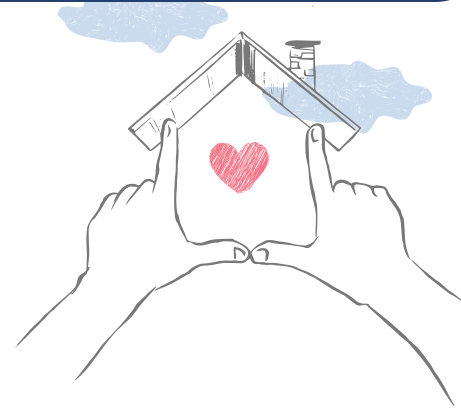


Key Learnings from: Safe Havens Emergency Shelter Solutions for Older People in Canada



- Due to the current housing crisis, there is a shortage of safe, affordable, and stable housing across Canada, affecting older adults too.
- The increased cost of living is leading more older people to access shelters as they struggle to meet basic needs, often choosing between affording housing, food or life-sustaining medication.
- Shelters are also observing a rising number of older women fleeing a lifetime of violence

Key data from the 2017 National Shelter Study



16.3% of shelter users are 55+ and experience longer stays than younger adults.



32% of seniors struggle with paying rent, 68% have difficulty covering all monthly expenses.



Between 2017 and 2020, seniors living in poverty increased from 12.3% to 15.1%



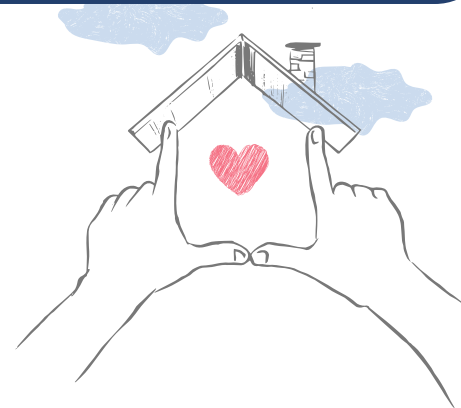
In 2022, 36,000 seniors were on waiting lists for social housing and numbers keep rising.

Effects of Homelessness on Older People

- The hard living conditions of homelessness cause the aging process to speed up.
- Many older people do not seek help out of fear of what will happen if they do.
- Many report that they don't have the means to pay for the medication they need or do not trust health care and social services professionals.
- Mobility limitations and multiple chronic health conditions such as alcohol use, mental illness, pulmonary disease, diabetes, hypertension, urinary incontinence etc. are additional challenges.
- Older people who survive on the streets are at increased risk for criminals (assault, robbery etc.) because of their health and mobility limitations.

Key Learnings from: Safe Havens

Emergency Shelter Solutions for Older People in Canada



Older Women and Homelessness:

(Data from the report *Experiences Of Women In Midlife And Older Living In Atira Permanent Housing*)

- A lifetime of child-rearing and caregiving duties means that many older women have limited pensions and are often unable to earn another income while the cost of living is rising.
- Shelters report an increasing number of women fleeing a lifetime of violence.
- GBV against older women is underestimated. As a result, there are few services available for older women.
- 60% identified as having current mental health problems and / or addiction struggles
- Up to 30% reported intimate partner violence, sometimes over the course of their lives.
- Many women reported intersecting issues related to employment, poverty, lack of affordable, safe housing, physical and mental health challenges and experience in the criminal justice system.
- Very little is known about permanent housing available to women in midlife and older.

Seniors' Mental Health

- Older people will be the group that experiences the highest rate of mental illness in Canada by 2041.
- Depression, dementia, Alzheimer's, delirium and delusional disorders are the most common mental illnesses among seniors in Canada.
- Older people experience the double stigma of mental illness paired with being older in an ageist society.
- The complexity of elder care requires the development of effective preventative interventions and service provision for older people experiencing homelessness/ living in shelter environments.

Older People and Homicide:

944

people 65+
were victims
of homicide
in Canada
(2000 - 2020)

82%

of domestic
homicide
victims were
female.

