

Journey Home is a
Housing First
program of:



United Way
Saskatoon & Area

“Housing First Saved My Life”

Year 1 Housing First Report

Introducing Journey Home

In April 2014 United Way contracted Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service to deliver a Housing First program in Saskatoon. The program focuses on Saskatoon's most vulnerable citizens and those that have been chronically homeless.

This Housing First program is based on the international Housing First model that believes in moving people directly from homelessness into housing without any barriers.

As more Housing First programs and initiatives are happening in our community, United Way has decided to name their program in order to differentiate.

United Way of Saskatoon and Area recently named their Housing First program **Journey Home** to distinguish it from other important Housing First initiatives happening in Saskatoon. This title reflects the program's purpose which is to give people who have been chronically homeless the opportunity to have a place to call home while guiding them through their journey to stability.

The First Year

Within the first year of the program there were 24 participants successfully housed. The average length of homelessness for these participants ranges from 3-5 years and as long as 17 years. The age range for these participants is as follows:

- 2 participants age 18-25 years
- 8 participants age 26-40 years
- 13 participants age 41-60 years
- 1 participant age 60+

Average length of homelessness is

3-5 years; some as long as
17 years



Of the 24 participants 16 are men and 8 are women. There are 70% who self-identify as aboriginal and all but 2 had mental health and or substance abuse problems. These participants also suffered from a number of chronic health conditions such as tuberculosis, HIV, and hepatitis C.

Shan Landry, a member of the Leadership Committee for the Plan to End Homelessness has seen first-hand the impact this program has on the participants. "This program offers people more than just a place to live; it is truly about saving their lives."

Statements directly from the Journey Home Housing First program participants:

- "I am recovering my relationships with a few people in my family who had given up on me and I had given up on them."
- "When Housing First found me a place to live it took months for it to sink in that I had a home."

- “Since I got a place to live everything is difference for me – better.”
- “Now I am trying to help other people and that makes me feel good.”

“Housing First Saved My Life”

Table 1 Journey Home Year 1 Results – System Usage

Service	Demand Prior to Housing First (24 Participants)	Usage Post Housing First (82% Drop)
Emergency Room Visit	399	84
Ambulance Ride and Assessments	286	66
Acute Psychiatric Hospitalization (1 Day)	195	0
Medical Hospitalization (1 Day)	375	116
Brief Detox (1 Day)	647	43
Social Detox (1 Day)	145	48
Contact with Police (Call out)	316	116
Police Detention for Intoxication (1 Day)	89	9
Incarceration (1 Day)	40	11
Emergency Shelter (Salvation Army) (1 Day)	604	57
Emergency Shelter (Lighthouse) (1 Day)	1184	213

Decrease in inappropriate use of services by

82%



Data collected and analyzed from the first year shows an 82% decrease in the inappropriate use of public system services that include emergency rooms visits, medical hospitalizations and contact with the City Police as shown in Table 1.

It also showed a Social Return on Investment of \$2.23 saved for every \$1 invested.

“Ending homelessness in Saskatoon will happen. As demonstrated by the first year’s data, all corners of our community are coming together and are dedicated to ensuring this happens.” Grant McGrath, Chair of Saskatoon’s Plan to End Homelessness Leadership Committee.

United Way believes that every individual and family deserves to have their basic needs met. Homelessness is unacceptable for anyone in our community. The first year report back proves that United Way and its dedicated community partners are making progress towards the goal of ending homelessness in Saskatoon.

Collaboration of Housing First Initiatives in Saskatoon

Interim CEO of United Way Saskatoon and Area Myra Potter says, “Journey Home is just one of the many ways our community is working together to end homelessness in

Saskatoon and United Way is proud to be part of this change. This program is about giving individuals who have lost all hope a chance.”

United Way is very proud to be part of a community that understands the importance of improving the lives of the most vulnerable in our community.

The outstanding collaboration and desire of the organizations and service providers in our community to address homelessness is so positive and we are very pleased to be working together.

The increased focus on projects and initiatives, around Housing First, through the work of SHIP, Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) and the Community Advisory Board on Saskatoon Homelessness has greatly enhanced the level of collaboration and support around Housing First in our community.

What is Next?

In order to build upon this initiative, United Way is launching a Major Gift program focused on Journey Home (Housing First) to raise funds to house the 100 most vulnerable, chronically homeless people in our community over the next three years, and to help them through their journey from Poverty to Possibility.

Our goal
is to create sustainable housing for the **100** most vulnerable, chronically homeless people in our community over the next **3** years

United Way has done extensive work on utilizing the program data we have to-date to develop projections of cost savings going forward. If we do nothing to help house these 100 people, they will accumulate an expense of over \$7 million in public system services costs over the next 3 years. Alternatively, if we support them through investing \$2.7 million into the Housing First program these system costs will drop by 82% or approximately \$5.7 million.



Although Housing First has demonstrated good value for money, no one program or organization will end homelessness. To truly end homelessness more than just Housing First will need to happen. An entire system of change must be set into motion to address all types of homelessness and ultimately prevent homelessness.

Ending Homelessness must be a community-wide endeavour, a collaborative effort and an effort where the welfare of clients rises above the needs of any one organization. We do this together because it is the right thing to do; the wise use of taxpayer and donor dollars and most importantly it provides for the best avenue for a dignified and productive life for those most in need of a solution.