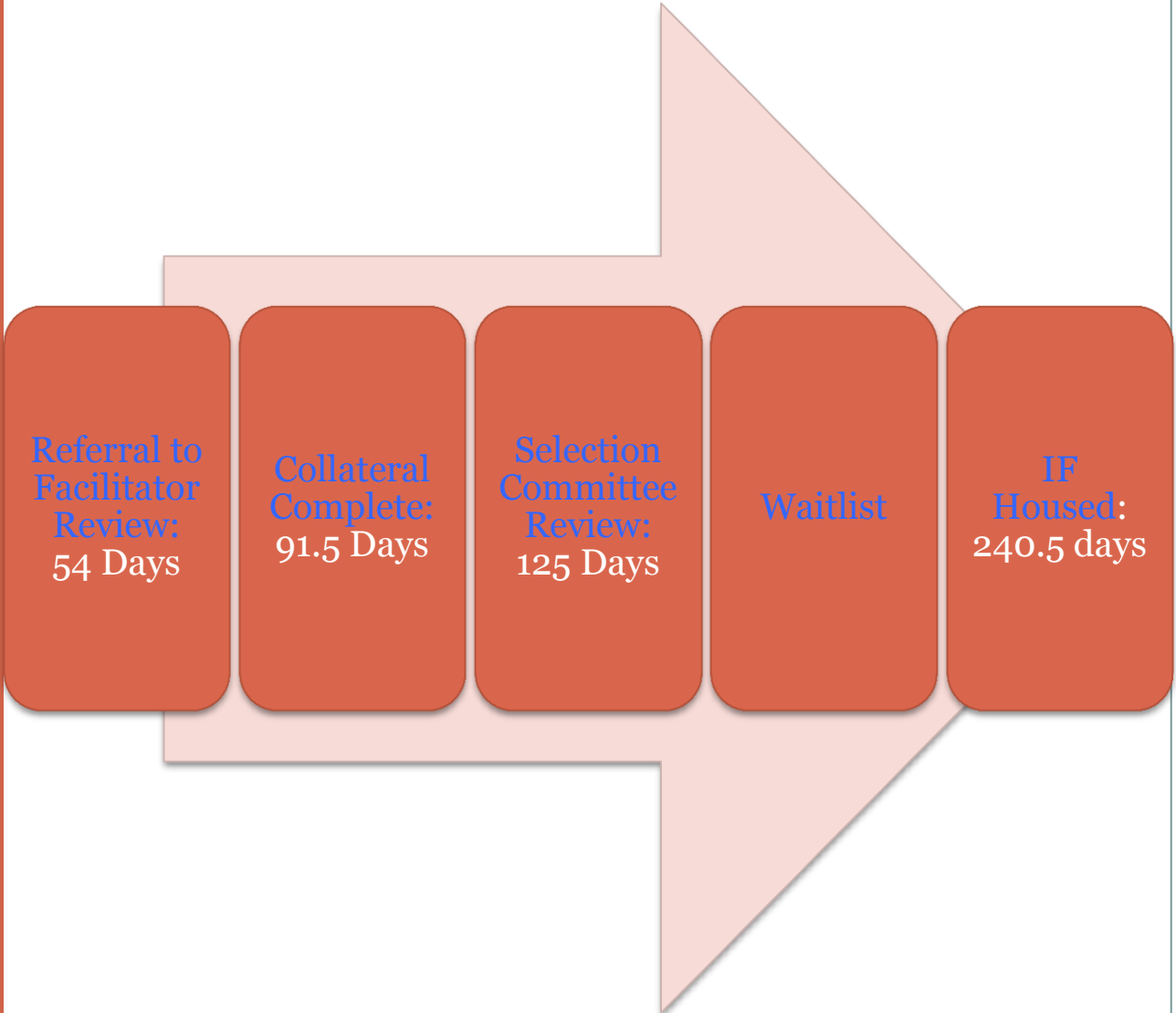
Number of Referrals Housed





CASH Time Segments

Cumulative
Number of Days
from Referrals
Received to
Waitlist and
Housed



Referral to
Facilitator
Review:
54 Days

Collateral
Complete:
91.5 Days

Selection
Committee
Review:
125 Days

Waitlist


IF
Housed:
240.5 days



The Evaluation

Key Interview Themes

1. CASH is a pathway to a waiting list for supported housing, not a housing program.
2. CASH: A ticket in a supported housing lottery.
3. CASH aims to be a fair and equitable process.
4. Having CASH is better than not having CASH.
5. There is a lack of client engagement in the CASH process.