Older female victims killed by:



a family member:

35%



an intimate partner

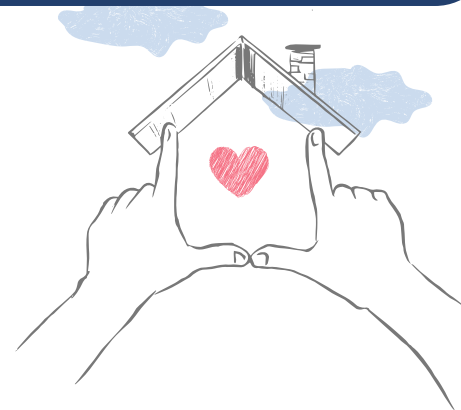
32%



Older perpetrators are
often male and
caregivers to
chronically ill spouses.

Key Learnings from: Safe Havens

Emergency Shelter Solutions for Older People in Canada



Shelters limitations specific to serving older people



Medications

Require safe storage, sometimes refrigeration. Shelters are designed to meet the most basic needs but rarely, for things such as daily reminders for medical appointments or medication.



Mobility

Many older people accessing shelters require assistance with bathing and hygiene. Shelters washrooms are not equipped with grab bars.



Furniture

Many older people report being unable to lower/lift themselves from their bed. Totes on the floor as storage are a challenge (when bending down is difficult). Inability to access items leads to wearing the same clothes for weeks at a time.



Sleeping arrangements

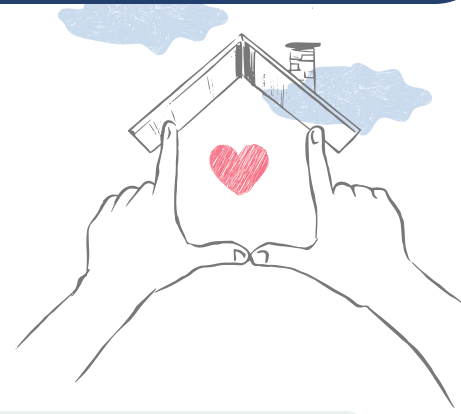
Sharing bedrooms with many strangers is a stress on victims seeking shelter.

Solutions for Temporary Housing for Older People

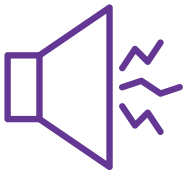
- Secured lockers for safe storage of possessions and medications. Medications which require refrigeration (ex: insulin) in staff office fridge.
- Staff monitor perimeter and perform health checks to ensure seniors' safety.
- Walk-in showers.
- Grab bars near toilets and in showers.
- Limit stairs, provide chairlift when possible.
- Raised beds and dressers for ease of access
- Living rooms with recliners and stools to elevate feet.
- Shared bedrooms for a maximum of 2-3 seniors per room,
- Limited number of participants to space and staff ratios

Key Learnings from: Safe Havens

Emergency Shelter Solutions for Older People in Canada



Shelters limitations when serving older people



Noisy, hectic environment

Fear of sleeping, or poor sleep. Seniors exposed for prolonged periods of time display symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, high startle response, diminished participation in personal care, as well as diminished decision-making.



Addiction

There is an increase in older people who are addicted to opioids and street drugs. Most substance-use supports are not equipped to assist with the challenges that older people face.

Solutions in Temporary Housing for Seniors

Other successful strategies Nutrition and Meal Preparation

- Older people play an active role in decisions and preparation of meals.
- Large kitchens/dining area for collective experience.
- All meals provided through weekly grocery purchase.
- Groceries are chosen based on the specific nutritional needs of the seniors (as well as needs related to dentures or denture replacement).

Successful temporary housing for older people should:

- support their involvement and empowerment;
- foster inclusivity;
- support problem-solving and relationship-building;

Factors that can help achieve these goals:

- A building staffed with support workers who are educated in senior needs and available onsite 24/7.
- Offer a wide range of services including:
 - Comprehensive intake
 - Identification of needs and barriers
 - Referrals to services providers
 - Collaboration with other services and physicians
 - Assistance with the completion of applications
- Arrange transportation through community volunteers and available services
- Provide medication and appointment reminders.
- Offer on-site programs that encourage connection, inclusion, and education such as cover letter writing skills, tech literacy, access to online services: art, exercise, activities and outings, vision/hearing testing.
- when possible, be pet-friendly.