1. CASH is a pathway to a waitlist for supported housing, not a housing program.

There was often a lack of understanding, information and transparency about the CASH process among program users affecting their satisfaction with the program.

“CASH sometimes is thought of by people, both [those who] refer to it but certainly some clients, as this omnipresent beast that has tremendous housing, where technically, it has no housing it’s just a referral system”.


...referral agent participant



2. CASH: A ticket in a supported housing lottery.

CASH must function in the untenable but required position of deciding who among an enormous group of those in desperate need should go on a list to wait for the *prospect* of receiving housing.

One participant suggested the CASH process was more a “lottery for housing” rather than a realistic process to obtain housing.



3. CASH
aims to be a
fair and
equitable
process


CASH has implemented several strategies aimed at promoting more equal access to supported housing with mixed results.

“I think once you finish that application it feels like it goes off into the abyss, ... but I don’t think it’s very transparent as to what they do with it.”

...referral agent participant

“The whole idea is to support the highest level of acuity that we possibly can, but still maintain some sense of....responsibility... to our neighbors. ...So we review the ...files of the individuals and then make the best choice, at that time, for that building.”

...housing provider participant



4. Having
CASH is
better than
not having
CASH.


Many participants viewed CASH as a useful approach to facilitate more fair and equitable admission to limited supported housing resources.

“CASH has certainly streamlined the housing process in greater Victoria; it’s reduced overlaps [of having] many waiting lists.”

...referral agent participant

“I think it’s created a much improved relationship between housing providers because they’re all part of the selection process and ...advisory committee.”

...housing provider participant



5. There is a
Lack of Client
Engagement
in the CASH
process.

The CASH process lacks client involvement and choice. This is not only difficult and confusing but in some cases potentially harmful and re-traumatizing.

“Yeah, the waiting part- it’s the worst. Like I said, hope ...it’s the most powerful motivator we’ve got, is hope. But when there’s no hope, it’s the most powerful de-motivator we’ve got. Even if they don’t say you’re number one on the list, just saying, ‘Yes, you’re on the list. How’re things going? Check in, in a little bit. That would be so god damn helpful.”

....client participant

“there is a lack of humanity.... It [CASH] eliminates the humanness side of it. And it just becomes a system and a number.”

...housing provider participant



To what degree is CASH meeting program and evaluation objectives?

- CASH meets two of its stated objectives (a single housing application or access point and “any door is the right door” for submitting referrals).
- Other objectives, a transparent and clear selection and referral process, timely referrals and efficient use of supported housing resources are only partially met.
- Unable to assess shared best practices among providers.
- CASH does not align with Housing First principles (e.g. direct access to housing, client choice and participation).



Recommendations

For enhancements of
CASH program

1. That an education program for all stakeholder groups detailing the scope and limits of the CASH program is undertaken.
2. Review and revise the CASH website to include more detailed information about the process, enhance FAQ's, and examine the possibility of clients and referring agents accessing updates about their applications.



Recommendations

(cont'd)

3. That a process for meaningful inclusion of clients at all levels of the CASH program be instituted.
4. That CASH referral forms and processes be reviewed with a view to limiting information collected to only that most crucial for deciding waitlist placement.
5. Increased staff capacity to review and complete applications would increase efficiency and reduce loss of clients.

“I think access is one of the most highly coveted pieces of currency in any system. ...So many different organizations have agreed to share that. That’s a pretty remarkable thing, and I think that’s at the core of this, and then from that, brings I think, **a lot of other possibilities**”.

...community partner participant